

The King is Here, and He Ain't Caesar

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[0 : 00] Come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King. Remember the song as we started off this morning, as we came to worship together.

And this was the echo of the song that we sang this morning. And how true it is that Christ, the Lord, the newborn King, is the one that we would want to adore.

So, this morning, we want to look at the announcement and the birth of Jesus from the Luke account as the continuation from the Church Sunday Puppet Ministry.

And today, we will look at Luke 2, verse 1 to 20. The King is here, and he ain't Caesar. Probably this is a very familiar passage to many of us, and I would like to invite us this morning to hear again as we are about to enter into the Advent seasons.

The next slide, what news have you personally heard that made you really want to find out more? I remember my uncle, who was from Cebu, contacted me about 11 years ago, and he begins to introduce himself.

[1 : 30] And at the beginning, I was skeptical because I have heard many different stories from my cousins of why he's contacting us. Many thoughts run through my mind, but I thought I would want to give him a chance.

And then, all these thoughts that I had in my mind changed after I have met up with him. He shared with me about our family tree and about my grandfather.

And my grandfather came to Cebu in 1920s, early 1920s, almost about 100 years ago. And in 1928, when there was a great fire in Cebu, they have shifted from Cebu to Setiawan, and then to Ipoh, and then my parents came to KL.

And I thought that I was so thrilled to hear that my great-grandfather was one of the workers in a seminary in China before he came to Cebu. And I thought to myself, wow, what a great exposure to my family history.

And today, how about you? Can you recall back any time in your life when you received news that made you curious and you want to find out more?

[2 : 52] And this morning, for our meditation from Luke 2, and this is what we want to do. And we want to look back into this account of the announcement of the birth of Jesus.

And we want to look at the journey that Joseph and Mary took at the beginning, and then the birth of baby. And how did the shepherd respond to the news that were given to them?

And this morning, and I invite us to hear again, the word speaks to us. The next slide. And Luke 2, verse 1 begins, This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. I will skip the next few slides, because just now Jamie has already read the scripture for us. If you go on to slide number 8.

Yep. The entire Roman world was born, was worn out with 20 years of civil war.

[4 : 23] Farm has been neglected. Towns were besieged. And wealth has been stolen.

Administrations and protections have been broken down. Robbers were everywhere on the streets, day and night, and made the streets unsafe.

Rome was full of men who lost their economy footing and moral stability. Women, on the other hand, were limited with freedoms, multiplying divorces, abortions, and adulteries.

And in a Roman world, and in this Roman world, then Caesar's Augustus came. And Caesar's Augustus was born on 23rd September 63 BC.

And his real name was Gaius Octavius. He was adopted by Julius Caesar. And he was the first Roman emperor who reigned from the 27 BC until his death on the 14th AD.

And the name Augustus means the revered one or the exalted. He is one of the greatest leaders in human history because he ended a long period of war in the Roman Empire and was hailed the

Prince of Peace, the Savior of the War.

[5 : 48] And with his reign began the Pax Romana. You have probably heard and familiar with it. And in Latin, it means the Roman peace.

And it's roughly reigned over 200 years, a long time spent in the Roman history, which is identified as a period of the Golden Age in increase as well and sustained the Roman imperialism.

The relative peace and order, prosperity, and as well as the expansion of the empire, despite although there were several revolts and war in some places in the Roman Empire.

And under his rule, the economy was booming. And Rome was built with even more glorious than before, with temples, with arenas, with public baths, and with forums.

And a system of road was built across the whole empire during his time. And the images of the emperor. And the Roman's god fills the Rome major cities and proclaiming, Caesar is Lord, and extolling his rule of peace as prosperity.

[7 : 07] Indeed, he was the emperor. But was he the savior of the people, as the people were waiting for? And a decrease went out from Caesar's Augustus.

It seems that the authority of this man changed the chaos time in a very dramatic way. Two things that he brought that turned around the Roman war.

First, he brought peace because he has defeated all his rival. And secondly, he brought stability to the political and administrative of the nation.

And this census first took place while Cerenus was the governor of Syria. And his name is in long, published, Scepticus Cerenus.

He was born in 51 AD until the 21st AD. And his name, translated as Cerenus, was a Roman aristocrat.

[8 : 10] Cerenus served as the governor of Syria with authority over Judea under the 12th AD. And this gives the historical anchor to the census.

The registrations and census described wasn't just for record-keeping of how many people in the empire. But the main reason was for effective governing and also taxing of the people in the Roman empire.

And the scripture says, as we understand, that all went to register. And the whole Roman world responded to this call by the emperor. Such a powerful man to call and everyone followed and moved.

The good thing about Augustus was that he was well known to be very sensitive to the feeling of his people. So then he commanded them to return to the city of the family origin for the census to be taken.

And the next slide, verses 4 to 7. So Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea to Bethlehem to the town of David because he belongs to the house and the line of David.

[9 : 27] He went there to register with Mary who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.

She wrapped him in cloth and placed him in a manger because there was no guest room available for them. The next slide, Joseph went from Galilee and he was from the line of David.

The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem, probably about 80 miles and probably is equivalent to 150 kilometers. From Kuching, where would you reach for 150 kilometers?

I googled. Probably you can tell me better. It's probably just before Sri Amman. To Sri Amman, it will take about 200 kilometers. So the journey Joseph and Mary took was from here walking to just before Sri Amman.

After Sri Amman, before you reach Sri Amman. This is not a very long distance for us who drive in the modern day like you and I, but it was a long journey in the olden days.

[10 : 46] It involved a very significant travel and cost of money and time. A family with donkeys can probably take about 20 miles a day.

And this journey of 80 miles will probably take them three days or four days for them to walk from here to reach Sri Amman.

Matthew 1, verses 1-17 begin the gospel with a record of the origin of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begot Isaac and continued on until Jacob begots Joseph and husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

Thus, there were 14 generations from Abraham to David, 14 from David to the exile to Babylon, and 14 from the exile to Christ.

With Mary who was pledged to be married and was expecting a child. Joseph's relationship to Mary is betrothed, which is only weekly like a modern engagement.

[11:56] Betrothed in the ancient world was more like a pre-marriage, and it requires a divorce to break, and the couple did not live together or consummate their relationship.

Since Joseph and Mary are not truly married, it would have been unusual for them to travel together. But in this case, however, because Mary is already pregnant, with a baby miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit, probably you have heard of it in the sermon before in Luke 1, verses 30-33, since she was close to giving birth.

That was what was written to us in verse 6, and it seems that it made more sense for her to be with her promised husband when this took place.

The next slide. She gave birth to her newborn son. She wrapped him in cloth and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

The time has come for Mary to give birth. The baby was wrapped in cloth. And the word used in RSV, Revised Standard Version Translation, is the swaddling cloth that comes from the ancient Greek word, which means to tear, meaning that there were torn strips of cloth wrapped around Jesus.

[13:27] And not even a full piece of blanket to tuck in a newborn baby. Perhaps most importantly, the Greek word, most Bible translation put in as in, is kataluma.

And that doesn't mean what we think in the modern days. Instead of an in, the word actually means guest room. In fact, you will find the same exact word used just the same way in Luke chapter 22 and Mark 14.

Consistent with the 2011 updated NIV. And now it reads, because there was no guest room available for them. So rather than being turned away from hotel, Joseph found his relative's house filled with guests, who were likely to be there because of the census, everybody balik kampung, just like probably next week many of us will be back home for the election.

The couple did not face closed door. They just have to live in the lower level of the house. And most of the time, a place where it's often found the animal were also housed in the ancient Israel.

And the next slide. As we reflect on the birth of Jesus, as we hear the word being spoken this morning from the account of Luke, Think again and imagine how scandalous it was for the outside world to know that a baby was born of a virgin.

[15:18] What would the world see? And what would the world think? How could this happen? And how would a woman not marry as pregnant?

To the outside world, is a scandalous without understanding of the virgin birth. And secondly, as we reflect on the birth of Christ, how dangerous it was, the road, the journey, that both Joseph and Mary took for them to travel from Bethlehem to, from Nazareth back to Bethlehem.

I was just talking to a graduate who took me here to the church. We just stayed less than a, probably it's less than a kilometer from here where our office is. And she said that one day, there's one time she walked, before she has a car, she walked here.

That's outside here. There were people disturbing her. Those on a motorbike. Probably these are very common to us, as we see, and at the same time, as we reflect on the journey that Joseph and Mary took, and how dangerous it was for them to take that three to four days journey on the road, on that kind of terrain, as they travel back to Bethlehem.

For that, and thirdly, as we reflect the birth of Christ, how unwelcome it was for a baby to be born and laid in a manger.

[16:49] Have you ever seen any newborn baby? Those of us who were served in the hospital, being a parent yourself, have you ever seen a baby?

He was born and laid in a manger. Not even a proper room or hospital for Jesus to be born, as we recall back the history 2,000 years ago.

And the next slide. So why was the saviour and the king came this way? Why was he then laid in an animal's foot trunk?

Surely God deserved a high-profile birth in the most elegant of surroundings. But instead, God's own son made his appearance on earth in the lowliest of circumstance.

this humble birth conveyed an amazing message to creation. The transcendent God who condescended to come to us, he came.

[18 : 01] He doesn't have to. He came. And instead of coming to earth as being a pampered, a privileged ruler, Jesus was born in meekness as one of us.

He is approachable, accessible, and available. No palace gates bar the way to him. No rings of guards prevent us to come to approach him.

The king of kings came humbly and his first spade was a manger. And this is the king that we adore as we sang this morning.

Came in a very unexpected way. And prophet Micah foretold the birth of Christ in the small town of Bethlehem. But you, Bethlehem, Ifata, though you are small among the clan of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will rule over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient time.

This is written for us in Micah chapter 5 verse 2. And this prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus' earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, were called to Bethlehem for a census in the entire Roman world.

[19 : 25] While they were there, where they were there in Bethlehem, the king was born. And the next slide. And there were shepherds living in the field nearby.

Verse 8, keep watching over their flocks at night. And angels of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified. But the angels of the Lord say to them, Do not be afraid.

I will bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David, a saviour has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord.

This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger. Next slide. Bethlehem's shepherds were well known to take care of the temple's flock.

This man may have also been protected and cared for the lambs that were used for the temple's sacrifice. But the shepherd has a very bad reputation. They were considered unreliable and they were not allowed even to give testimony in the lost court.

[20 : 37] What was being told to us by the scripture is that they were terrified. Who would have not? Even you and I went in the middle of a quiet night and they were suddenly interrupted and the dark night was shining with the presence of the angels and the glory of the Lord.

And the first angel brought good tidings to these shepherds who were regarded as the social outcasts. And the fears that when they were terrified, the fears that they had began to diminish, begins to go away with the announcement for there is born to you this day in a city of David a savior.

and the angel announced the birth of the savior, which was and is exactly what the need of the mankind, of the people of that time and even now for us.

And we do not need an earthly king who comes and gives us more taxes, but a savior who saved them from their own sinfulness.

Today in the town of David, a savior has been born to us. He is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger.

[22 : 01] In spite of their poor reputations being a shepherd, this shepherd seems to be godly and men who were looking for the coming of the Messiah and all the others.

If you can remember the accounts of others who come directly being informed of the birth of the Messiah in Matthew and Liu were described as godly men. And so it will be true too for this shepherd as well.

And after all, the news of his coming would not be a great joy unless they were seeking for him.

And we can see later as we read that the desire of this shepherd even to find this Messiah that has been born to them.

next slide, verse 13. Suddenly a great company of heaven's hosts appeared with the angel, praising God and saying glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth, peace to those of whom his favour rests.

[23 : 06] And next slide, and after the single angel's announcement, a whole group of angels appeared. And this was a heavenly host, a band of soldiers that proclaimed peace.

The world needed them and now the peace that came from within the Saviour. While the emperor may give peace to the walls and the land and the sea, as you have heard earlier, he was unable to bring the kind of peace from passions and from grief and from envy.

He cannot give peace of heart for which men yearn for more than ever outward peace. And the next slide, verse 15 and 16.

So it was when the angel has gone away from them into heaven that the shepherd says to one another, let's go and go to Bethlehem and see the things that have been passed, has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.

And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph and a baby lying in a manger. And let us go now. This shows the genuine urgency without delay.

[24 : 27] They didn't hesitate at all. From terrified to peace and to the excitement of finding the Saviour, the announcement that had been given to them.

angels may go to make the announcement and they disappeared.

But Jesus remains. It is a lovely thought to know that the shepherds who look after the temple's lamb were the first to see the lamb of God who took away the sin of the world.

Not CNN or neither BBC, but the shepherds of the field who were tending the flock were given this privilege to be the first to sight the birth of Jesus who is the Messiah and the King to come.

Of the people have been waiting for the last 400 years since the last prophet in the Old Testament. And verses 17 to 20.

[25 : 59] Now when they have seen him, they made widely known the saying which told to them concerning this child and to those who heard, it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherd.

But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that have been heard and seen as it was told to them. this grand mystery was first revealed to the shepherd.

Upon confirmations by seeing what really took place, then this shepherd shared this news with others widely. Those who have heard the news will marvel at what the shepherd has told them.

Mary's reaction was different than either the shepherd or those who told them. Mary kept all these things and pondered it upon her heart.

[27 : 14] She calmly took it in and meditated in her heart, seeking to understand the deeper meaning of it all. Mary had good reasons to meditate.

What brought her to Bethlehem? a Roman's emperor's great decree and perhaps gossiping's tongue in Nazareth. God's work through all kinds of people and all kinds of events to accomplish his plan.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that have been heard and seen and it was told to them. And the shepherd has such a happiness and praise to God because of the word was fulfilled just as it was told to them.

And next slide as I conclude. The king is here and he ain't Caesar. Though Caesar has the political power over the land being the emperor with the authority that was given to him.

But Jesus was the Messiah that the people were waiting for for the last 400 years after the last prophet and during the seven years.

[28 : 34] He came in a very unexpected way. And do you and I have room to reflect what does this unwelcome birth mean to you personally?

And not just us, to the whole white world and to our community surrounding us, to our neighbors.

And the king is here. He ain't Caesar.

He is Jesus. He came for you and for me. And let us pray. Father, we thank you this morning as we look at the account from Gospel of Luke.

God's love. And we see, Lord, how you have come, that you took upon yourself even to come to condescend, to leave the among us.

You know that we can't help ourselves with the sins and what entangle us, that separates us from the love of God. And Father, this morning as we see your birth, the announcement, and even how you have come.

[29 : 50] Lord, that you brought us even to ponder again of the meaning of your coming to our life. Father, we thank you for what you have done for us on the cross as well, through this, that we can truly reconcile back to you for who you have been to us.

Father, we thank you and we give you thanks for what you have done for us 2,000 years ago to take this journey to come to us. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.