

## INTRODUCTION:

1. [Image] Merry Christmas. Growing up a pastor's kid meant that we never celebrated Christmas until after church on Sunday. I would endure several Sunday services of listening to my dad's preaching again only to come home ready to open my presents. But instead every year he would open up his Bible and read Luke chapter 2. I thought listening to a whole sermon would save us from another one, but I was wrong. I'm a little different than my father, but not by much. I didn't make my children wait. We opened our presents already, but I am going to read this story.
2. [Need] We commonly refer to this passage as The Christmas story. And whether you have been to church on Christmas before or not, you have probably heard this passage. But we need to hear it again because it is part of the greatest story ever told.
3. [Subject] I want to remind you this morning of the greatness of Jesus. Alongside the angels I want to herald the good news of Christ's birth. The news that is so good 2,000 years later we will take time out of our holiday to sit in a room and worship Him.
4. [Text] Luke 2:1-21
5. [Preview] We will look at two reasons Jesus is great and then how we should respond to Him.

Our first point is that **Jesus is a better king (v. 1-2). Jesus is a better king (v. 1-2).**

Jesus is born as a Savior and as a King.

Much of the talk in these first few verses is meant to draw attention to Jesus' kingship.

And Luke does this first by drawing a contrast between Jesus and Caesar.

The story opens in verse 1 **"in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered."**

This is not just given to give us a historical footnote.

It is not just so that we know where we are chronologically.

Luke wants us to compare these two would be kings.

Between the powerful emperor who lives in Rome.  
And the humble God-king in the manger.

But who is Augustus?

Maybe you need to brush up on your Roman history, like I did.

Augustus is the first Roman Emperor.

He was the adopted son of his uncle Julius Caesar.

He became the emperor after a bloody civil war.

He defeated all of his rivals including Mark Anthony and Cleopatra.

He called Julius Caesar divine and claimed to be the "son of God"

He claimed to be the savior of the world because he brought "peace."

He began the practice of worshipping the Roman Emperors.

Luke opens talking about Caesar.

He does it with the hope that we could compare that king to Jesus.

And we find that the greatness of emperor of Rome

Is no match for the greatness of the child born in Bethlehem.

Because Jesus is a better king.

We see this in the mention of the world registering for a census.

Everyone has to go to their ancestral home and be counted.

They will be counted so Augustus can see how large his empire is and raise taxes accordingly.

It is a flex of his might and power.

After all he commands **"all the world should be registered."**

Everyone has to interrupt their plans and go to their ancestral homes.

Even though Mary is pregnant, about to give birth, and it probably isn't safe to travel, she must.

Because Caesar says so.

But there is something Caesar doesn't know.

He thinks he is commanding the entire world.

I mean that has to feel powerful to make decisions that impact everyone.

But he is actually submitting to God's plan.  
Because the Messiah was prophesied and promised to be born in Bethlehem.  
And Jesus' human parents live in Nazareth.  
So Caesar is already submitting to Jesus.

What might feel like an elaborate show of power,  
Is nothing compared to the power of God.  
All of Augustus' political maneuvering.  
All of those battles and wars between rivals and great nations.  
Every decision he has made leads to this moment.

And all of it was part of God's plan.  
So that Jesus could be born now to fulfill a prophecy made 700 years ago in Micah 5:2 **"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 of old, from ancient days."**

Caesar is a king who thinks he commands the whole world.  
But Jesus has ruled the world since before it was spoken into existence.

Caesar believes he commands **"the whole world."**  
But if you look at a globe Roman never covered all of it.  
But Jesus commands every inch.  
Not just of the globe, but every planet and every star.  
There are places in space no human eye will see for a thousand years.  
Jesus already rules over them.

Caesar moves people around like chess pieces to increase taxes.  
Jesus moves people around so that He can redeem them.

Caesar calls himself the savior.  
Because he has shed blood and conquered his enemies.

Jesus calls Himself Savior  
Because He sheds His own blood to save his enemies.  
On the cross Jesus forgives those who are torturing and killing him.

Caesar says he has brought peace to the world.  
But his peace is false.  
His peace was built over the bones and blood of any who resisted.  
And his peace won't last a generation

Jesus brings a peace that passes all understanding.  
Jesus brings peace that you can experience even when life is falling apart.  
When Jesus returns again His peace will reign.

Every sword, gun, and weapon of man will be turned into farming tools.  
Because violence and war will be over.

But Jesus was born not just to bring peace between men and women.  
Jesus was born to bring peace between us and God.  
To end sin and everything that separates us from the power of death.

Only one King can bring the peace we all desperately long for.  
And that King is not in Washington or Rome.  
He was born overseas in the Middle East, in little town called Bethlehem.

Our second point is this. **Jesus is better because He becomes one of us (v. 3-16). Jesus is better because He becomes one of us (v. 3-16).**

What makes today so special.  
What makes this story so significant.  
It is not just that God has decided to save us.  
It is that He decides to save us by becoming one of us.  
Not just fully human.  
But Jesus is born to an ordinary family.

Verse 7 **"And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the guest room."**

Because Joseph and Mary would have stayed with family.

But the rooms are all full.

And the manger is part of the bottom floor common area, or living room.

It is also where the animals stay.

Just like when family comes over it can be a challenge to arrange the rooms for everyone.

You decide who gets the best rooms and the best beds.

Where do the kids go and who sleeps on the couch.

Mary and Joseph get the couch.

Jesus doesn't even appear to be the most important person visiting.

He is down with the animals and His crib is a feeding trough.

This is unbelievable that Jesus would do this.

If I was God and could pick any family to be born into.

I would have chosen Caesar's house.

Or at least an important Jewish family.

Maybe the son of a high priest.

But Jesus chooses the ordinary.

He becomes just like us.

Now we come to the shepherds.

Verse 8 **"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 appears to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were filled with great fear."**

All of us would be terrified to see this.

The same glory of the Lord that overshadowed Mary now overshadows the shepherds.

Verse 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. For unto you is born this in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord."**

They get to hear the news that the Savior is born for everyone.  
Ordinary blue collar shepherds.

I have good news for you.

Jesus was born for you.

Everyone in this room is part of **"all the people."**

Your Savior was born.

God became one of us to save us.

Verse 12 **"And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."**

Don't miss it.

The reason we know and sing about Jesus in the manger

Is because God wanted a sign for the shepherds.

Because Jesus comes as such an everyday child in an ordinary family that a miracle needs to occur and a big neon sign needs to point out that this child is the Savior.

God wants the shepherds to see they came to the right place.

So the shepherds leave the 99 sheep to see the one Lamb of God.

Verse 13 **"and suddenly 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."**

How many angels do you think there were?

I normally picture what I have seen in Nativity plays.

So, a handful of angels maybe 20 at most.

But it tells us there was a multitude of heavenly host.

Multitude is usually used to describe the massive crowds of people that followed Jesus around.

And heavenly host is a fancy way of saying, "army of angels."

It is a massive amount of angels.

Maybe a better question to ask is not how many angels do you think were there, but how many angels do you think were not there?

God has been planning for this exact moment since before He said let there be light.

He has been teasing it and foreshadowing it in all of the prophets.

When I watch a movie and it gets to a crazy awesome part.

I usually turn because I want to see Brianna's face when it happens.

How much do you think the angels wanted to participate in telling everyone Jesus is here?

I would think that every single angel available would show up.

For a few moments the sky was littered with more angels than there are stars in the sky.

They probably blanketed the night sky.

Their voices boomed like thunder.

Because this is one of the greatest moments in human history.

Jesus is born.

The reason that we celebrate.

The reason the angels sing.

Is because our Savior is born.

And our God is willing to humble himself and step into ordinary life.

He was born to be one of us.

And because Jesus is one of us, He can save us.

God Himself chose to enter into ordinary human life to save us.  
He came down because He loves you.  
He came to bring everlasting peace that only comes through salvation.

**[transition]** This is the incredible news, but how should we respond?

Point number 3 **Respond to Jesus with faith (v. 15-21). Respond to Jesus with faith (v. 15-21).**

The shepherds first response is to run and see.

Verse 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. And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger."**

They make haste to get there.

I can only imagine what they talked about on the way.

If they talked at all.

I would be too in shock to say much.

Verse 17 **"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."**

They find Jesus in the manger and know.

"This is the Messiah and Savior!"

That had to be awkward.

Knocking on doors trying to find the right house.

But they do and they tell all **"all who heard."** about what the angels said.

They didn't just tell Mary and Joseph.

They told the family they were staying with.

They probably told several people in town as they searched.



And all of those people wonder about it.  
In that moment every single person has a decision to make.  
Every single relative of Mary and Joseph,  
Every individual shepherd.  
Even each animal in the house.

They all have a decision about how they will respond to the news of the Savior.

And the primary decision is whether or not they will believe.

Look at how Mary responds in verse 19.

**"But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart."**

Something amazing to notice is that Mary does not get special access to salvation.

She might have carried the savior in her womb  
She might be blessed above all women,  
But she still needs to ponder and respond rightly to the Savior.

And she does.

She treasures all of the words of the shepherds.

She holds them tight in her heart.

They do not go in one ear and out the other.

They sink deep down into her heart.

She responds with quiet faith.

The shepherds respond a little more loudly.

Verse 20 **"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them."**

They leave in a congo line of dancing and singing.

In my head, I picture something like the celebrations I saw of Argentinians after winning the world cup.

Large groups of men just loudly dancing filled with joy.

Not because they love to see cute babies.  
But because they realize that their salvation has come.  
And their response is one of loud joy.

Both of these are valid responses and expressions of belief.  
Some of you are loud people.  
Some of you are quiet people.  
But all of us can respond.

The point of the passage is not that you must sing loudly.  
The point is that we need to respond in faith.  
Whether that faith is outwardly loud and joyful,  
Or inwardly pondering.  
We respond by believing that Jesus truly is our Savior.

All of us probably have busy days.  
I don't know what the rest of your holiday looks like.  
I'll be spending over 7 hours in a car with a 2 and 4 year old driving to  
Nebraska.  
Much like the shepherds had to return to their ordinary lives.  
We all have to return to our days.

But when you return to your life and regularly scheduled program.  
You can return in faith.  
You can return having believed that Jesus is the Savior,  
Or you can return having rejected Him.

But you will decide.

Because this is not just a cute story.  
This is not a fairy tale or make believe.  
This story is the foundation of our hope.  
Our only hope in life and death.

And that hope is available to any who want it.  
But you need to respond.  
I hope you respond in faith.

If you are not a believer I invite you to respond in faith.  
There isn't a magical way you must respond.  
You can respond by talking to me or an elder after service.  
You can respond by praying quietly in your chair.  
You can even respond by loudly praising in song that you believe.  
However you choose to respond, I hope you respond in faith.

If you are a Christian, then you need to respond in faith too.  
Don't be distracted.  
Return to your day and it's stresses and joys filled with faith in Jesus.  
Faith that Jesus your Savior was born.  
God became one of us because He loves you.  
So, have faith.  
Whether it is quiet or loud.  
Respond with faith.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] Jesus is a better king. Jesus is better because He becomes one of us. We should respond in faith.
2. [Challenge] We are going to transition to a time of observing communion in a moment. That will give us all a chance to respond spiritually and physically to the coming of Jesus.