**LUKE 2:1-20**

**PAIRS AND SPARES CLASS**

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, WAYCROSS**

**DECEMBER 25, 2022**

**INTRODUCTION**

The birth of Jesus was no accident, nor was it a mere footnote in the annals of history. God sent His Only Son to earth for a reason: to offer each human being the opportunity to be reconciled to God.

The birth of Jesus was the intricate fulfilment of promises made by God from the time of Adam and throughout the Old Testament to provide a Savior for Jews and for Gentiles alike. God orchestrated every single detail of this miraculous display of His grace and mercy. Nothing was left to chance, nothing was without supreme significance, and nothing was done without God’s commitment to your best interest and to my best interest.

1. In Genesis 3:15, God promised that the Savior would be a human being.
2. In Genesis 12:1-3 and Numbers 24:17, God promised that the Savior would be a Jew, not a Gentile.
3. In Genesis 49:10, God promised that the Savior would come from the tribe of Judah.
4. In 2 Samuel 7:1-17, God promised that the Savior would be a descendant of King David.
5. In Isaiah 7:14, God promised that the mother of the Savior would be a virgin.
6. In Micah 5:2, God promised that the Savior would be born in Bethlehem.
7. In Genesis 22:8, God promised that He would provide the Lamb for the sacrifice required to atone for my sins and your sins.

Jesus is God’s Messiah, and Jesus is the only One Who fulfills each of these promises and every other Messianic promise of God.

In and through the birth of Jesus, God:

1. controlled the circumstances of history to bring Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem;
2. displayed His glory by sending a host of angels to proclaim the birth of His Son, our Savior; and,
3. demonstrated His grace and mercy for even the lowliest of us by choosing shepherds to be His heralds to share the news of the birth of the Messiah to all who would listen to this amazing story of God’s providence.

The birth of Jesus was the event that initiated the greatest expression and demonstration of love ever experienced in all of human history.

It was the birth of Jesus that would set in motion God’s final revelation of Himself to humanity which would climax in the death of Jesus on a Roman cross and the resurrection of Jesus from a garden tomb to defeat death and to provide atonement for the sins of those who would accept Him as the risen Son of God and who would proclaim Him as their Lord.

All these things and more are the reason this birth of Jesus is so meaningful. Our thoughts of what God did for us that night warm our hearts and never cease to amaze us. Through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God accomplished for us what we can never do for ourselves, and He did it at the greatest expense of any act of love ever committed.

**GOD BROUGHT JOSESPH AND MARY TO BETHLEHEM** (Luke 2:1-7)

Luke tells us that Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. The Romans conducted a census about every fourteen years, and this process required that every adult male be counted in the home city of his ancestors.

So Joseph, a descendant of King David who had been born in Bethlehem, made the trek from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea to be counted by the Romans who ruled the Holy Land at that time.

A male was not required to bring his wife or his family with him. But Joseph decided to bring Mary, to whom he was engaged to be married, because she was very pregnant and because God had chosen Joseph to be the one responsible for her. So instead of leaving her in Nazareth, the two of them made the ninety-mile journey together.

While they were in Bethlehem, God’s timing came for Mary to deliver her son—at the exact moment in history and in the specific town God had planned and announced.

Like mothers did and continue to do, Mary wrapped Jesus snugly with cloth to provide Him warmth and a feeling of security once He had departed His mother’s womb.

But instead of her baby being laid in a crib or on a bed beside His mother, Jesus, the Son of Almighty God, was placed in a feed trough because the only available space for Mary and Joseph to stay was a stable due to the village’s being overwhelmed by all the visitors who had come to take part in the census.

It would seem that Caesar Augustus was the one responsible for Joseph and Mary being in Bethlehem. But in reality, it was God Who used the circumstances of history to bring them to the very village He had chosen long before for the birth of His Messiah.

Hundreds of years before, God had told Micah that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Caesar Augustus knew nothing of God, nor of God’s promise to Micah, nor of an engaged couple in the Holy Land who were expecting a child, nor even of the birth or person of Jesus. But God was fully aware of all of these details including the fact that Mary was pregnant with the Son of God Who needed to be born in an otherwise insignificant village called Bethlehem.

Caesar thought he was in total control of all that was happening in the Roman Empire. Little did he know that God would use Caesar’s order for a census to set in motion the events surrounding this most meaningful of all births, the one that would be the turning point in history and would change the world for all eternity.

*Powerful and wealthy men and women are convinced that they are in control. But the absolute reality is that God and God alone rules over everything, including every single event of history. And God can use these events to glorify His Name.*

G**OD SENT ANGELS TO DISPLAY HIS GLORY** (Luke 2:8-14)

The birth of a future king was usually announced with extravagant fanfare and celebrated throughout the kingdom by people across all levels of society.

In the case of the birth of the greatest king in all of creation, the celebration was the most extravagant ever. But it was celebrated in an unimportant part of the Roman Empire by people who were considered meaningless by society. God Himself sent angels in all their magnificence to a group of shepherds who were simply going about their normal routine of taking care of sheep at night somewhere in the fields near Bethlehem.

While they carried out their responsibilities, suddenly out of nowhere an angel shattered the calm and darkness of the night. “The glory of the Lord” lit up the landscape, absolutely terrifying the shepherds.

As angels throughout the Scriptures had done, this angel’s first comment was meant to calm and reassure the shepherds: “ ‘Do not be afraid.’ “ All is well!

Then it told them the “good news” that would bring “great joy” not only for these shepherds but also for everyone who would accept what God was doing: The long-awaited Savior, the Messiah, the Lord, had been born in Bethlehem!

The angel told them to go search for Him. He would be the only new-born male child in Bethlehem who was “wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

As if the appearance of one angel were not enough to celebrate the birth of The King of Creation, God then sent a great host of them to praise God, glorify His name above every other name, and proclaim the hope for peace on earth in the hearts of those who sought the God of Kept Promises, the God of Hope.

*God has a way of bursting into our lives and revealing Himself to us at the least expected times and in the most astounding, most profound ways.*

**GOD CHOSE LOWLY SHEPHERDS TO BE HIS WITNESSES AND HERALDS** (Luke 2:15-20)

After the magnificent display of God’s brilliant glory and after they shared God’s good news with the shepherds, the angels left to return to heaven.

But these shepherds had encountered the glory and representatives of God. Their hearts had been ignited. They longed to go to Bethlehem to search for this Baby Whom they would find in a feeding trough. They had to see for themselves what God had done.

Luke tells us that the shepherds “hurried off” to begin searching for this Baby. They couldn’t get to Bethlehem fast enough. And their search led them to the Baby, His mother Mary, and Joseph.

When they found Him, they amazed everyone they encountered by sharing the story of what the angel had told them about this child and how the multitude of other angels had praised God and had proclaimed this Baby as the Messiah.

*How can a person who has encountered God’s revelation keep from telling everyone about that experience?*

Eventually these shepherds would return to their normal duties. But God had invaded their lives, and they would never be the same again. They glorified God and praised Him for all the things He had so mercifully revealed to them.

These men were not the only ones whose lives were changed that night. Luke tells us that Mary, the mother of our Savior, treasured everything that she experienced and kept thinking about them in her heart, trying to make sense of it all; trying to fully understand what was occurring; marveling that God would use her in His salvation plan.

Luke would go on to tell us of Simeon and Anna, Godly people whose lives were forever impacted by encountering the Baby Jesus in the Temple.

As time would go by, the life of Jesus would continue to be one that would make an eternal impact on people, one person at a time.

**CONCLUSION**

Even today, Jesus continues to impact the lives of people as they hear of Him, wonder about Him, try to make sense of Him, and decide whether to accept Him or reject Him. Even today, deciding what to do with Jesus remains the most significant question for each and every human being.

Many people believe that recorded history is the story of the accomplishments of mankind.

But recorded history is actually the story of how God uses the choices and actions of human beings over time to fulfill His plan to redeem mankind; how God offers each of us the opportunity to choose or reject His solution for our having a righteous relationship with Him; how God allows each of us to choose whether to glorify Him or ridicule Him.

Caesar could provide peace, the absence of war on land and sea, and could require that a census be taken of the people he ruled. But only God could provide true peace in our hearts, the kind that enables each of us to have a righteous relationship with God.

God’s solution for our true peace is Jesus, the man who as a baby was born in a stable in Bethlehem.

In Jesus, people are assured that our greatest need--salvation from our sins and victory over death--have been guaranteed by God. And this assurance enables us to trust fully in all the promises of God through Christ, knowing that God will be faithful to each and every promise He has ever made.

The birth of Jesus is not just another “feel good” story about a newborn baby.

The birth of Jesus is the story of God’s love for each of us; the story of our importance and value to God; the story of just how far God will go to reveal Himself to each of us through Christ. Is it the story of promised hope and joy for those who are certain that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God who lived a sinless life on earth, shed His blood and died on a cross to atone for my sins and yours, was buried, but rose to defeat death and reign forever.

The story of the birth and life of Jesus is the story of God’s intentional, exorbitant provision for us: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16).

The story of the birth and life of Jesus is the story of God’s doing everything needed for each of us to be reconciled with Him if we will only give our hearts, minds, souls, and entire being to God by making Jesus the Lord of our life.

The story of the birth and life of Jesus requires a response on our part. Belief and commitment to Jesus are the only way to a righteous relationship with God. There is no other solution in all of God’s universe other than placing our complete faith in His Son.

The decision of what to do with Jesus then becomes the most important decision in our life, the decision that every human being cannot avoid making.

It was the birth of Jesus that would make it possible for us to have the opportunity to make this decision.