

² In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire^[a] should be registered. ² This first registration took place while^[a] Quirinius was governing Syria. ³ So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town.

⁴ Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, ⁵ to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him^[a] and was pregnant. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger,^[a] because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸ In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.^[a] ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people!” ¹¹ Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host^[a] with the angel, praising God and saying:

¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace on earth to people he favors!^{[b][a]}

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

¹⁶ They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard, which were just as they had been told.

Good News

What child is this? I think the song has already clarified that. “*He’s Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing. So hurry up and worship him.*” What a king right? According to Luke he doesn’t look like much of anything.

Luke takes us from a 30,000’ foot view and zooms in. He pictures the entire Roman World, the Ruler of Rome, “Caesar Augustus,” (talk about a regal name). He then zooms in on a small portion of the Empire, a war torn country eventually landing upon a small insignificant town of Bethlehem. Here under the boot heel of Rome, under an emperor that could care less, is the King and Creator of all...

From this point on it looks like there is nothing but bad news. Government mandated family reunions were taking place. Mary and Joseph are returning to their ancestral town to register and like any government run program there are problems. Apparently no one had told them about the size of the family tree of David. So they descend on the little town of Bethlehem, they find no room. Bad news for Mary and Joseph and even worse if you think that Bethlehem turned them out because they knew this child was conceived outside of wedlock. It was bad news. Let’s not romanticize this. Let’s not make a Hallmark card here. Let’s not pretend this is pretty.

The Savior of the world is placed among the animals. Those who welcomed God into this world are shepherds, the uneducated, the unclean, excluded from the synagogue, and they smell like sheep. The hymn asks, “*Why lies he in such mean estate where oxen now are feeding?*” The angel answers, “*Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.*”

Is that what we want? Do we want good news? Bad news sells and people pay for good advice. Good news doesn’t gain much attention after all that’s as things should be. Bad news is where our attention is at because we can fix it. And so often we’ll forget about all the good things we have and prefer outrage, “How could they treat Jesus

like that? Why isn't anyone helping him?" We honestly think we would have done something different because bad news can be countered with Good Advice... And we'll seek good advice, how to, and self-help books. Churches turn away from the Gospel, the Good News and start teaching, "Five part series on how to manage money. Four keys to well-behaved children."

And the message of good news is confused with good advice. But the problem with giving advice is that sometimes the situation is so bad no amount of effort will improve the situation. How comforting is it to hear, "Have you tried essential oils," when battling cancer. How comforting is it to hear, "Have you tried trying harder," when you've lost everything. Sometimes we can't help ourselves and that is why the Christ has come.

Good news is different from good advice. Anyone can learn good advice from Dr. Phil or even a bookstore. Why go to church for good advice? No, we have good news. There is no self-help to heaven, but God has done something to save us.

This good news is that Christ has come. That little infant is here so that "*Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross he'll bear for me, for you.*" While the setting seems so hopeless there is hope. God is in control. Thought *Jesus is wrapped in clothes (bound) and laid in a manger.* That King used the King of the Roman Empire to get him to Bethlehem so he would fulfill prophecy. And the next time he is swaddled in strips of linen he won't be found in a manger, but laid in a tomb, and another Joseph will wrap him, Joseph of Arimathea. It all looks bad, until we see those same strips set aside, carefully folded by the one who rose from the dead.

He is risen! but tonight we celebrate that he has come. Jesus is the one who brings peace between God and man. This is God's gift to you. It's Good News not Good Advice. That good news gives us hope among all the bad news. We are forgiven and no matter what may happen to us here we have an eternal home. There is a resurrection from the dead. We will rise and we have his promise.

What we need this Christmas is not a list of helpful tips to make life better but we need a Savior and we have a Savior. "*The King of kings salvation brings.*" This is Good News. Merry Christmas.