

The Birth of Christ

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[0 : 00] So today is Christmas Sunday and we will talk about the birth of Christ today.! So please turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 2.

And this morning we are also concluding our five-part Christmas message series. This is the final message and it's entitled, The Birth of Christ.

Luke chapter 2, we begin in verse 1. I think it goes without saying that all of us perhaps run the risk of coming to this message with a kind of familiarity that could cause us to really miss the significance of the only earthly event that attracted angels in song.

They sang what we sang about this morning, glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased. And we, this morning, joined our voices with them, but they sang over 2,000 years ago.

And really, as I, I mean, so many times I feel inadequate when I bring God's word and I especially feel inadequate this morning because I recognize that there's only a small bit of what the angels understood and sang about that I understand.

[1 : 29] And I'm trusting God that as we open his word this morning, that he'd open our hearts and he would grant us illumination and revelation concerning the Savior's birth that the angels sang about some 2,000 years ago.

So please follow along as I read, beginning in verse 1 of Luke chapter 2. In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David.

To be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to a firstborn son and wrapped him in swathing cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

[2 : 57] And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them.

And they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you.

You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.

[4 : 21] And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning the child.

And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Let's pray together. Father, we are so grateful this morning to be gathered in this place to now sit under the authority and the instruction of your word that you have preserved over the ages. And Lord, we come to a familiar but indescribably significant section of scripture. And so we ask that you would give us fresh ears to hear and eyes to see and minds to understand the truth and the significance of the Savior's birth.

[6 : 05] Father, we ask that you would give us humble and pliable hearts and fertile hearts to receive the implanted word of God and that we would grow by your word.

Lord, we ask that you would generously give us your Holy Spirit for illumination and for revelation as we consider your word today.

And Lord, I once again ask for your help that you would make me a sufficient minister of your word this morning for these who are gathered.

Lord, you know each one. You know them uniquely. You know their circumstances. You know what they need from you today, from your word.

So I pray that you would cause each one to hear as he or she ought to hear. And Lord, that you would attend them to the work of the Holy Spirit, convincing of truth, convincing of righteousness and judgment to come.

[7 : 17] Father, we ask that you would help us now as we open your word. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, from the very outset of his gospel, it is very clear that Luke is both a historian and a theologian.

And by this I mean Luke, as he wrote his gospel, was telling history and he was also teaching theology. So what we see in Luke's account of the birth of Christ is this commitment to historical accuracy theology and also theological faithfulness.

And he did this because, as we have seen, as we've worked our way through this series, he did it because he had a concern for this man called Theophilus. He wanted Theophilus to be certain about the things he'd been taught.

He didn't want Theophilus just to take it because he'd been taught it. He wanted to show Theophilus that there was a reasonable basis for the faith that he had in Jesus Christ, who he was, and what he came to do, and also what he did.

And the same benefit that Theophilus had from this gospel account can be ours this morning. And I believe that's God's will for us because he has preserved his word over the ages.

[8 : 44] It has come to us this morning. We too can have certainty about these things that we have been taught. As we consider Luke's account of the birth of Christ, I don't know what is going on with the clock, but the clock doesn't seem to want to give us the right time.

And I'm tempted to follow that clock and keep us here. My wife says, don't yield to that temptation. But here's what we see when we consider these verses.

When we consider these 21 verses that we have just read, what we see is that the birth of Christ is a compelling drama of God's sovereignty and a comforting display of God's grace.

I think that is what we see when we encapsulate this account that Luke gives us. we're able to see this compelling drama of a sovereign God at work.

But we're also able to see this comforting display of amazing grace. And I want us to consider these two realities this morning, these two theological realities that we find in this passage.

[10 : 10] For those of you who are taking notes, I've organized my thoughts for this sermon under two headings. And they are, number one, a compelling drama of God's sovereignty. And number two, a comforting display of God's grace.

We see the compelling drama of God's sovereignty in verses 1 through 7. And then we see this comforting display of the grace of God in verses 8 through 21.

So first, let's consider a compelling drama of God's sovereignty. On the face of it, when we consider this account, there really is not anything that is compelling about God's sovereignty.

There's just this account on the face of it when we take it at first glance. what we see at first glance is there's this powerful emperor by the name of, well, who's going by the title of Caesar Augustus.

And he's ordering people around. He's telling them to return to their home town of origin to be registered. And this was to tax them, essentially. This man, Caesar Augustus, was the ruler over the vast Roman Empire, which at that time was synonymous with the world.

[11 : 27] You could say Roman Empire or you could say world at that time and it meant the same thing. Caesar Augustus was an autocrat. He led and governed by autocratic decree.

What he decreed became the law of the land. He was not there in a democratic way where you led by consensus or by resolution. He declared it and decreed it and that's how he led.

And Luke helps us to see this from the very outset of this account of the birth of Christ. But for us to be able to see how this compelling drama of God's sovereignty is laid out for us in this passage, we need to understand who this man Caesar Augustus was.

Caesar Augustus was a man by the name of Octavius, Gaius Octavius. That was his real name, Gaius Octavius.

Caesar Augustus was the title that he had as the Roman emperor. He was a ruthless warrior and he fought his way to the top as emperor by being ruthless.

[12:40] Within the Roman Empire, the emperors were considered to be gods and they were worshipped as gods. But Octavius went further than all the Caesars before him in allowing emperor worship.

What he did was some 25 years before Jesus was born, Octavius received the Roman Senate's title of Augustus.

They conferred on him this title, Augustus. And Augustus means holy or revered one. And before Caesar Augustus, this title was exclusively used for the gods.

It was exclusively reserved for the gods. And because Octavius assumed this title, it communicated that he had divine qualities. Historians tell us that Octavius permitted the worship of various powers claimed to be operating through him.

For example, the powers of peace and victory and liberty and security. Augustus even received such titles as Savior. He was revered as the one who had brought peace to the Roman world.

[14:00] It was called the Pax Romana or the Roman peace. And it was a season marked with the absence of conflict. And it was attributed to Octavius.

Some 200 years they did not know conflict. And it was all attributed to this man Octavius. He was also considered to be a son of deity.

And as such, he was called son of God. And the Romans believed this so much that when Octavius died, they comforted themselves with the fact that gods don't die and Octavius is a god, so he's not really dead.

That's where they comforted themselves that he was not really dead. Now, clearly, as Luke would have been recounting this bit of history for Theophilus and telling him that Jesus was born during the time of Caesar Augustus, Theophilus and others who would have read Luke's gospel at the time would have understood who Luke was writing about.

Caesar Augustus died in the year AD 14. And Luke is writing approximately 45 years later, so they would have known pretty much this man who was credited with so much in Rome.

[15:32] He was the architect of the piece that they enjoyed for some 200 years. He was the one who built the Roman road system and who developed the courier system of being able to transfer messages and transfer important documents from one part of the Roman Empire to the next.

So he was credited with so much. People knew who he was. It's kind of like today saying Lyndon Pendling. I think most of us, probably maybe not the smallest, youngest child in the room, but most of us, when we hear the words Lyndon Pendling, we know that here's a man who's considered the father of our nation, who's done so much, and although he's been dead for 15 years, I think it would be true that if in 50 years or in 100 years his name were to be mentioned, most people would bring to mind this man who was considered the father of the nation and some of the significant things that he did.

So now when we put this bit of background all together, what we see in verses 1 through 7 is we see Caesar Augustus issuing this decree, telling everyone in his empire, go back to your hometown and I'm going to register you, I'm going to count you.

So all the people go back to their hometown of origin, Joseph goes to the city of David in the city of Bethlehem because that's where he was from, and then we're told in verse 6 that the time came for Mary to have her child.

And then in verse 7 we're told that Mary had the child, she wrapped him in swaddling cloths which wasn't so much a warm blanket but it was more strips of cloths designed to keep the baby's body straight.

[17:28] And she laid him in a manger which was the feeding trough for animals. Now in these seven verses we see Luke the historian and the theologian giving these details of the birth of Christ in such a way for us to see the divine implications of his birth.

And what we see in this section is this compelling display, this compelling drama of the sovereignty of God. First of all, consider when Jesus was born.

Jesus was born at a time when there was an imposter God by the name of Caesar Augustus who was ruling the world.

So here Caesar Augustus is ordering people around, he's issuing decrees, and all that time God was sovereignly ruling over him and using him to bring his purposes to pass.

Here you have a mere man parading around, claiming to be God, and God sovereignly ordained it that at that time he would send his son, God in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ, to be born in Bethlehem, the place where Caesar Augustus ordered that his father should go.

[18 : 57] We also see God sending the true savior in the person of Jesus Christ at the time when there was a false savior in the person of Caesar Augustus.

Caesar was offering a political salvation from national enemies and God sent the true savior because what we really needed was a spiritual salvation from ultimate enemies, namely sin and Satan.

Octavius was called savior by resolution when he was 40 years old, but Jesus was called savior by heaven's declaration at his birth.

God sent Christ into a world that had a false peace, a peace that was only going to last about 200 years and that was going to be shattered and to be reminded again that there is no lasting peace away from God himself.

love. And the peace that God would bring through Jesus Christ was not a peace that was ruthlessly enforced. God recognized that true peace would only come through Jesus Christ, through his son, the prince of peace, who could bring men to God and make peace with God.

[20 : 15] Not a false peace, but a true peace. peace. I imagine if someone was to interview Caesar Augustus at the time that he was making his decrees and said, you know, why are you doing this?

I have no doubt he would say because I want to. I want to number the people in my empire. I want to know what my tax base is. I want to know how many citizens are in my empire.

He would never have attributed it to God. But God was the sovereign one working in the midst of all of Augustus' choices, bringing his own purposes to pass.

But not only do we see this compelling drama of the sovereignty of God in when Jesus was born, we also see it in where Jesus was born. 750 years early up, approximately, God spoke through the prophet Micah that the Messiah would be born in the insignificant town of Bethlehem 750 years before.

This prophecy is recorded in Micah chapter 5 verse 2 and this is what it says, says, but you O Bethlehem Ephrathah who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from old, from ancient days.

[21 : 56] God gave, that he was going to send the ruler, he was going to send one whose origin was from old, from of ancient days, to be born in this obscure place.

So the birth of Christ was no accident, it was not because Caesar Augustus sent them there, sent Joseph there, and Mary happened to give birth at that time.

It was not by accident, it was instead by the design of the hand of a sovereign God. God prophesied it, and at the right time, he brought it to pass, even though it looked like a political tyrant was in control of it all.

Brothers and sisters, this is very instructive for us this morning. Above all the circumstances of our lives, we should be comforted this morning that there is a sovereign God to whom even tyrants are subject.

There's a sovereign God that even when tyrants and those who are full of power are acting like God and throwing their weight around, there is a true God who's sovereignly at work bringing his purposes to pass and even using their arrogant abusive power to bring it to pass.

[23 : 28] And this is true this morning, whether it is a prime minister or a boss who's the tyrant, whether it is a father or a husband, there is a sovereign God who is above all and who is able to work in all to bring his purposes to pass.

We don't understand that. We don't know how he is able to do that. We don't know how God is able to work in evil and in very hard circumstances to bring his purposes to pass.

But scripture and history are replete with examples of how God has done this. And so we should be encouraged this morning.

Your circumstances may be such that there are those who are controlling your life in a way that you would rather they not control your life. But again, remember that the sovereign God who declared that he would bring the Messiah in a specific way, in a specific place, at a specific time, and then sovereignly used a ruthless dictator to bring it to pass, is at work in your life and in my life in the same sovereign manner.

God is sovereign, so let's trust him. Some of us this morning may be walking through hard circumstances, contradictory circumstances, like Mary.

[24 : 59] Here Mary is, she's carrying the Son of God in her womb. She's carrying the ruler of the universe in her room, and she's being ordered around by this imposter.

But let's remember God is sovereign, and therefore let us trust him. And I sense this morning that for some of us, it's not so much what's happening in our lives now, but it is what will happen in our lives in the days ahead that we need to remember this.

That God is sovereign, and God works in the lives of his people in spite of some of the obstacles and the difficulties that they may face.

I'm reminded of the second verse in William Cooper's famous hymn, God Moves in a Mysterious Way, and it says, O fearful saints, new courage take. The clouds that you now dread are big with mercy and will break in blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sins, but trust them for his grace. Behind a frowning providence, providence is God's smiling face.

[26 : 33] As I prepared, I thought of our young people, many of them are home from school, school, some are graduating in the summer, and probably wondering, wondering about your future.

What will my future be like? Will I go to college? Will I finish college? What kind of job will I have? Will I be safe? What about marriage?

Where will I live? Some of us are probably wondering about particular events and the timing of those events, when they will happen, and indeed, if they will happen.

We're reminded this morning that this is the last Sunday of the new year and we, of this old year, we face a new year in front of us. And no doubt, many questions flood our minds.

But this morning we can take comfort in the fact that there is a sovereign God who rules over all and who rules in the midst of all, even some of the most difficult and hard to believe circumstances.

[27 : 54] We can entrust all of these questions, all of these wonderings to this sovereign God who displayed his sovereignty when he sent his son to earth in the person of Jesus.

And we consider where Christ was born as well. I think about all the places that God could have chosen for Jesus to be born.

He chose Bethlehem. I'm sure you've met people who are very proud of the city that they were born in or the city they happen to live in.

They proudly tell you, well, I'm from New York or from Los Angeles or from London or from Paris.

And certainly if you are from a settlement like Mangrove Key Andros or from Snug Corner Acklands, you want to change the conversation.

But you know what? In a sense, Bethlehem would have been like a Mangrove Key, like a Snug Corner.

[29 : 13] Not as significant like other places in Judea, but it's a city that God chose for Christ to be born. And you have to realize that that's not just happenstance.

I mean, why would God choose this city of all the other places that he could have chosen? Why would he choose this insignificant, marginalized place?

I think we should consider this this morning that even what the world considers to be insignificant, God, for his own reasons, considers to be significant.

Worse than where Jesus was born in terms of the town is the exact location where he was born. He was born in this manger and laid in this feeding trough of animals.

And you ask yourself the question again, okay, why was he born there? Was he really born there?

Because there was no room in the inn, there was no place in the inn for them? And I guess the human answer is yes, that's what the account says to us, that there was no place in the inn, and therefore they resorted to the manger.

[30 : 50] But let me think about that, if the sovereign God of the universe, this God who was able to prophesy through one of his prophets that 750 years from now I'm going to send the ruler of the universe, and he's able to orchestrate these other events that we're seeing, if this God wanted his

son to be born elsewhere, he could have done so.

If he wanted him to be born in the palace, he could have done that. If he wanted him to be born in an inn, get somebody out of it to put them in, he could have done whatever he wanted to do.

But it was the plan of God. It was the sovereign design of God that his son would enter into the world in the way that he did. It was not by accident or by circumstance.

And think about it, what a contrast it was that night. Here you have Caesar Augustus in all of his pomp and pageantry and power in his palace, parading around as a son of God, as the savior of the world, and the true son of God, the true savior of the world, the true prince of peace, was helplessly laying in a feeding trough, in a squalid stable, steeped in the scent of manure and urine.

And God designed it. It was his plan that his son would come that way. And what we're able to see immediately is that the God of the universe was not then and is not now appealing to human pride.

[32 : 26] And brothers and sisters, the only thing that's worse than the squalor of that stable that we sang about this morning is the scandal of the cross, where Jesus would hang helplessly and naked before a gazing world, bearing our sin and our shame and paying the price for our rebellion.

So ultimately, the reason he was born there was because of divine design. And here again, we need to be instructed by all of this.

We need to be instructed by where Christ was born when we are tempted to try to impress the world with what we know and what we have and what we do.

But instead of that, what we need to do is we need to joyfully embrace the lowliness of our Savior's birth. And we need to embrace the humility that it communicates.

I think of what the writer to the Hebrews says concerning Moses in Hebrews 11 verse 24. It says, by faith, Moses, when he was grown up, when he was grown up, when he was able to think and he understood, he'd been exposed to a lot of stuff, when he was grown up, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, rather choosing to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

[34 : 06] He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. What about you this morning?

Where do you identify most? Is the squalor of the stable awkward for you? Does that embarrass you?

Are you in pride identifying with the glitter and the glitz of the world? Brothers and sisters, there is no getting around the humble origins of our faith.

There is no getting around it. And those who seek to make the Christian faith more attractive to the world, they are offering the world a counterfeit. They are offering the world something that is not true.

And therefore we must be comfortable with this. And I speak to all of us, but I especially speak to our young people this morning. Be comfortable. Be comfortable with this faith that the world would scorn and look down upon and don't want to associate with.

[35 : 27] Be comfortable that you would be willing to be like Moses and identify with the people of God and also embrace the suffering that comes with it because you are able to value that as something more precious.

When you come to that conviction, surrounded by friends who are going another way, by the grace of God, you'll be able to stand. And by the grace of God, you'll be able to identify with joy with this faith of humble origins.

So Luke's account of the birth of Christ communicates a compelling drama of a sovereign God who was at work. And Luke helps us to see that where Christ was born and when he was born were all the result of a sovereign God who was at work.

But Luke, the historian and theologian, does more than communicate a compelling drama of God's sovereignty in his account of the Savior's birth. He also communicates a comforting display of God's grace.

grace. This is my second and final point. Luke helps us to see this comforting display of God's grace through the angels' appearance to the shepherds in verse 8.

[36 : 56] We read in verse 8, and in the same region there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night. And here they are at night when everyone else is safely in their homes.

The shepherds are out in the field watching over their flock and more than likely not their own flock, but they were hired to do that work. Verse 9 tells us, the angel of the Lord appeared to them to tell them of the Savior's birth.

And then we read in verse 10 that the angels call it good news of great joy that will be for all the people. No one excluded.

This is good news of great joy that will be for all the people. And God demonstrates it right in this act of sending the angel to these shepherds who are out in the field watching the flock.

Notice in verse 10 that there are three titles that are given to Jesus and we shouldn't read over them so quickly. Three titles given to Jesus. The first one is Savior. This is a salvation word and it immediately communicates to us that Jesus is the Savior.

[38 : 21] He, it also tells us what he came to do. he came to save. And so what this immediately does is it communicates our condition. It communicates our need.

We need to be saved. We need to be delivered. We need to be delivered from sin and Satan and from the wrath of God. And see again, it is this same sovereign or wise God who was at work, who determines I'm going to send a Savior.

He sent what we needed. He didn't send us an educator because our problem is not a lack of education. And how sad, we need to improve the education system in our country, but we are totally wrong when we believe that by educating people we can deal with the sin problem.

By educating people we can turn our country around. We need to improve it. But let us not have false hopes in that. The Lord sent us a Savior because fundamentally what we need is we need to be saved.

The second title is Christ, which means Messiah or anointed one. And this title comes really from the Old Testament, from the kings and the priests who were anointed with oil as a sign of their consecrated mission and life.

[39 : 45] But because they were all sinners, because all the priests and all of the kings of the Old Testament were sinners, they all failed. Some were better than others, but they all failed.

And God had always promised that he was going to send a Messiah, he was going to send an anointed one who would save his people forever and who would put an end to this line of failed kings and priests.

And that's really the point of the kings, the chronicles, that's really the point of just showing you these kings and the various priests who were serving.

There was king after king and priest after priest. And the point was that none of them could continue, none of them could be a perfect king or a perfect priest and therefore they were replaced. But God sent his son, Jesus Christ, who would be the faithful king, the faithful priest, the faithful prophet where all the others had failed.

[40 : 45] And that night in Bethlehem, the angel proclaimed that God's Messiah had finally come. And the third and final title is the title Lord.

And this title points to the deity of Christ and to his sovereign rule over our lives. He is Lord. Here in verse 8, for the very first time in scripture, the words Christ and Lord are brought together.

Meaning that Jesus was the Lord Christ. He was God in the flesh. He was Emmanuel, which means that God is with us.

And this was good news for all the people, shepherds included. So why was this appearance to the shepherds an amazing display of God's grace?

Well, to see that and understand that you have to appreciate the place that shepherds held in Jewish society. Shepherds were considered the lowest class of people in Jewish society except for one group.

[42 : 11] There was one group, they were higher than, and that was lepers. Shepherds by law could not give testimony in court because they were considered to be liars and thieves and not trustworthy people.

And perhaps this was largely because they were hired to do what they did. They didn't own the sheep and oftentimes when danger would come, they would run off and leave the sheep. and so they were considered not dependable and untrustworthy.

And this is what Jesus gets at when he says in John 10, I am the good shepherd. And the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He doesn't run off when there's danger. He lays down his life for the sheep.

So these shepherds were outcasts. They were nobodies. And yet when the sovereign lord of the universe sent his son to the world and he had been born, the sovereign lord dispatched an angel to go to those shepherds.

He sends an angel to go to those shepherds with the news of great joy for all the people, shepherds included. He chooses the lowest in society, these shepherds, to hear the good news that God had broken into human history and he brought mercy and grace into a fallen world.

[43 : 50] Why didn't he tell the innkeeper who could have broadcasted it to his guests? Why didn't he tell the people who were in the rooms? in the inn where Joseph and Mary could not get in?

Why didn't he tell Caesar Augustus who had his wonderful curious system that he could get the message out into his empire? He didn't do any of those things.

Instead, he chose to tell lowly shepherds and in so doing, he displayed the nature of his grace. His grace comes to the undeserving. Now, when we consider this, it's kind of odd that the Lord would send us the first messengers of the Savior's birth, those who people just wouldn't believe to tell the truth, those who could not give testimony in court, these were the ones, the first to hear, and the ones who were to be the first human messengers of the good news of the birth of Christ.

And what we see in this passing over others who may have seen as more likely candidates to share the good news, we see the fulfillment of Mary's song, or part of Mary's song, where mighty Caesar Augustus is brought low, and the lowly shepherds are exalted.

[45 : 33] And it's a display of God's grace because the unexpected receive, while the entitled are passed over. In verse 14, we have the angel's song that is called the Gloria in Altissimus.

And the words of the song accent the grace of God, glory to God in the highest. And on earth, peace among those with whom he is pleased. And here what we see is the divine initiative that is necessary in salvation, not just with shepherds, but to all upon whom God's favor rests.

God's peace comes to those and among those who are the recipients of his grace. None of us can please God in and of ourselves.

No human can please God to deserve the grace of God, to deserve the peace of God. It only comes by grace.

And brothers and sisters, this morning, God's compelling grace displayed to the shepherds should remind all of us that we're not beyond the reach of his grace.

[46 : 57] No matter how sinful, no matter how shameful, no matter how detestable our sins might be, God's grace can reach us and God's grace can forgive us.

notice again, God is not impressed with the world, nor is he seeking to impress the world, because he uses shepherds as the first evangelists.

The shepherds heard the good news, and the shepherds believed. They heard it from angels, and this morning we are hearing it from God's holy word that he has watched over, and he has preserved.

And so I think the question for all of us this morning really is, do I believe that Jesus is the Messiah? Do I believe the good news that is for all the people?

This good news that was prophesied some 750 years prior to the birth of Jesus Christ. Christ? And do you believe this morning that grace comes to the undeserved?

[48 : 15] Do you believe that grace comes to those who don't deserve it and, like the shepherds, knew they didn't deserve it? Or do you instead believe that maybe if you're good enough, if you pray enough, if you read your Bible enough, if you come to church enough, that maybe somehow, you can be good enough for God to accept?

He takes us just as we are, where we are, and he bestows his grace and mercy on us because of this good news that the angel proclaimed to the shepherds and that the shepherds then shared. God, this morning, very much like in the day of Augustus, there were two kinds of peace that were then available.

The peace that he was offering that depended on having a strong army and depended on being able to suppress enemies, and there was a peace that was personal, but it only came to those who believe that good news, that a Savior had been born.

And because of this Savior, men and women could now be reconciled to God, and God's peace would rest on those with whom he is pleased.

[49 : 47] Friends, those two kinds of peace are available to us today. Jesus said that he would give a peace that's unlike the world's peace. It's a peace the world didn't give, it's a peace the world can't

take away.

It's a peace that keeps us in the midst of life's darkest and hardest storms. And that peace is available to us today.

Those of us who have trusted in Christ, we know that peace, and we can rejoice that God in mercy has saved us and given us his peace. But if you don't know that peace today, what you need is to be rescued by this Savior.

I was thinking about how every time I read this word Savior in Scripture, it's very personal to me because I rarely read about Jesus being a Savior without thinking in a very personal and real way what it is to be saved.

I, at the age of 12, almost drowned. And I could see my life just going.

[51 : 14] I was totally hopeless, couldn't do anything, and I just saw myself dying until my coach jumped in the pool and fished me out and brought me up on the platform.

I was totally helpless. I could not have done anything for myself and left to myself, I would have drowned. See, that's what it is to be saved.

What it is to be saved is to recognize that you are helpless and without a Savior, you are going to drown. You're going to die. But the good news is that a Savior has been born.

And those who put their trust in Him, those who call on His name, those who cry out to Him, He saves. He forgives.

He gives them mercy. He gives them mercy. My prayer for us this morning is that we will all see in the Savior's birth this drama of a sovereign God.

[52 : 31] We would see this display of a merciful God who gives grace to those who don't deserve it.

Luke concludes in verse 21. And in a sense, he is really saying to Theophilus, he's saying Theophilus, the very thing that was told by Gabriel to Mary before the child was conceived in her womb, when the eighth day came, the day to circumcise boys, the day to name the child, he was called Jesus.

He was called Savior. Luke wanted the office to have certainty about that, and God wants us this morning to have certainty as well.

Let's pray.