

The Manger King

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, we have gathered this morning as your people. And we now incline our ears and our hearts toward your word because we believe that you seek to us, you Lord.

We have this privilege of gathering in your name because of what you did on our behalf. And sending your son, Jesus. On Christmas Day, we live a perfect life, to die for our sins, and be raised for our justification.

And that privilege, Lord, we do not want to take the rest. We ask God that you would strike us this morning on you with the wonder of Christmas. The wonder of Christ, the Lord, the Son of God.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Luke chapter 2. I will go ahead and read out loud. Justin is supposed to read for this morning, but he's really sick. He's got a new clay.

He's staying home. Maybe Luke chapter 2. In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

[1 : 23] 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 out 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 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. And in the same region, there were shepherds out there, 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.

[2 : 33] 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.

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 this child.

And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary, treasuring 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.

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus. It's the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

[3 : 46] As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male who first opens the womb shall be called fully to the Lord, and to offer sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

Now, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. And this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord Christ. And he came in his spirit into the temple.

And when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your work.

For my eyes have seen your salvation, that you are prepared in the presence of all peoples, of light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.

[4 : 48] And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed, and a sword will pierce to your own souls, so that the thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Thania of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was 84.

She did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer at night and day. And coming up that very hour, she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was 12 years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.

[6 : 02] His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group, they went a day's journey. But then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances. And when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him.

After three days, they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answer. And when his parents saw him, they were astonished.

And his mother said to him, Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress. And he said to them, Why were you looking for me?

Did you not know that I must be in my father's house? And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and submitted to them.

And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. Always winter and never Christmas.

[7 : 10] I guess my recognized line. That's the condition in which we discover the imaginary world of Narnia in C.S. Lewis' book, The Lion, the Witch, and the Warbrook. And Christmas follows the winter solstice, which for us was this past Friday, December 21st, the shortest day of the year when the sun seemed to pass by only for a few fleeting moments.

And in Narnia, it was always winter, never Christmas. The blistering cold kept people as shuddered in, and the frozen world seemed impervious to the faint rays of light.

And this is an apt description of the world before the coming of Christ as well, which we celebrate on Christmas Day. God's people were looking for relief, looking for salvation, but their God, it seemed to them, was nowhere to be found.

And some of them were starting to look elsewhere for salvation. Some of them had already resigned themselves to perpetual winter. But then Christmas came, and that's what Luke 2 is all about.

It teaches us that we should believe in Christ the Lord, who has come to redeem God's people. And I will talk about the identity of Christ, the fourth phase.

[8 : 27] First, Jesus as the Christ, and then Jesus as the Lord, and then the Savior, and then finally as the Son of God. In verses 1 to 7, we see his identity as the Christ.

Because in verses 1 to 2, it set the context for this important story. It says in verses 1 to 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. In those days refers to the time of John the Baptist's birth, which we just talked about in the previous chapter. And it was during the reign of Caesar Augustus, also known as Octavian, who was the first emperor of the Roman Empire.

And he reigned from 27 B.C. to 14 A.D. And during his reign, he issued a decree that called for the registration of all the world, meaning the entire Roman world. It's a generalization, but it's not really that much of an exaggeration, since the Roman Empire at the time occupied a sprawling territory from Western Europe to North Africa and the Middle East, and about 70 million people, which is about a third of the world's population.

And the registration is basically a census. The world census actually originated in ancient Rome, and it played a crucial role in Roman governance, because it facilitated the assessment of taxes and the conscription of citizens for military service.

[9 : 46] So it was the ways in which kings and emperors kind of flexed their proverbial muscles, giving them an estimate of the extent of their financial and military power. And due to this mandated registration, verses 3 to 5, Tal has said 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.

It seems that the Jews, according to their custom, were required to go back to their ancestral homeland in order to register. And so Joseph knew that he lived in the region of Galilee, in a town of Nazareth.

He had to journey back to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the lineage of David. And this, of course, is not an incidental detail. It's important, intentional detail, because 1 Samuel 17, 12 tells us that now David was a son of an Ephrathite, of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons.

So, because of the divine promise in 2 Samuel 10, that the Davidic monarchy would continue forever, the Old Testament prophecies declared that the Messianic king that would come would be from the line of David.

And Micah 5, chapter 5, verse 2 prophesied, 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 coming forth is from the old, from ancient of days.

[11 : 25] And so, even though Jesus was conceived in Mary, which was still a virgin, since lineage is traced through the Father, Jesus is born in the lineage of David, in Bethlehem, the city of David. And the implication, of course, is that Jesus is the Davidic king, the Christ, which means anointed one, the promised Messiah, that God's people have been waiting all this time for.

By people, they have known, they have been conquered by the Assyrians, and then by the Babylonians, the Persians, and the Greeks, and then finally by the Romans. And there's seemingly endless subjugation of oppression.

There always winter is about to come to an end. And the child in Mary's womb is the king who will end that winter and bring Christmas. And Augustus Caesar, who is only trying to flex his own royal muscles, unwittingly becomes the pawn of God's sovereign rule and brings about the fulfillment of this Old Testament prophecy, that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem.

He calls for senses to display his power, and God displays his own power and witness by bringing about the Messiah through his birth in Bethlehem. And if the coming of this long-awaited Christ is amazing, the circumstance of his birth is even more shocking.

Look at verses 6 to 7 with me. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swathing cloths and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

[12 : 55] When the contractions start, you quickly have to make arrangements for the pregnant woman to give birth because the baby's birth is imminent. And inns in the ancient world usually had two sections.

They had the first section for human occupancy, and they had a second section for animals, to house people's animals. Joseph and Mary needed to find lodging immediately, but because there was no place for them in the inn, it says, meaning the guest rooms were already occupied, they had to settle for a stable where the animals were usually housed.

Church tradition holds that the stable was actually a cave, which was not uncommon in those days. And the church of the nativity now sits in that site in Bethlehem. A manger is a box or trough in a stable from which the cattle eat.

We had to get a privilege of baptizing a few people a few weeks ago in our church, and for our baptismal, we used a horse trough. I don't know if you guys knew that. It's never been used as a

horse trough.

It's only repurposed as a baptismal, so it's clean. But that's kind of what you're looking at. But this manger in which Jesus is born, however, is a trough that's in use. It's dirty, probably smelling.

[14:09] He's in a stable, and he has a manger for his cradle. While Caesar Augustus was busy counting his subjects so he could use them for himself and his kingdom, Jesus the Christ, the messianic king, came to be counted among us, and he's laid in a manger.

And because of that, we know he's not like the kings of this world. He's not like the haughty kings of earth who are aloof from the cares of common life and refuse to associate with the lowly.

Christ the king comes to the downtrodden and the lowly so that he might lift them up toward God. And because Christ the king came in a manger, because he came in weakness, in lowliness, he's able to empathize with our lowliness and weakness.

Hebrews chapter 4, 15 to 16, says this about Christ. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Let us then, with confidence, draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of the meeting. Because Christ knows what it is like to be lowly and weak.

[15:25] Because Christ knows what it's like to be born into a broken and sinful world. Because of all of that, because Christ was laid in a manger, he's able to sympathize with our weaknesses, and we can be confident that when we approach him, we'll receive mercy and grace.

So remember that truth. This Christmas is in the year to come. Don't forget for a moment that your hardships, your weaknesses, and your temptations, that you have to bear them alone.

Christ knows, Christ sees, Christ sympathizes with your lowliness, because he's the manger king.

And then this Jesus, who is the Christ, who is also the Lord, as verse 8 to 20 tells us.

In verse 8, the scene shifts from the barn to the field. It says, And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night. And verse 9 continues, 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.

So the fact that this happened while the shepherds were keeping night watch paints kind of a wondrous scene, because out in the field in the middle of the night there would not be much light at all, especially in those days when there's not a lot of, there's no artificial light.

[16:38] So, but during this time, the glory of the Lord shone around them. In scripture, God's glory shines wherever he makes his presence felt, whenever he reveals his presence to people.

The glory of God is kind of the sum of all of the divine attributes. His holiness, his beauty, his power, it's kind of the manifestation of Godness, display of divinity.

And so God's presence is powerfully being manifest around the shepherds in the midst of a dark night. And understandably, shepherds are filled with great fear in the presence of God, but the angel reassured them in verses 10 to 14 this way, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news, a 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 wine in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying, Glory to God in highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

[17:43] Verse 1, we noted that in verse 1 we noted that Jesus was born during the reign of Caesar Augustus. And there's an interesting parallel with his life and the things we hear about his reign.

Because during his reign, the Greek cities in Asia had decided to rearrange their calendar to begin the year on Augustus' birthday due to the claim that he had been sent as a savior to them to make an end to all war.

And there are Greek inscriptions that archaeologists have found from that era that claim that Augustus' birth marks the beginning of the message of, quote, good news and peace for the Lord. In fact, there was an altar to Augustan peace that stood in Rome commemorating the unchallenged power and peace of the Roman Empire.

And given this context, the language used in these verses invite an intentional comparison. Who is the real savior? Who is the real bringer of good news?

[18 : 45] Who brings peace on earth? Who establishes an eternal kingdom? By all appearances at this time of Jesus' birth, it seems like the right answer is Caesar Augustus.

But Luke tells us that the right answer is actually that baby wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger. And history has borne out Luke's testimony.

While the Roman Empire came to an end in 476 AD, the kingdom of God continues to expand in and through the 2,000 year old church. And Caesar Augustus brought a political peace that lasted a short while, but Christ brings eternal peace with God and through that with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Caesar Augustus saved his subjects for a short while from the ravages of war, but Christ saves his people from sin and death onto eternal life. Caesar Augustus brought good news for some, but Christ brings good news for all who would believe.

Okay. And what is this good news? Why is the coming of Christ good news? This is explained by the three terms that the angel uses to describe Jesus.

[20 : 02] He says that he is Savior, that he is Christ, and that he is Lord. And I'll talk about Jesus' identity as a Savior in my next point, but for now, Jesus, he says, is the Christ, which means anointed one, that he's the Messiah, and that's not surprising because we've seen his Davidic lineage in the previous passage.

What's surprising, though, is the phrase Christ the Lord. Because the word Lord is consistently used throughout the Gospel of Luke to refer to God. It's really, it has in its background the Old Testament proper name of God, which is rendered as the Lord.

This is an audacious identification. In the same way that Elizabeth earlier in chapter 1, verse 43, called Jesus my Lord, here Jesus is being identified with the Lord God, the creator of the universe. Jesus is not only the Christ, the Davidic Messiah, the king sent by God, he's also the Lord God himself. And what is the sign of this good news? It says in verse 12, this will be a sign for you, you will find a baby wrapped in sparkling cloths and lying in a manger.

That's crazy, right? Think about it. The word baby is used to refer to the infant Jesus only twice in all four of the gospel accounts. And both of those instances are in Luke chapter 2. And there's something jarring about that image because the Lord, the eternal, timeless Son of God, the Word of God, is born on earth as a babbling, crying, breastfeeding, diaper-sowing baby.

[21 : 36] I hope you get how mind-blowing that is. We see Jesus once again through this incarnation, taking on human flesh, occupying the place of the weak and the low.

After this unidentified angel makes the announcement, he's suddenly joined by a multitude of the heavenly hosts of angels, praising God, saying, glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he's pleased.

The highest is referenced to the highest of heavens. So it's the first half of the angelicals' praise described the effect of Christ coming in heaven and the second half described the effect of Christ coming on earth.

In heaven, God receives glory and praise because of Christ and on earth, people with whom God is pleased receive peace. And the people with whom God is pleased is a reference to the kind of people that were mentioned earlier in Mary's song of praise in chapter 1, verse 50, that God's mercy is for those who fear him.

God is pleased with those who revere and worship God, people who humble themselves before God. And these are they who belong to him. And with them, God is pleased and he keeps them peace.

[22 : 51] Not peace in terms of a ceasefire, a rest from war, the peace with God, which is the key concept in Luke and Acts. And note the contrast between verse 10 and verse 14.

Verse 10 said that this good news of great joy is brought for all the people, but God's peace, it says in verse 14, will rest only among those with whom he is pleased. The good news invites all people, but only those who humble themselves and come to God in faith will benefit from that peace.

And this passage enjoins us to believe with the examples of the shepherds and Mary because we saw that the shepherds in verse 16, they went with haste in obedience to the angels' words, just like Mary before them in chapter 1 went with haste to Elizabeth after hearing the angels' announcement.

And it says, and it says in Mary that even though the crowds who were there who heard the shepherds' views, they wondered at what the shepherds told them, verses 18 to 19. It says, but,

contrast, but Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

There's a contrast there between the crowds who wondered and Mary who treasured and pondered. The announcement that the baby in a manger is a Savior who is Christ the Lord, it piqued the crowd's interest.

[24 : 12] Who wouldn't be interested in hearing something like that? It tickled their ears, but it did not pierce their hearts. So they moved on with their lives. But Mary, on the other hand, it says, she did not move on.

She treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. Some of you are visiting us because this is a Christmas service.

And some of you are not yet a follower of Jesus Christ. But regardless of why you came in here this morning, which is the good news that you are hearing now, the good news, the same news that the shepherds announced, that the angel announced is what you're hearing now, the same message. How will you respond to this good news? Will you be like the people in Bethlehem who merely wandered and then moved on with their lives? Or will you be like Mary who treasured these things and pondered them in her heart?

Will you respond with faith and obedience? The scene shifts once again in verses 21-40 this time to the temple where we see Jesus' identity as the Savior.

[25 : 24] It says in verses 21-24, 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. And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord as it is written in the law of the Lord.

Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice according to what is sent in the law of the Lord. A pair of turtle doves or two young people. We saw earlier in verse 11 the angel called Jesus a Savior and the name Jesus given here according to the angel's announcement means the Lord saves.

And there are two specific reasons why Joseph and Mary traveled to the temple in Jerusalem with baby Jesus and they both have something to do with the Old Testament law. The first purpose is this, the purification according to the law of Moses.

Due to the discharge of blood during the birth a woman with a second birth was required by the Old Testament law to go through a ceremony of purification in Leviticus chapter 12. And according to Leviticus chapter 12 verses 6 to 8 the purification ritual required two sacrifices.

The sacrifices of a male lamb a year old for a burnt offering and a pigeon or a turtle dove for a sin offering. But it's specified that in the event that the woman and her husband cannot afford a male lamb a year old for burnt offering they could substitute with the substitute the lamb by using two turtle doves or two pigeons instead.

[26 : 57] And that's actually what Joseph and Mary do here which shows us that they were not well off. They could not afford a male lamb a year old so they substitute a pigeon or a turtle dove.

They bring the poor people's offering to God and that's the first purpose. That's purification. The second purpose was to present Jesus to the Lord as it is written in the law of the Lord to every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord meaning set apart for the Lord and to offer sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord.

So in Exodus 13 God said that every firstborn male in Israel belongs to him. Every firstborn male animal had to be sacrificed to the Lord and every firstborn son had to be redeemed for the redemption price of five shekels specified in Numbers chapter 18.

So this requirement was in commemoration of the Passover when God struck down the Egyptians by killing all the firstborn sons of the Egyptians and all their firstborn male animals because Pharaohs stubbornly refused to let God's people Israel go from their slavery.

And there's this kind of retributive justice here because in Exodus chapter 4.22 and elsewhere God calls Israel his people my firstborn son. And so Egypt's firstborn sons are struck down for enslaving God's firstborn son.

[28 : 23] And that concept of the firstborn son is important of course because of the right of inheritance in this culture. By virtue of being the firstborn son Jesus belonged to God and since God explicitly prohibits child sacrifice he makes a provision for the redemption of the firstborn son instead through the payment of a ransom price.

And all of these rituals and sacrifices serve as signs that prefigure the coming of Jesus Christ because he's described in Colossians chapter 1 verse 15 as the firstborn of all creation. That's who Jesus is. That does not mean that Jesus was the first being ever created by God. It's referring to his right of inheritance because Jesus is an uncreated being. He's the second person of the Trinity as John chapter 1 verse 1 to 3 made clear. But he is the firstborn of all creation meaning that he lays claim on all creation as an inheritance because he is the son of God.

But Jesus and so this is Jesus the firstborn son and then according to John 1 29 Jesus is also the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He's the Passover lamb sacrificed for us. [29 : 33] So to a couple that cannot afford to sacrifice the male lamb for purification and therefore must substitute a pigeon or a turtle to them comes the lamb of God who will die as the atoning sacrifice the ultimate substitute for our purification.

Joseph and Mary present Jesus at the temple and pay his redemption price and the ransom that they pay points to the ultimate ransom that God himself pays with the death of his one and only son Jesus Christ to redeem his people from slavery to sin and death.

That's why Jesus describes his own mission this way in Mark 10 45 the son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Because Jesus died on the cross for our sins as the son of God we can be spared as God's people and become adopted children of God. That's how Jesus is the savior.

He saves others by not sparing himself. He delivers others by delivering himself over to be crucified in the hands of sin. In verses 25 to 28 a man named Simeon enters the scene and corroborates this.

[30 : 50] Verse 25 says that Simeon was righteous and devout waiting for the consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit was upon him and God had promised this man that he would not die until he had seen with his eyes the Lord's Christ.

And this man who had been waiting and looking out for the Lord's Christ of course recognizes him immediately when baby Jesus is brought into the temple to be presented for redemption. And he's quite eager.

Hopefully he asks for permission but he takes the baby Jesus up in his arms and lifts him up and he praises God this way in verses 29 to 32. Lord now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word where my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples a life for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. Seeing the Lord's Christ in verse 26 parallels my eyes have seen your salvation in verse 30. The Lord's Christ is the salvation.

So seeing salvation he sees salvation when he sees the Lord's Christ. And Jesus because he is the salvation he will be a light for revelation for Gentiles and for glory to God's people Israel.

[32 : 06] Christ brings light to Gentiles who live in darkness and this will be for Israel's glory because Christ is the Lord the Savior he came from among them. He was one of them.

Sometimes people dismiss the Old Testament as being narrow and ethnocentric but right from the beginning from the book of Genesis and onward God says repeatedly that eventually ultimately the salvation plan is for all the nations.

The reason why the Jewish nation has such a prominent place in God's redemption history in the Old Testament is because it's from them among the Jewish people that Christ the Lord will be born who brings salvation to all nations.

He is the Davidic king the Savior of the Lord. And having praise God for the birth of Jesus, Simeon has a specific word for Mary in verse 34 35.

Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is opposed. And a sword will pierce through your own soul also, so that thoughts from many hearts may be healed.

[33 : 13] It was prophesied in Isaiah 8, 14-15, and Isaiah 28-16, that the Messiah would be a rock. He would be a rock that causes some people to stumble, but he will also be a rock that serves as a precious cornerstone of a sure foundation for others.

For those who reject Christ, he will be the rock of stumbling that caused them to fall, but for those who receive him in faith, Christ will be the precious cornerstone that supports them up.

Jesus' coming is such an earth-shattering event, such a history-defying event, that his identity and ministry divide the whole world into two parts.

Everybody is defined according to God by how they relate to Jesus Christ. And as Jesus does this, as he divides the world through his ministry, Simeon notes, a sword will pierce through Mary's own sword also.

The word sword refers to a large and broad double-edged sword, which makes this image quite graphic. It's referring to sharp emotional pain that Mary will experience as a result of Jesus' life and ministry.

[34 : 33] And of course, that pain comes to a climax in Jesus' crucifixion when Mary, according to John 19:25, is looking at him, watching him in the presence of his son, her son's, crucifixion.

That's the cost of bearing the son of God, who properly belongs not to her, but to the Lord. And after Simeon, a prophetess named Anna also comes up, we have a lot of actually Annas in our church.

And Anna is a godly woman, a devoted person like Simeon. Before the death and resurrection of Christ and the subsequent outpouring of the Spirit, actually only five women out in Scripture, before the coming of the Spirit, are described as true prophetesses.

Only five in the Old Testament and here. Miriam, Deborah, Hode, Isaiah's unnamed wife, and lastly, Anna. So Anna is a special vessel of God's revelation.

And she was so devoted that instead of remarrying after being widowed after a short few years, she remained the widow until she was 84, worshipping with fasting and prayer daily in the temple, giving her life exclusively to the service of God.

[35 : 45] And this godly and reliable prophetess of the Lord, after seeing Jesus, began to give thanks to God and speak of Him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

He's the long-awaited Savior that is to come. And then in the last section, verses 41 to 52, we move past Jesus' infancy to an account from Jesus' boyhood, which teaches that Jesus is also the Son of God.

As faithful Jews, Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover, and on one such occasion, when Jesus was 12 years old, as the family made a return trip from Jerusalem, verses 43 to 45 follow this, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, his parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group, they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem searching for him.

So for these kinds of major trips, it was common for an entire village to travel together, so they would have quite the wedding, Joseph and Mary would be accompanied by their extended family as well as their neighbors from the village of Nazareth, and this is why, even though Jesus wasn't with them during the first day's journey, Joseph and Mary kind of assumed that he was in the group somewhere, and so they didn't worry too much, but then at the end of the day, when everyone gets together again to settle down for the night, Joseph and Mary discover that Jesus is not in the group, so they frantically search for him, and eventually return to Jerusalem in search of him, and they find something astonishing in verse 46, it says, after three days, they find him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

It was common for Jewish teachers of the law to be surrounded by students who sat by their feet to receive instruction, so the technical way to describe that relationship is for them to sit before the teacher's feet, as it says in Acts 22:3, but that typical scene is kind of mixed up here in verse 46, because Jesus is not sitting before the teachers' feet, he says he's sitting among the teachers, listening to them and questioning them.

[38 : 11] In verse 47, it says, and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. The word understanding here refers to penetrating insight.

Jesus is a full conversational partner with these teachers of the law, and in fact, he dazzles them with his own penetrating insights, his understanding and his answers to the questions and problems that they pose.

And finding Jesus sitting casually among the teachers and conversing with them is understandably upsetting to the parents who have been searching practically for them for three days.

So Mary scolds them in verse 48, Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.

But if they were astounded earlier, Jesus' response floors them in verse 49, Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my father's house?

[39 : 20] If Jesus weren't really the son of God, if this weren't true, this would be like the height of insolence, right? How dare you, child, talk to me this way, but that because he is the son of God, this is true.

And look at the contrast between verse 48 and verse 49. In verse 48, Mary addresses Jesus as son, and then she emphasizes your father and I have been looking for you.

And Jesus' response directly answers that. Why are you surprised? Do you not know that I must be in my father's house?

He's been in his father's house this whole time. This reveals Jesus' self-awareness and identity and purpose, his priority.

He must be in his father's house. It's a necessity placed upon him through his true identity as the son of God. Biologically, as a human being, Jesus is the son of Mary.

[40 : 29] Genealogically, Joseph is Jesus' father. But spiritually, internally, Jesus is the son of God. God. This is such a bold statement that Joseph and Mary are taken aback.

They don't quite even understand what Jesus means by this. And nevertheless, verse 41 tells us that in spite of his identity as the son of God, Jesus was submissive to his earthly parents.

And Mary, once again, treasured up all these things in her heart. You can see Jesus' growth and progression in this chapter by looking at what words are used to describe him, to call him.

Because verse 52 provides another growth chart for child genes for us. It says, And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and men.

In this chapter, Jesus has gone from being a baby in verse 16 to a child in verse 40 to a boy in verse 43. And finally here in verse 52, he simply referred to by his name, Jesus.

[41 : 37] And this is a noteworthy statement that reveals Jesus' nature as being both fully God and fully man, because it says that he increased in three categories, wisdom, stature, and favor.

Jesus grew mentally, physically, and morally in terms of the favorable moral standing he had before God and men. Jesus did not have all of these things in fullness from the beginning.

He increased in them. Jesus is fully the Son of God, but in his full identity as Son of Man, he grew and he increased in these things.

His divine nature and his human nature are united separately and eternally in the person of Jesus Christ. And throughout this entire chapter, we've seen the greatness of Jesus according to heaven's estimation, salvation, put right next to side-by-side with his lowliness from an earthy perspective.

And if you are ready to follow Christ, brothers and sisters, this is your calling as well. Because if you wish to follow Jesus Christ, the path that we too must follow to the greatness that he has is the path to lowliness.

[42 : 52] To reach glory, the Christian must walk through the path of humility. Philippians chapter 2, 3-8 puts it this way, do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Christ established the pattern in which we are to walk. So don't pretend like you have everything put together. Share your weakness with your fellow Christian brothers and sisters.

confess your sins to one another. Don't try to go in alone trying to earn salvation with your own moral living, self-righteousness. Instead, renounce your self-righteousness and cling to Christ's righteousness alone for salvation.

Don't live to advance your own interests. Look to the interests of others as Christ sacrificed for you. Humble yourself before others.

[44 : 20] Don't lift yourself up by bringing others down with your words. Count others more significant than yourself. If you're not yet a follower of Christ, this Christmas is also an invitation to you.

1 Timothy chapter 2 verse 5 says, For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. All of humanity rebelled against God and sinned against Him by

resorting to living according to their own wills rather than following the will of God. And the just penalty for that treason is eternal man. Because God who was the defended party is an eternal king. Someone of eternal will. And this is too high a price for any man to afford. That's why Psalm 49 7-8 says that truly a man, no man, can ransom another or give to God the price of his life. For the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice. Only God can pay to bear the ransom price of a man's life. And yet man, humankind must bear the punishment because man is responsible.

[45 : 33] Hebrews 2-14-18 tells that because God's people were of flesh and blood that Christ too had to be made like us to take on flesh and blood so that in every respect He might be able to make propitiation for the sins of His people.

That's why Christ alone is the sufficient Savior because He is both the Son of God and the Son of Man. He's the one mediator between God and man.

And the only way to be saved is to entrust yourself to Him. I begin with an illustration from the first book in C.S. Lewis' series, Chronicles of Narnia.

And in the last book of the series, The Last Battle, when the last great battle is being waged for the fate of Narnia, the last king, Tyrion and all his loyal servants are forced to make a last stand against the enemies.

And they're forced into a small stable on top of a hill. And Tyrion is amazed to discover that this small stable is actually a portal to another world.

[46 : 38] And this is what he says. This is what the book says. Tyrion looked round and again and could hardly believe his eyes. There was the blue sky overhead and grassy country spreading as far as he could see in every direction and his new friends all around him laughing.

It seems then, said Tyrion, smiling himself, that the stable seen from within and the stable seen from without are two different places. Yes, said the Lord Diggory, its inside is bigger than its outside.

Yes, said Queen Lucy, in our world too, a stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world. That's the mystery and wonder of Christmas, that once a stable held something that was bigger than our whole world.

That Christ the Lord came to redeem God's people. In the human, as a human being, this manger king, king in the manger, this is God's plan for salvation.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer comments on this reality in his book, God is in the manger. He asks, who among us will celebrate Christmas correctly? Whoever finally lays down all power, all honor, all reputation, all vanity, all arrogance, all individualism beside the manger, whoever remains lowly and lets God alone be high, whoever looks at the child in the manger and sees the glory of God precisely in his lowliness, they are those who will celebrate Christmas properly.

[48 : 32] So lay aside your tribes, self-righteousness and humbly submit yourself to the king whose cradle was the manger and whose throne is the cross.

Then and only then you will celebrate Christmas correctly. Let's reflect on this truth a moment and I'll work it out. For a few moments we'll respond by praying a lot to you.