

Xmas Eve 2018
Luke 2: The Christ our Peace

2 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. **2** This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. **3** And all went to be registered, each to his own town. **4** 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, **5** to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. **6** And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. **7** And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** 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. **10** **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. **11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.** **12** And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” **13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest,
 and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

15 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.” **16** And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. **17** And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. **18** And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. **20** And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. ¹

In the Name of Jesus.

Those are the happy events that make your poor preacher bold enough to address you, children of the Most High God, on Xmas Eve. For I stand before you in uniform, or costume. Your shepherd dresses as an angel so that that hillside Glory is present to

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 2:1–20). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

you every time you hear the good tidings of great joy—JOY!—
which belongs to ALL PEOPLE! Even from ME!

Mark THIS: this is despite who and what I am and what I bring to
the table or not; despite what y'all have learned of me and still
learn after all these years. Since the Unthinkable One now has
fingers and toes like us—and ran through the diapers too!—then a
shepherd can herald His arrival! Why NOT those shepherds? And
why not this one?

And what limit on the Good News of God need I suffer? I don't
see one!

So, hear it, dearly beloved of God!

Holy heaven is now enslaved to sinful earth! I am walking proof
of that! So...are...you!

The Unseen God moves all in all for your good—yours! for
you!—without reference to what YOU bring to the table. He sets
His table with delight—even His Body and His Blood. How much
MORE could He be SURRENDERED to us in this lifelong tug-of-
war we have going on with HIM?!!!

Good news comes to peasants, not rulers; the lowly are lifted up.²

God's glory, normally associated with the temple, is now manifest
on a farm!³

Mary's Firstborn is called David and Christ in this lesson; was
born where David was born. But now, that all our sinful man's
figuring about God and us is ruled out is seen when HE is
compared to the accounts of the first David. What is power? What
does heaven see as a King? Just before BOY David went out to
meet Goliath, who was taunting and threatening the ARMY of the
Lord, of Israel:

³² And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him.
Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." ³³ And Saul
said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to

² Green, J. B. (1997). *The Gospel of Luke* (p. 131). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

³ Green, J. B. (1997). *The Gospel of Luke* (p. 131). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth.”³⁴ But David said to Saul, “Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock,³⁵ I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him.³⁶ Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.”³⁷ And David said, “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” And Saul said to David, “Go, and the LORD be with you!”

~~³⁸Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail,³⁹ and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. Then David said to Saul, “I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them.” So David put them off.⁴⁰Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd’s pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine.~~⁴

David killed the giant; cut off his loud boasting; and later had so much blood on his hands that he was disqualified from building the temple he so very wanted for his God.

New David was born in Bethlehem. And the ARMY of the Lord arrived—and brought with them PEACE!
the shepherds are told to trade their “great fear” for “great joy.”⁵

Luke’s Gospel is the Gospel of the lonely and the lowly. Lazarus at the gate of the rich, doomed man; the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son.

Caesar taxed, harrassed, bullied: the WORLD! While the World’s maker and ruler was nursed in a shed.

It is not without import that Luke devotes more space to the census, which he mentions four times in 2:1–7, than to the actual event of Jesus’ birth.⁶

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Sa 17:32–40). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁵ Green, J. B. (1997). [The Gospel of Luke](#) (p. 133). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

⁶ Green, J. B. (1997). [The Gospel of Luke](#) (p. 122). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

The people under Rome's rule came to call the emperor "Saviour" and Christians took the word and used it of Christ.⁷

With the birth of Jesus, the powerful are already being brought down, while the lowly are lifted up (cf. 1:52).⁸

the efforts of the Emperor might be viewed as unwittingly serving the divine plan in having the Messiah born in Bethlehem⁹

2:7: "wrapped in bands of and laid him in a manger"
him cloth,

23:53: "wrapped in a linen and laid it in a ...
[Jesus' body]cloth, tomb."¹⁴¹⁰

Born Gaius Octavian as the grandnephew and later adopted son and designated heir of Julius Caesar, Augustus was recognized as sole leader of the Roman world in 27 B.C.E. Having restored Roman rule, now in the form of the Empire, he was accorded honor due one who seemed more a god than a human.¹¹

Indeed, the name "Augustus" itself identified him as possessing divine characteristics, if not actually divine.²² The census, too, signals an unwelcome, alien intrusion into the affairs of the Jewish people, a reminder of the allegiance required of Israel as a conquered people.¹²

On one level, Joseph's journey is the consequence of the almighty decree of Augustus. On another, even the universal rule of Augustus is conceived as subordinate to another purpose, the aim of God. One may call this ironic, as if Rome is made unwittingly to

⁷ Robertson, A. T. (1933). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Lk 2:11). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

⁸ Green, J. B. (1997). *The Gospel of Luke* (p. 121). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

⁹ Green, J. B. (1997). *The Gospel of Luke* (pp. 121–122). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

¹⁴ See Derrett, "Manger at Bethlehem," 43–44.

¹⁰ Green, J. B. (1997). *The Gospel of Luke* (p. 124). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

¹¹ Green, J. B. (1997). *The Gospel of Luke* (p. 125). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

²² One might have expected the Greek form Σεβαστός, "venerable" or "revered"; as *narrator*, Luke may have avoided the Greek term, choosing instead the less obvious Latinism (Αὐγουῦστος), so as to avoid the possibility of thus affirming the sacred connotation of the ruler's name (cf. R. L. B. Morris, "Why ΑΥΓΟΥΣΤΟΣ?").

¹² Green, J. B. (1997). *The Gospel of Luke* (p. 126). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

serve a still greater Sovereign. But it is also prophetic, for it reveals the provisional nature of even Roman rule.¹³

the announcement of birth is directed to shepherds rather than to parents, and thus to “outsiders” in a double sense—that is, to persons who are outside the circle of Jesus’ family of origin and are persons of low regard. This portends the considerable ramifications of this birth, which cannot be conceived as a family affair, and may also anticipate the redefinition of “family” in Jesus’ ministry.¹⁴

Thus, when Paullus Fabius Maximus, proconsul of Asia, proposed beginning the new year on Augustus’s birthday, he observed:

(It is hard to tell) whether the birthday of the most divine Caesar is a matter of greater pleasure or benefit. We could justly hold it to be equivalent to the beginning of all things ...; and he has given a different aspect to the whole world, which blindly would have embraced its own destruction if Caesar had not been born for the common benefit of all.⁵²¹⁵

DO NOT toady up to your King like that! It IS a pleasure and it IS a benefit that Christ was born—but HE, unlike E...V...E...R...Y other power of this world, has revealed HIS pleasure, and what HE considers of greatest benefit to HIM: the healthy do not need a doctor; the sick do; I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

An imperial world measure—tax day!—was inaugurated to bring about the fulfillment of the prophecy regarding the place of the Savior’s birth. God moves emperors and empires, if necessary, to bring about a single, apparently small point in his gospel plan.¹⁶

This is why the Christ OUR King—the world’s—is called by these names:

¹³ Green, J. B. (1997). *The Gospel of Luke* (p. 127). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

¹⁴ Green, J. B. (1997). *The Gospel of Luke* (p. 132). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

⁵² ET in Price, *Rituals and Power*, 55.

¹⁵ Green, J. B. (1997). *The Gospel of Luke* (p. 133). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

¹⁶ Lenski, R. C. H. (1961). *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel* (p. 117). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House.

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.¹⁷

There is NO greater WONDER than that holy heaven is now enslaved to sinful earth, that the Unseen and Unknowable God moves all in all—even HIMSELF!—only and always so that you would pray to Him with all boldness and confidence; so that we could be confident and joyful enough to pray: JUST PRECISELY as freely and with no strings attached WE...HAVE...ALREADY...FORGIVEN those who sin against us—dear Father in heaven, forgive us too.

These things are for your keeping, for your pondering in your heart, for your joy, for your peace, for you—SO, your shepherd guarantees YOU in the Name of Jesus.

¹⁷ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Is 9:6). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.