

4th Sunday of Advent
Christmas
“Jesus the Savior”
Luke 2:1-20

Please turn in your Bibles to Luke 2:1-20. It'll sound a little familiar this morning because we just read part of it for our advent calendar.

In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world shall be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. It might also be before 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 of the 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 clothes 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 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 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 clothes and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was an angel. There was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host 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 the 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 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.

This is the word of the Lord. Please be seated.

Well, it was an inauspicious beginning. It had seemed to probably have been a pretty frustrating day. Any of you who have been on a family road trip can probably relate a little bit to Mary and Joseph. A hard family road trip that no one wanted to make. They weren't. This wasn't vacation. They weren't heading out to thirty A to go enjoy the weather in the South. They had this feeling of being forced, tossed to and fro by political and governmental machinations that really had no relevance for them apart from the inconveniences that they brought. But after the trip, just when you think it's about to come to an end, there's a mess up with the lodging.

I've had that happen quite a few times. Growing up in a Navy family, we moved around quite a bit, and in the early days before you had all of your apps to tell you where the hotels were, you'd just drive on faith, hoping that there was a Red Roof Inn or some kind of hotel that you might be able to find when the night fell, you're they arrive in Bethlehem and there's a mess up with the lodgings at the worst possible time. Oh, yeah. And then imagine that you're bursting at the seams with the pregnancy at full term. You know, the call to register for a census would have been somewhat typical during this time. This is how empires plan for their future. It's how you plan for how much money you can spend in each particular region. You have to know where the people are. You have to keep track of things. And it's this kind of bureaucratic process that people would have been used to. But it was it was probably made more difficult. In Israel. We know that it wasn't all over Rome that people were required to go back to their ancestral homes, but they were in Israel. And that's probably related to our Old Testament teachings, that people have an inheritance. They own land in the tribe where they were born from. Right. They have an inheritance. That was the difference between the Israelites and the sojourners. Right? The Israelites have land. They have a portion. And so if you want to lay claim to that during the census, you have to go back to your hometown. And that's probably what brought them to Bethlehem in the first place.

But at the end of the day, this was all just bureaucracy. It was somewhat meaningless. There wasn't there wasn't some kind of deep value to it. It was just a meaningless bureaucratic process by which the Lord would fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament. Now we have no reason to question Mary and Joseph's disposition through all of this. There's no hint in here that they were discouraged. And yet. And yet, as we follow their story, as we as we read Luke alongside Matthew, and we know there was such a build up to this birth, and we know that even Joseph at one time thought, I'm just going to quietly divorce her, right? This isn't my child. Our reputations are at stake. This isn't the way I thought it was going to go in my young marriage. We know that there were little, just human questions that were rising up during the course of the birth of the child. As a matter of fact, if you think about it, there's no reason why we are told about the manger unless Luke is just showing us. It didn't go as they had planned, right? It doesn't need to be in a manger. We don't need to know where he's born. And yet Luke leaves it in there to point out they got to the end and there wasn't even any room left. And so they found themselves in this place that was little better than a farm barn, a stable, probably surrounded by animals. If not, they were surrounded by a place where animals had been kept, at least at some time in the recent past. And, you know, they've got to have asked after the prophecies, after the angels, after the visions, you know, they must have asked Joseph might have must have said, oh, really, Lord, really this this is how it's going to go. Mary who said I was blessed amongst all the women of the world that I get to bear the Christ here she finds herself and she is she. Did they maybe ask, was it was it our imagination, or were we just kind of caught up in something?

If you notice, interestingly, even once we get to the birth. It happens quite simply. It's normal after a frustrating day on the road. Luke writes this in verse six and seven, 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 clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the

end. That's it. That's the story of Jesus birth. There's a musician that my wife and I like. Some of you may have heard him before. His name is Pierce Pettis. He's actually an Alabaman. He's from Fort Payne, just up the road. He has a song called Miriam. I think it's one of my favorite Christmas songs. It's a song about just using that, that Aramaic name, the Hebrew name of Mary. He sings about the birth of Christ, and he has this line. No banners were unfurled when God stepped into the world. Held in the arms of a little girl named Miriam.

And it's true. There's no banners unfurled for this messianic king. The moment comes there in the manger. And he's just born. And as you would with the child, he's wrapped in swaddling clothes. So we do have to ask, was, was there a moment of doubt with Mary and Joseph? Was there a moment when they maybe just said, have we thrown our lives away on this dream that we somehow conjured up between us, that we got caught up in? And yet, contrary to this inauspicious beginning, the course of human history is being changed forever.

So this morning, as we look at this passage, I want to look, first of all at the angelic choir, because there were banners unfurled. It just wasn't in the manger. Right? It wasn't in the stable. That's not where the banners were unfurled. And then I want to talk about the shepherds. And what does it mean for there to be shepherds there? Why does Luke choose to tell us about the angelic choir followed by the shepherds? And then lastly, I want to wrap up this advent series and talk about what do we actually see happening here at this moment of change, where the whole world pivots as the creator steps in to creation? So let's start with the angelic choir. Notice. Luke draws our attention to this event that's going on just a few miles away. It's still even in the Judahite countryside, just a few miles away. Close enough that they could walk in the evening, it seems, and get to Bethlehem pretty quickly, and already have a crowd there that they can speak to and tell about what they had seen. So? So nearby, just just a few miles away on this Judahite countryside, we see that the veil between heaven and earth is suddenly drawn thin. Now let me explain what I mean by that. The veil is drawn thin throughout the Bible. The heavenlies are depicted as this other place that kind of overlaps with the earthly realm, the physical realm overlapping with the heavenly realm. Okay, I know we talk about the heavens being in the sky, and that seems to be a metaphorical picture. But that's not actually locational. That's not a literal location that the heavens are in the sky. Okay. Rather, the way it's depicted in the Bible is that the heavenlies are kind of right behind the fabric of the physical world. What's important, actually, is that the heavenlies, the spiritual world, is not of the same kind as the physical, earthly world. That's actually why theologians, you know, in the medieval period, would debate how many angels could dance on the head of a pin. They're not just getting caught up in kind of esoteric theological reasoning. What they're actually trying to do is try to define how is it that the spiritual stuff relates to the physical stuff.

Whereas one of my daughters, one time asked when she was going to bed and she was afraid at night and she said, I just am afraid I'm alone. I don't want to be here in the dark. And I said, but don't you know Jesus is with you? And she turned to me, and she said, but I can't see him. I said, you know. That's right, isn't it? You can't see him. She goes, how can he be with me if I can't see him? And that's what those theologians are asking when they say, how many angels can dance on the head of a needle? They're saying, how does the spiritual relate to the

physical? And here we get a glimpse of it that adds to the mystery. Notice in the Old Testament, sometimes you'll see the veil drawn thin.

Okay, think about the time when David is going out in battle in, in second Samuel five and the way that they know that the Lord's armies, spiritual armies are going out in battle for them before they go out, is they can hear the feet of the spiritual army, the spiritual angel army. They can hear the feet of them moving through the leaves and the trees over their head.

It's this beautiful story, like this. This moment where the veil is pulled thin. They don't see anything, but they can hear it. There's also that story with Elisha and his servant. I love the story. I remember reading it as a kid. Where you have the Aramean soldiers gathered outside and the servant says, we're going to. How can we survive? How can we get by? They're going to destroy us. And Elisha just says, Lord, open his eyes. And suddenly, as the servant looks out, his eyes are open and he sees that he's surrounded by these fiery, angelic chariots. Right? They were always there, but his eyes are made so that they can see it again. The veil is kind of drawn thin. And here we have it happen again here on the Judahite countryside, as the shepherds are sitting out there and they're just minding their own business, watching their flocks at night, and suddenly heaven can't contain itself anymore. And it's like it's just bursting with celebration and the curtain is just pulled back just a little bit. And you see the angels emerge into the physical realm and proclaim the coming of the King. It must have been terrifying.

Why do we know this? Because that's exactly how the shepherds respond. Notice what it says. And they were filled with a great fear. I've pointed this phrase out to you before. It's a Greek phrase that we all know immediately as English speakers, because we still use these Greek words. Okay. It says that they were filled with a faux bon. Okay. What's that? Mega phobia. They were filled with mega phobia. You've heard of arachnophobia, right? The fear of spiders, claustrophobia, the fear of closed spaces. They are filled with mega phobia. They were filled with great, great fear. Because that's what happens when you see the glory of the Lord unveiled in this life. The shepherds respond with great fear and the angel begins his quote, his his message with the same command that many angels over the centuries had used to begin their messages. What does he say? Do not be afraid. That's something that happens when you see angels. You're afraid. And he says, do not be afraid. This is good news. This is not bad news. This is good news that you're receiving this evening. Look at the message he says, born in the city of David. Okay. So that's telling us that this is going to be a king. He's harkening back to that prophecy that we find throughout the Old Testament that the city of David will be the city out of which the king in the line of David comes.

Okay. Particularly Micah five two, where it talks about Bethlehem will one day give forth a son, a child, a king who will come and reign in the line of David. But notice he doesn't stop there. He says, born in the city of David. Okay, that's our King. Who will we receive? The Savior? The one who will save us. The rescuer? Who is that? That is Christ, of course. The Christ is just that Greek word for Messiah. Again, hearkening back to the Son of David, who would come, the Anointed One Messiah, the one born in the city of David, that is our Savior, that is our Messiah. Who is that? And then here comes the real twist. That is the Lord himself, Adonai, the Tetragrammaton yav. Of course, this is in the Greek here, so it's curious. It's just the word that

means Lord, but it's falling into that Old Testament tradition of referring to the Lord's divine name, Yahweh, as the Lord. Notice that here our Savior comes, born of the city of David, a Savior Messiah that is the Lord himself. I think it's important that we understand these titles, because we have to understand the importance of what he's bringing to bear on the earth. And this is the thing that the angels declare, isn't it?

As I step forward, they have this two part message. On one side, glory to God in the highest. Right. That's point one of their message. This is what this individual is going to bring this Savior. Glory to God in the highest. And what? And peace on earth, on earth or on man with whom he is pleased. You see, that is the first message of Christmas, according to the angels, that glory and peace are coming to earth. And notice how they're intertwined. It's important that that they're intertwined too, because the shepherds aren't wrong to be afraid when they see the glory of God. The glory of God is a terrifying thing.

So how can you have glory and then also have peace, right? How can you have glory? And let's just think about this for a moment. Think about how glory works in the Old Testament. Glory is just referring to the light of God, his radiance. Okay, what do we need light for in the Old Testament? Well, we need light to live, right? It's the very first thing that God makes when he's creating the heavens and the earth. He says, let there be light. You need light to live. It's required for life. And yet it also registers God's presence Light tells you, tells you that God is near. How did how did the Israelites know that Moses had been on the top of the mountain with the Lord? Because when he came down, his face reflected the light. And yet they also recognized that this is a consuming light. The glory of God's presence is a sweet thing, but it's not something that you take lightly. It's not something that you relax in front of right when you're standing in the glory of the Lord, it's proper to be concerned.

As a matter of fact, think about the Aaronic Blessing. May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May he make the light of his face shine upon you. What? And he be gracious to you?

Because if he's not gracious to you, in the light of his face shines upon you, it will consume you. That's why the Israelites rushed to cover the reflective face of Moses when he came down from the mountain. They said, Lord Moses, that's terrifying. May the Lord be gracious to us. You see, because of sin, because of the fall. God's glory was not a cause of peace for mankind. And yet the angels are telling us that that all has changed. Now that's all changing now, with the birth of this baby wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger. Because now, finally, there's a human who can stand up and bask in the glory of God and yet still be at peace. There's now finally someone who, through his life and his death and his resurrection and his ascension and is now his intercession for us at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. There is now one that makes a way so that we humans can do that thing that the Westminster Confession tells us to do right. In the Shorter Catechism, to glorify God. What? And despair. To glorify God and be afraid to glorify God and have a faux bond. Mega phobia? No. To glorify God and enjoy him forever. We now have the means by which we can do that thing that we are called to do. Because finally, there is a baby on earth who can bask in the glory of God and still be at peace. Be at Shalom.

As a matter of fact, Christians, let's just take these important things often happen early. This is one of the earliest proclamations of the birth of Christ that we find in the Scripture as, as the Christ's kingdom is now coming to earth. Notice what? What's out there? What are the themes that are being drawn to its glory and its peace? What is this telling us? If you are in Christ. Be a person of glory and be a person of peace. As a matter of fact, it's a good ethic for us. If you're trying to ask yourself, what should I do in any given situation? I've got this tough situation in my job. I've got this difficult relationship in my marriage, or maybe in my family, maybe between a parent and a child. I've got I've got to make a decision about how to be or to behave where when I'm at church, how should I be? Here's a good ethic to start with. Does it glorify God? Okay. Does it bring peace on earth? Sometimes people see these things as being in conflict, but they never are. Okay. You can never say, well, I was really seeking the glory of God, so I had to let the peace go for a minute, right? No, that doesn't happen. Likewise, you can't seek the peace. You can't soften the word, soften the teachings of Scripture, and hope to still have the glory, Right. Rather, we are called to both glory and to peace. If you're struggling with decisions, if you're even to Christians who are disagreeing, there's a good, good rule of thumb. Two Christians who are disagreeing about the right way to move forward on something. Ask yourself, do our decisions glorify God? Do they bring about peace even if you don't end up with the same conclusion? You're closer than you think. If those are your guiding principles, and they should be our guiding principles, because that is the nature of being in the sun. That is the nature of those who have been saved by the Savior who is born in the city of David, who is indeed Messiah, who is indeed the Lord. So notice the angels come. They give their declaration. I like how it says it. I mean, I wish I could see the events behind it. We don't, but Luke just tells us this. And as the angels were going back into the heavens, I just. I read that and I'm like, what's going on there? What does that look like? Are they are they disappearing into the darkness?

Okay. Is the veil closing again in front of them? What's actually happening? But whatever happens, they give their declaration, they disappear back into the heavenlies. And the shepherds know exactly what to do. We've got to go see this sign. Child was born in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. So let's turn our attention then, with Luke to the shepherds. Okay, notice that with the story of the shepherds, we see the good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, being welcomed by his guild. We gotta understand something about shepherds in the Bible. If to understand kind of what they mean. You probably already know because you've read, you know, you know. Psalm twenty three, the Lord is my shepherd. You're aware of the fact that shepherds are highlighted throughout Scripture. You even notice that even early on, like right after the fall, you have this conflict between the farmers and the shepherds, right? Cain is a farmer and Abel is a shepherd. And you might sense there's something going on here. And you're right. Oftentimes in the Christmas story, we like to highlight the lowliness of the shepherds. And there's some truth in that. It's important to recognize that it's partly their lowliness. These are just regular folk that the angels appear to. It's important for us to kind of recognize this, and this falls in line with what we talked about with the servant last week, isn't it? Right? It is not much to esteem him. He's not particularly good looking. He's not going to be celebrated by the great people of the world.

Okay. And we see that happening with the fact that lowly shepherds who are just working one night get to be the first gospel bearers on earth And yet the fact that it's shepherds is pregnant with meaning. Okay, gotta recognize this about Israelites. If you had said what is the nation of Israel in terms of vocations? They would say, oh, we're the shepherds. Okay. Do we farm? Yeah. We farm. We have barley harvests and olives and all of that stuff, no doubt. Do we fish? Yes, we fish. Okay. We go out into the Sea of Galilee. Don't go into the Mediterranean. A whole lot. Israelites didn't like the big sea. They didn't like the big bodies of water. They'll take the littler bodies of water. Okay, we do a little bit of fishing. But what are you known for? We are known for being shepherds. We are a shepherding people. They would say. As a matter of fact, their primary metaphor for their kings are the kings being shepherds. As a matter of fact, the primary credential for being a king. Think about it. Both Saul and David had the same job before becoming kings, and this was Credentialing them to the job. They were both shepherds. It's kind of like in the United States, there's a period of time where if you wanted to run for president, you needed I mean, it really helped a lot if you had served in the military, at least for a little bit. That was one of the pathways to becoming a president. It's kind of like that in Israel. If you wanted to be the king, you better have served at least for some time, some period of time as a shepherd, because as the king, you are the shepherd of the people of God. You are the shepherd of the flocks. So here are these shepherds out on the countryside. They're staring at the sky. I like to think of the sky as kind of like God's television. You know, it really is, if you think about it. Before we had all of these screens in our lives, there weren't a whole lot of things that changed in the world around you. You think about that, how now technology just changes the way we engage with the world.

For thousands of years, the only major change you may see in your life where you don't really travel ever more than thirty miles away from your hometown. You probably don't know more than fifty people over the course of your life. The only thing that's really changing is what the sky. Is it any wonder that so many signs and wonders and metaphors describing God and describing the things of theology are really metaphors that come out of the sky, right? Okay. God riding on a thundercloud, shining like the sun, the radiance bursting forth like lightning and fire coming out of the sky. Because that's God's television. That's how God keeps life interesting for us.

And if you're a farmer or if you're a shepherd, guess what? You spend a lot of time outside, leaning on your staff, looking at the sky. And suddenly on this one night, the sky has a totally new show on. It's a totally new revelation, but it's important that it's shepherds. Even in the Old Testament, the hope was that the corrupt shepherds of Israel would someday be replaced with an uncorrupt shepherd, a just shepherd, a good shepherd. As a matter of fact, the prophet Ezekiel says exactly this as the exile is coming, and he's looking at the corruption of the line of David and Judah. And he says those corrupt shepherds need to be replaced by a good shepherd. And we find passages like this one in Ezekiel chapter thirty four twenty three to twenty four, where the Lord says this in the restoration after the exile, what will happen? I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them, and he shall water them, and he will be their shepherd, and I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince. Among them. I am the Lord, I have spoken. You see, one of the hopes of Israel

was that one day we'd get that shepherd, the one who would come and who would rule us and watch over us with justice and goodness and peace and extravagance. I want to actually argue this, that the idea of Jesus as a Savior, that title Savior, which really just means rescuer, that is most closely connected to his function as our Shepherd. When we say Jesus is Savior, what does that mean? We've talked about how he's a son, how he's a seed, how he's a servant, but he's our savior.

Think about what the shepherd does. The shepherd guards over the flocks. He protects the flocks. He waters them, he gives them food. Think about Psalm twenty three. What does he do? He leads me beside still waters. What does that mean? Waters that are not dangerous so I can eat and drink in peace. He anoints my head with oil. That's a picture of extravagance, okay. His rod and his staff. They comfort me because they both keep me from my own, uh, you know, desires to go jump into a chasm somewhere. And they also protect me from the wolves and the bears and the lions that hide in the darkness. You see, the shepherd is the savior. And this is what Jesus birth means for this world. A lot of us don't realize that we need a shepherd. A lot of us don't realize that we need a savior. As a matter of fact, we live a lot of our lives. There are many that you know out there who live their lives really trying to neglect that need for a savior. As a matter of fact, we try. We try to live as if there's nothing to be afraid of, and that we can just take care of it on our own because we don't need saving. It's interesting.

I was reading recently the twentieth century anthropologist named Ernst Becker, and he wrote a book called *The Denial of Death*. I remember reading in college, and as I was unpacking books after moving down here, I found it and I was flipping through it again. And he really is making this very same argument, he says. It's interesting to me how many people live their lives completely denying the danger and the reality of death. He says there's an irony because the more we deny and reject death and the reality of it, this thing that we have no control over, the more that we deny it and reject it, the more we actually end up rejecting and denying and being alienated from life. Ernst Becker writes this. The irony of the man's condition is that the deepest need is to be free of the anxiety of death and annihilation, but it is its life. It is life itself which awakens it, this fear. And so we must shrink away from being fully alive. You see those who say, I can pull myself up by my own bootstraps, I've got nothing to fear. I don't need a savior. They are ultimately living a life that is alienated from life itself, because they are living in rejection, as if this thing does not exist out there, which is death. And let me tell you, over the course of human history, the mortality rate has always been one thing one hundred percent. Right.

And yet we live in denial of its reality. Yes, there are those who aren't aware that they need a savior. And there are those who are painfully, painfully aware. We live right now in an age of epidemic proportions when it comes to clinical depression. We all know we've all been touched by it, either personally or by family members or by friends. And even if you don't have the clinical type of depression, we all know what it's like to wrestle with anxiety. I've got daughters who just came home from college and we were talking about what's it like there? And one thing people point out is that there's just a lot of anxiety. There's a lot of fear about the future. It's different from when I was in college. There's more anxiety. There's more concerns about what the future is going to bring. There's this terrible fear that you're going to do

something that derails your life, and you'll never be able to get it back on course. And that leads to this just this kind of loss of joy, because that's what anxiety does. It steals our ability to have joy. You see, some of us are painfully aware of our need for a good shepherd. And this is the world into which the baby comes about whom the angels declare. Glory to God in the highest. And what peace, shalom flourishing for those men upon whom the Lord has placed his good pleasure.

Before we leave the shepherds, I just want to point out the fact that just like the apostles who will come after them, notice the shepherds know exactly what they're supposed to do with this new message. They go into the streets and again, I wish I could see it, because what's going on there? There is a hubbub in Bethlehem about this child who was born in the in the stable? Notice it. It talks about the shepherds arriving in Bethlehem, and they don't just share with Mary and Joseph what they've heard. It says they shared with everyone. I'm like, okay, everyone. Who's everyone? Again, it's something that's kind of behind the scenes. We don't get to know exactly what's going on, but what happens? The shepherds are out declaring now this good news, this evangelion, this gospel that they have received, because that's the nature of the gospel. Once you hear it, you have to proclaim it.

Well, I want to end with this. Finally, just a brief reflection as we look at this story about our Savior, Shepherd, who is born in the city of David, who is Messiah, who is indeed Lord. Notice we're grabbing on to all of those themes that we've been talking about over the course of advent, that Jesus is the seed of the woman, right, who would come and crush the head of the serpent. He is the son, the faithful covenant partner, who lives out the law into its perfection. He is the servant who will take upon himself the atonement that that that we need but can't get for ourselves. He will be the substitution. Who will die? But by his stripes we will be healed. And notice what we see here too. He is also the Savior born of the Virgin. That's important that we say that. It's important that that's in our creed that we just recited earlier when we asked ourselves, what is it that we believe? And we cited the Apostle's Creed, the fact that he is actually born of a woman.

Think about how in this birth story, put aside the angels for a moment. Everything else is absolutely normal. Everything else is absolutely unremarkable. There's a woman. She's at the end of a trip. She's. She's found lodging and she gives birth. That's how the Son of God steps in to the world. Notice the incarnation of Jesus Christ is not a restart of human history. This is not God saying, I'm just going to do it. Totally different than the way I've been doing it in the past. Think about how it could have been. It could have been. There could have been a bright light in the sky. We could have had the angels and they could have come out and said, Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth. And then they could have maybe held forward a child or maybe even an adult man, or maybe one of the angels could have unrobed and we would have seen it's not actually an angel, it's this Son of God character. And he descends out of heaven and he takes his place on earth. Or he could have been like a sage who emerges out of the wilderness. And we don't know his background. We don't know where he came from. It's mysterious, shrouded in mystery. Think about it. If I was writing this story, I would have written something like that. But notice he's just a baby. He's just a baby born of a woman. He's got a

family tree. Both Matthew and Luke tell us about that. He has a place in his tribe, the tribe of Judah. He has a place in his nation.

Think about what this is telling us. It's what we've been focusing on throughout this whole advent series. God is not coming to restart the world with a new plan. This is not plan B because plan A failed. This is the Lord redeeming the whole of human history. The fact that Jesus is born of a woman tells us that he's not a new kind of human. He is redeeming the kind of human that was created way back there in the garden when, after the fall, the Lord did not say, you all are rubbish, I'm done with you. I'm just going to let you kind of run your course and, you know, spin off into oblivion. He doesn't do that, but rather he begins right away, as we saw with that prophecy about the seed of the woman crushing the seed of the serpent right away, he begins the work of redeeming humanity. And you see, brothers and sisters, if this is true for human history, I want you to know this morning that this is true for you individually. You are not a failed project. You're not. You're not a plan A that failed and messed up. And there's really no hope for you. You're not alone in isolated and left for dead. That the Lord is about the work of redeeming our lives. The Lord is about the work of bringing into your life that love with which he has loved you. Remember what Paul said in Ephesians from before the foundations of the earth? He's bringing it to bear in your life. And if you are in Christ, then your life story is immovably bent toward the glory of God and peace on earth. And you can't control it any more than those shepherds can control what sites they were going to see on that Judahite countryside two thousand years ago. I love that at the end of this account, after all of these events had taken place, the disastrous road trip. No room in the inn.

Imagine Mary's face as she's looking at Joseph, as they're in that stable and she's about to give birth. She's going what? Couldn't you have called ahead? All of those things happening right there and then the shepherds come down and they bring their message that they got from the angels. And look at what it says about Mary. It says in verse nineteen, Mary treasured up all of these things, pondering them in her heart. I have to think that she's the source of this account for Luke. She heard it. She stored it up. That miserable day was redeemed. It became not a source of despair for her or anxiety, but a source of hope about her life and what the Lord was doing in her. Because in her arms, wrapped in clothes, cloths that were probably just the clothes that were on hand, was the hope of the world, the seed of the woman, the Son of God, the servant who would suffer. And his name is Jesus Yeshua, which means our Lord saves. Let us treasure up these things and ponder them in our hearts during this season.

Let's pray.

Heavenly father, as we come before you, we do pray that you would, Lord, through the power of your spirit, testify to our spirits of the lordship of this Christ. Child, what a wonderful thing it is that we take this time out of the year to meditate on this particular moment in redemptive, redemptive history when all of the events of this earth, the course of history, was changed. Lord, as our eyes are drawn to Christ, may we find our transformation in him. It's in his name we pray.

Amen.