

Christian MONTHLY

DEDICATED TO THE PROCLAMATION
OF THE WORD OF GOD



Psalms 119:105
**Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.**

December 2014

The Divine Becomes Human

Pastor Chuck Bylka
South Range, Michigan

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John 1:1-14

AT THE CENTER OF THE CELEBRATION of Christmas is a great mystery. With the birth of Jesus, the Divine becomes human. In his Gospel, John speaks of this event as the Word becoming flesh. In the past, God spoke to us through the spoken word and the written word. But now, God communicates His great love for mankind through the living Word, Jesus Christ. Instead of sending another ordinary messenger, God comes and speaks to us *in person*. The writer of the book of Hebrews echoes a similar thought: *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.* (Hebrews 1:1-4)

This passage teaches us that God took on human flesh not only to say that He loves us, but to *demonstrate* His love for us. Christ came for the express purpose of offering Himself as a sacrifice for sins. Not only did Christ cleanse us from sin by His blood, but He also conforms us into His own image. We now walk in newness of life, because of the death and resurrection of God's Son. To paraphrase the church father Athanasius, "*He became what we are, so that we might become what He is.*"

May God grant us grace to believe in the wondrous mystery of the Incarnation and celebrate the "...good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." ~



Nativity by Josefa de Óbidos

The True Christmas Spirit

from the January 1930 Kristillinen Kuukauslehti

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Luke 2:29-32

THUS SPOKE THE DEVOUT AND RIGHTEOUS Simeon when his eyes beheld the Christ-child to whose coming he had earnestly looked forward, for God had revealed to him that he would not see death before he saw the salvation which God had prepared for all people. This man believed the Word of God which had been spoken by His prophets of old, and he looked for the coming of Jesus Christ.



Simeon and the Infant Jesus
by Benjamin West

Therefore, he alone with the prophetess Anna, of that great multitude of people in Jerusalem, knew Jesus as the Christ whom God had prepared as the Savior of the world. The multitude, although seeing Him, did not know Him, for they did not believe or understand the Word of God.

So it has been throughout all the ages, even unto our day, that the salvation of God has been in the midst of the people but because of their unbelief they did not see or understand. Only the humble brother Simeon and sister Anna, whose eyes had been opened by faith and whose understandings had been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, were able to see and know Him when He appeared in their midst, for God had taught them to look for His coming, not with pomp and glory, but in a humble and lowly manner.

Thus He has always been found among the humble and lowly, among the despised and rejected of men, even as was He Himself. They too, like Simeon and Anna, have taken Him to themselves and blessed God for His salvation, goodness and grace toward sinful men; and the desire has come to them also that they might depart in peace from this vale of sorrow and sin for that glorious home that they have seen with the eyes of faith.

Surely, this light has enlightened the Gentiles and is to the glory of His people Israel. We of Finnish and Scandinavian descent have had this light shining brightly in our midst for nearly ninety years, but oh, how few, compared with the multitudes of even our people, have seen the light and received the Lord. Dear reader, are you among those few? If not, why? Have you been looking for Him where He is not found? Have your eyes been uplifted? Are you searching the vaulted skies? Cast your eyes down, for lo, He descended from His glory on high and has come to His own, the lowly, humble and despised of the world who have received Him. He has given them power to become the sons of God, for they have believed on His name.

He is here, beloved, though you cannot see Him with your natural eyes like Simeon and Anna beheld Him but He Himself said, "Blessed is he that seeth not but nevertheless believeth." Just as assuredly as you believe that Christ was born in Bethlehem 1929 years ago and you are celebrating this Christmas Day in commemoration of that eventful day, just so assuredly is He here in our midst, yea, and still is with His own unto whom He came. They are those who are continuing the work that He began, preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus Christ and because of His shed blood. Do not allow Him to go unnoticed by you this Christmas Day but receive Him to yourself by letting Him make your heart His abiding place.

Therefore, despise not the lowly children of God, for in so doing, you despise Him. He said, "He that despiseth you, despiseth Me, and He that receiveth you, receiveth Me and Him that sent Me," for "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Receive Him, oh contrite and sinsick souls, by receiving His children and His blessing that is proclaimed by them, namely, the forgiveness of all your sins, and you shall receive the true Christmas Spirit, which is the Holy Spirit that brings with it joy and peace and rejoicing over the salvation that God has prepared before the face of all people. This will then be the happiest Christmas you have ever known, and your heart shall join the angelic choir in singing: Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace and good will to men.

Wishing all the beloved children of God a joyous Christmas in the Lord and a prosperous new year rich in the grace of God.

(the late) Rev. Andrew Mickelsen

Submitted by Bernie Lampinen; Ashby, Massachusetts

DEAR TRAVELERS UPON THE WAY to the land of glory above: God's peace.

Enclosed is a dear Christmas letter of our dear brother from Hancock, Michigan, where he served for so many years, including my confirmation class in 1942. Also my dad's funeral he held in 1938, and mother's in 1969.

This Christmas sermon was printed in English in the old Finnish monthly in January 1930. If it would be fitful to be printed in the current edition, we leave it up to you dear ones who have a special gift to help to spread the Word by the *Christian Monthly*, thank God. I am so thankful that I have hundreds of the older Finnish monthlies. I had confirmation in Finnish, also.

Oh, Father, send a revival movement before Jesus comes. "He is coming again. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." "The joy of the Lord is thy strength." Carl K. and I wrote letters together since about 1947. We miss the dear ones also, who now are in joy in glory above.

Love in God's peace,
Bernie and Hester Lampinen

Waiting and Longing

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:15) Through the promise given in the Garden of Eden after mankind fell into sin, **God has revealed that He is for us.**

We are now in the season of Advent, a word that means arrival or coming. It is a time of expectant waiting, a time of joy and excitement. As we continue in this Advent season, and as we await the celebration of the first coming of Christ to His world, we experience a growing expectation, excitement and anticipation as we attend worship services, go caroling together, gather with family and friends, or read, meditate and pray over Advent and Christmas texts from the Bible. There is a sense of excitement in the air, even in the dark winter nights of life, that our brighter day of joy is coming soon. Even though we may have had many Christmas celebrations come and go, nevertheless each year it is as if it is the first one all over again. **For God is coming to be with us.** (Isaiah 7:14)

Isaiah by faith, 700 years before Christ, was able to peer into the future of the effects of the first coming of Christ, for he spoke of being able to draw water out of the wells of salvation (12:3) and of how the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah 35:10). **For God not only is for us, but He came to be with us so that He might be in us.**

Having experienced the forgiveness of sins through Christ's atonement through faith, we live under the covering of Christ's righteousness and through His indwelling Spirit we belong to Christ alone. Because we are His, our desire is to follow Him, so then watching and praying is a natural outflow of our union with Him. It is not a must, a have to, but I want to and I will...

We are like children awaiting the day when they will be able to open their Christmas gifts which sit under the tree with their names on them. We are waiting and longing, waiting and longing...

May we have a blessed Advent season and a Merry Christmas!

Pastor Orval Wirkkala
Kingston, Minnesota

In Bethlehem of Judea: For Thus It Is Written by the Prophet

the late Pastor Alvin Holmgren

IN HIS OMNISCIENT WISDOM AND perfect plan, God had selected both the time and the place for His redemption promise to be fulfilled. More than seven hundred years before the sacred event, Prophet Micah revealed that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, also known as the city of David. Then in fulfillment of this revelation, Joseph was required by law as a descendant of David to travel from his home in Nazareth to Bethlehem in order to be counted in the first taxation census that was levied by Caesar Augustus. This is an example of how God works marvelously in the affairs of men and nations in order to accomplish His purposes.

However, Micah's revelation contained something infinitely greater than simply the geographical location of the Savior's birth. It revealed that the One who was to come and to be Ruler in Israel did not share the same origin with all of us who are born of Adam's line. He was not the son of Joseph and Mary. Prophet Micah explained that His *goings forth have been from old, from everlasting* (Micah 5:2). This verifies that He was the Word which was in the beginning with God, the Word by whom all things were made. He was the Life which was the light of men, the true Light which lights every man that has come into the world. As such He was born of the Virgin Mary, but He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was the Word made flesh, *the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:14)

In his Christmas hymn "O Little Town of Bethlehem," the songwriter Philip Brooks so simply and yet majestically gave expression to an event never before witnessed among the sons of men: the message contained in the song continues to renew our hearts and to restore our joy. A pilgrimage to Bethlehem could hardly do more to imprint this image on our hearts.

***O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee tonight.***

Jesus is the hope of the world. He is the desire of all nations. Prophet Malachi calls Him the Lord, the Messenger of the Covenant, who has come to His temple. He also likens Him to a refiner's fire and to fuller's soap. He has come to cleanse and purify His people so that they can present unto Him an offering in righteousness.

As we prepare to celebrate our joyous Christmas festival, let our delight be in Him so that we can renew our expectations and anticipate His blessings. He is the One who has promised to give us the desires of our hearts. He is the Lord; He does not change. Our "hopes and fears" are known by Him. We can believe that they will be met in Him again this Christmas night as "God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven." ~

The First Christmas

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

How are all of you? I hope you are all well, and if you are sick I hope you will feel better soon. Once again, I can't believe how time has gone by so quickly. We will soon celebrate Christmas. It is a very special season of love and giving. God loved us so much He gave us His only Son, the most special gift anyone can receive. I enjoy the Christmas story very much and am glad to be able to tell it to you, from *St. Luke, chapters 1 and 2*.

MANY LONG YEARS AGO, SO MANY that you children would have a hard time understanding it, the angel Gabriel came to the virgin Mary in Nazareth. She was soon to be married to a man named Joseph. The angel said unto her, *Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. (Luke 1:30-31)* Mary was a little fearful at seeing the angel, but she received his words and said, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:38)*

Mary was so filled with the wonder of what she had been told that she hurried into the hill country to her cousin Elizabeth's. Elizabeth was also going to have a baby and when she heard Mary's news, Elizabeth's baby leaped in her womb (Luke 1:44). Mary spent three months at Elizabeth's home, and I'm sure they had some very special times together.



Annunciation by Caravaggio

While they were there, the time came for Mary's Baby to be born. There was no room for them in the inn, NO room anywhere. They went to a stable where the animals were fed, and there Mary brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)

The Son of God was born! Wonder filled the stable and the sky as a multitude of heavenly angels filled the sky, singing, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:14)*

The angels told the good news to some shepherds out in the fields and they came with haste to the stable to behold the precious Baby Jesus, the Savior of the world.



Adoration of the Shepherds by Gerard van Honthorst

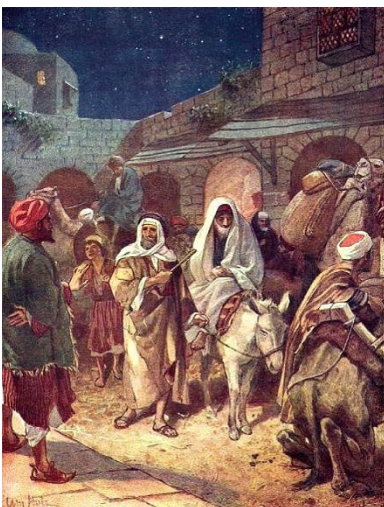
On the way back to their sheep, the shepherds told everyone they met about what they had seen. They could not keep such wonderful news to themselves. *And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.*

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered (thought about) them in her heart. (Luke 2:18-19)

WHAT AN EVENING THAT WAS! This was the beginning of much change in the world and so much more when Jesus would start His actual ministry. The world would never be the same. We can be so thankful to be part of that change and be believers in this Holy Christ Child who was born to save us.

I pray that we would be like those shepherds, that we would be quick to tell others about our Jesus, and about our God who loves us so much that He gave His only Son to be born into this world to die for all mankind, so that we might be saved and be able to go to live with Him in heaven. I pray that you will hold this story close to your heart and always remember why Jesus was born.

Wishing you all a very blessed Christmas filled with God's peace!



Joseph and Mary arrive at Bethlehem by William Brassey Hole

SOME TIME AFTER MARY HAD returned home, there was word that all the world should be counted and everyone was to go to the city of their birth. *And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. (Luke 2:4-5)*

The Sermon for Christmas Eve

Text: Luke 2:1–20; December 24, 2010

Rev. James T. Batchelor; Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Hoopston, Illinois

IF THERE IS ONE THING you can say about the human author of tonight's Gospel, it's that he was thorough in his research. Luke just peppers his writing with all kinds of time markers and place names. He gives us the kind of detail that let's us know that the story we are about to hear is a real story. It is about real people in real places at real times.

Luke begins at the top with Caesar Augustus. Here we learn that God can even use the Emperor of Rome to arrange things to happen according to His good and gracious will. Caesar probably thought he was just issuing a typical order to register people so he could collect tax from them. Little did he know that God had arranged this taxation in order to move a very pregnant Mary from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea.

Then there is the governor of Syria with the weird name of Quirinius. At first, historians thought this was a mistake because all the records that they could find on Quirinius came way too late for the birth of Jesus. Then an archeologist discovered documents indicating that Caesar had appointed Quirinius to two terms as governor of Syria and that his first term agreed with the Gospel according to Luke.

Then, of course, there are the cities. You can still go to Nazareth and Bethlehem. You can walk around and look at the buildings.

What a wonderful gift the Holy Spirit has given to us by inspiring Luke to write an account of the Gospel. For from His writing, we know that our Savior is a real human being who was born in Bethlehem.

It's a good thing that Luke is so accurate and detailed because the account of the birth of the Christ is full of events that sound more like fairy tales than reality. Think about it: God wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger; angels proclaiming the birth of the Christ to shepherds; shepherds abandoning their sheep in order to worship the newborn Savior. Then, of course, our culture has a tendency to sanitize and romanticize the whole event and make it seem even more unreal. We can give thanks to Almighty God that He inspired Luke to give us the facts in such detail – the facts that let us know that the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem really happened.

The baby whose birth we celebrate this evening is no ordinary child. Nine months before this birth, the Son of God had taken on mortal human flesh as a single fertilized egg in the womb of this woman Mary. He did not take on this human flesh in the ordinary way, but He was con-

ceived by the Holy Spirit. From that point on Jesus would forever be both true God and true man in one person. This is the child who was born that night.

After Jesus took on His humanity, His experience was totally human. He was born like any other child. It was a real, biological, human event. When God proclaimed the curse of sin to Eve in Eden (Genesis 3:16), He said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children." This birth would be no different. There would be the same pain and tears and blood and sweat that accompany any birth. This is a real birth to a real mother.

Why is it so important to understand that this is real – that this is human? Why is it so important for us to

understand that although Jesus is true God from eternity, He nevertheless endured everything of this life without using His divine power to help Himself in any way?

The answer is in the proclamation that the angel made to the shepherds. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." In order to be our Savior, Jesus must be a real human being. Jesus has to be a real human being because we are real human beings. We are real

human beings who have earned God's eternal punishment for our sin. We suffer the curse of that sin. We get sick. We get injured. Ultimately, we all die. These are all the real consequences suffered by real people who are under the condemnation of real sin. These are all consequences that you and I have witnessed and experienced.

Sin is very real and its eternal consequences are even worse than the sickness and death we experience here in this time and place. The eternal consequence of sin is eternal punishment away from the love of God. It is the everlasting condemnation required by God's justice. This is all very real and very terrifying. We need a real Savior with real salvation.

When God took on humanity, He became that salvation. He took our place under the law and did something that we cannot do. He fulfilled the law perfectly, as a human being, in our place. Jesus is the one (Hebrews 4:15) who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. As we celebrate Jesus' birth this evening, we celebrate the beginning of a perfect life that earned righteousness for us.

The angel also said that Jesus is Christ the Lord. Jesus Himself had this to say about the Christ (Luke 24:46):



Image courtesy of sweetpublishing.com

“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.” That means that when the angel tells us that the Savior is Christ, he tells us how Jesus is the Savior – he tells us that Jesus will suffer. In His suffering Jesus took our place as the target of God’s wrath against our sin. Because Jesus is a very real human, He was able to take our very real sin onto Himself and carry it to a very real cross. God was born in human flesh so that He could die a human death and by that death pay the penalty for all our sins.

When the angel tells us that this child is the Savior who is Christ the Lord, he is also telling us that this child will rise from the dead. The humanity in which Jesus was born and died did not remain with the dead. Instead, Jesus rose from the dead in perfect humanity. We have a living, human Savior who loves us and offers to take away our sins and give us His perfect, human righteousness. He offers us eternal life and salvation.

The Gospel for this evening very clearly proclaims the reality of the Christ to us. As we celebrate the birth of the Christ-child, we celebrate a real birth in history. This is a real birth of a real human being – a real human being who is the Savior who is Christ the Lord. This is God who comes to us in our own human flesh. He was born as a human. He died as a human. He rose from the dead as a human. He did all this so that He could actively obey the law on our behalf and passively receive the punishment we deserved. He did all this so that He could give us forgiveness, life, and salvation. In order to do all this, God had to be born as a human being in a real place in a real time. The real time was when a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. The real place was the city of David, which is called Bethlehem. The real human being was Mary’s firstborn son wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger. This baby in the manger is Christ our Lord. Amen. ~

IT HAS OFTEN BEEN REMARKED that Luke’s Gospel “opens with a burst of melody.” The angels, Mary, Elisabeth, Zacharias, Simeon, Anna, and the shepherds, are all found praising and adoring the God of all grace who has raised up, in the house of David, a Redeemer for His people. Mary’s song, that which we commonly call “The Magnificat,” is a wondrous expression of her sense of the goodness of God in providing through her a Savior, not only for the race but for herself. She sings as one who recognizes her own sinfulness by nature, but who rejoices in the divine provision for her salvation; she knew nothing of the false doctrine of her own immaculate conception. She gloried in being saved by grace.

H.A. Ironside

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

Luke 1:46-55

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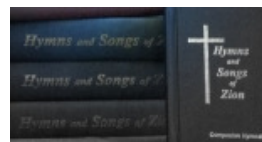
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At Just the Right Time

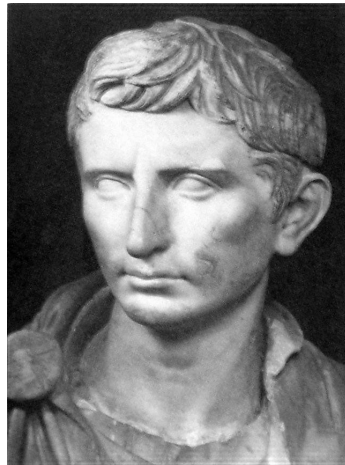
Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

Luke 2:1-3

IN OUR HASTE TO GET TO THE SUBSTANCE of the story of Jesus' birth, we may tend to dismiss the first verses of Luke chapter 2 as only a preamble to the real thing. We want to hear about the arrival of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem, and that there was no room in the inn. We want to hear about the birth of the Christ. We want to hear about the angels and the shepherds.

But let's pause a moment and consider this introduction. It wasn't happenstance that at this particular time Caesar Augustus decreed that every adult male in his kingdom had to return to his own town to be registered for the tax. It wasn't a random occurrence with no purpose. This registration of Roman subjects occurred at the proper time to ensure that the prophecy of Micah from ages past would be fulfilled: the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judea.



Augustus Statue—public domain

THINK OF THE INDIVIDUAL EVENTS that had happened previously, actions that are not specifically addressed in the Gospel of Luke, but that had taken place in the day-to-day lives of the people involved. God was working His purpose, using the emperor of Rome to bring about His divine will.

History had shown that taxation caused unrest, uprisings and, sometimes, outright revolt. Therefore, the Caesar must have pondered his decision to tax, possibly consulting his advisors, before delivering his decree. At just the right time.

Cyrenius had been set in place to do his work. Josephus says in his *Antiquities* 18: "NOW Cyrenius, a Roman senator, and one who had gone through other magistracies, and had passed through them till he had been consul, and one who, on other accounts, was of great dignity, came at this time into Syria, with a few others, being sent by Caesar to be a judge of that nation, and to take an account of their substance." The registration required details of all property ownership, a listing of the family with the names and ages of each member of the household, including employees and slaves. The governor was ready and waiting "to take an account of their substance." At just the right time.

Word of the decree of Caesar Augustus had to reach each town and city. The Roman Empire didn't enjoy the instant communication that we sometimes take for granted today. News traveled by means of horse and rider, moving from station to station across the land. In each town, the proclamation was delivered to the proper authorities, and finally, eventually, the news reached the common people, including Joseph of Nazareth. At just the right time.

Citizens prepared for travel. When news of the census reached him, Joseph had to plan the 70-mile journey, realizing there was a good chance that Mary would give birth while they were away from home. They needed provisions for the road: food and water, warm clothing, and maybe a beast of burden. Once they were ready, the arduous journey began. At just the right time.

Mile after mile through the Judean countryside, Joseph traveled with his very pregnant espoused wife. In those days, they didn't ride in planes, trains, and automobiles; they went on foot, or they rode a horse or mule. Some people traveled with a caravan of traders for protection from wild animals and thieves, but they probably paid for that pleasure and Joseph wasn't a rich man. Finally, travel-worn and road weary, the couple reached the town of Bethlehem. At just the right time.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:6-7)

Glory to God in the highest! ~

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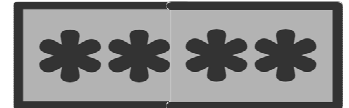
John Ruotsala, Foreign Mission Administrator
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DEAR READERS AROUND THE WORLD! We are now entering the Advent Season. We are so thankful for Jesus that this time of year is quite exciting. However, all who are Christians have the right to be joyous and at rest in Jesus all year long, not just in this season.

Yesterday I experienced computer problems in my office. The internet stopped working. For no real reason that I could tell, it just stopped working. The thing was, the computers still worked, the cables were all hooked up and everything seemed in order. I surely could not tell by looking or inspecting why the internet stopped working. Since my job demands that I always have internet access for communications around the world, this was quite a problem.

I earnestly set about to try to correct this problem. I spent a total of probably 6 hours on the phone during the course of the day and evening. I talked to people as far away as India and the Philippines that work for the customer service departments of these major companies.

Finally at the end of the day, a nice lady in the Philippines was able to enter the correct code numbers in the proper places in the multiple levels of internet security and set up, to make the internet work again. During this lengthy call I was able to share about Jesus, and she promised to come to our services in the Philippines in March. God is good!



I tell you this story to make a point about Jesus, who is our passage to heaven. You see, even though a person may look good on the outside, and even though they seem to be doing all the correct things, this does not mean that they are saved. The good appearance and the works that they are doing will not amount to eternal salvation. Man can never work his way to heaven. *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)*

No, dear reader, without the Lord Jesus, no flesh shall be saved. In the picture about my computer, codes were needed to be put into my computer in order for it to work. Likewise, faith of and in our Lord Jesus is the only way to heaven. *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)*

Dear reader, share with all who you know about this passage to heaven. *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)*

If there is someone reading this today who does not know the way to heaven yet, the holy unerring Word of God has the answers. Please turn to the Holy Bible and read it, and listen to the preaching from truly believing Christian preachers in accordance with *Romans 10:17: So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Dear pastors and readers, remember that God's Word teaches us in *2 Corinthians 4:5: For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.* Also, Jesus said in *Luke 24:47: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

We have been given the password and codes to get to heaven. Jesus Christ is the way! Let us pray together that many would yet come to faith before it is too late. Let the calling voice of our Lord be heard in our day in this Advent season! ~

TELL GOD ALL THAT IS IN YOUR HEART, as one unloads one's heart, its pleasures and its pains, to a dear friend. Tell God your troubles, that God may comfort you; tell God your joys, that God may sober them; tell God your longings, that God may purify them; tell God your dislikes, that God may help you conquer them; talk to God of your temptations, that God may shield you from them: show God the wounds of your heart, that God may heal them. If you thus pour out all your weaknesses, needs, troubles, there will be no lack of what to say. Talk out of the abundance of the heart, without consideration say just what you think. Blessed are they who attain to such familiar, unreserved intercourse with God.

Francois Fenelon