**SIGN OF THE MESSIAH: BABY IN A MANGER**

*Luke 2:1-20*

*Key Verse 12*

*“This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”*

Christmas is a beautiful time to be with family, friends, and loved ones, gather around a tree and open up presents. A beautiful time to get caught up in spending hundreds of dollars on presents and gifts. A beautiful time to remember Mariah Carey’s repeated hit “All I want for Christmas is you!”

As this Christmas time is coming up, I want us to think about the signs of Christmas. How do you know when it’s time to celebrate? Because the Calendar says so? **(slide)** When it gets cold out and starts snowing?When you drive around and see your town hanging up snowflakes on the lampposts and stores throwing up Christmas trees? Well what about…**(slide)** the baby in the manger? This picture of a baby in a manger with Mary and Joseph, wise men, shepherds, and animals is one of the obvious signs to celebrate Christmas. BUT…let me tell you how this image is more than just a Christmas decoration. “The baby in a manger” is the sign that he is the Messiah, the Savior who will save his people from their sins. The birth of Jesus is what we came here today to celebrate. So I ask why. It’s good you know the birth of Jesus, but why do you celebrate here today during this time? Let’s go over why we have come together to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

**I.Birth of Jesus (1-7)**

*(1-5) In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)**And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.**He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child*

During this time, Caesar Augustus, the Emperor of Rome, was calling for a census.

**(slide)** A census is when the government counts the entire population within the country to obtain information on things like age, race, gender, property ownership, and other details about your life. It was also intended to impose taxes and maintain control over the people. The Jews were required to comply with the Roman emperor's decrees without exception. Today, it’s a lot easier to do since we have mail and the internet. So If you were from Korea, you can simply do it online and not have to fly back to Korea. As we all know, there were no such things as the internet back then. So it was required to go to your hometown to register.

**(slide)** So Joseph and his pregnant fiancee went from the town of Nazareth to Bethlehem, approximately 90 miles, or 145 km. It is the distance from this seminary building to a little under Yale University in Connecticut. It takes about 2.5-3 hours by car, or about 42 hours on foot without stopping. Since they had to travel on foot over unpaved roads and rough terrain, the journey could take about a week. Their situation only gets worse as they are also expecting a baby. Can you imagine, in the third trimester, walking 90 miles with no stopping? Obviously, it would be dangerous and painful, especially looking at Mary’s point of view. But she still kept going through the pain and suffering she endured.

**(slide)** *(6-7) While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born,**and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.*

By the time they made it to Bethlehem, the time came for the baby to be born.

As we read, there was no room available for them so she had to give birth someplace else. Where? Many people put an image of a **(slide)** farm or stable because of the word manger, which is something animals use to eat. She wrapped him in clothes and placed him there. After persevering through a lot of pain and hardship, Mary finally gave birth to Jesus Christ. The birth of Jesus is something far more important than we think. This is not just another birth of a baby. This was the birth of Jesus Christ. This birth teaches us **the humility and faithfulness** of God.

**(slide)** The angel told Mary “The baby will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; He will be given the throne of his father David.” However, Jesus wasn’t born in a palace, a fancy hotel, or even a regular one. Jesus wasn’t born in a hospital or nursing area, like how all babies should be born. Jesus was born in some sort of stable and placed in a feeding basket for animals.

Naturally, it’s a frightening image to think about, a woman going through painful childbirth and a man worrying about whether his wife is going to die or not, and there’s just a goofy-looking cow.**(slide)** This environment is not suitable for childbirth. But we see that **(slide)** God has let go of what we think is almighty or amazing and birthed Jesus in the lowest of lows. Jesus was going to be the most humble man who had the compassion of suffering and pain. **(slide)** **Philippians 2:6-8 “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death even death on a cross!”** Jesus was going to be a man of understanding and one who knows the pain we go through. It was resembled through his birth in a stable and placement in a manger.

God showed his faithfulness through the promises he fulfilled through the birth of Jesus. **(slide)** God promised to send a savior who would crush the head of Satan from the woman’s offspring. (Gen 3:15) God promised that all nations will be blessed through Abraham’s offspring. (Gen 22:18). God promised that a virgin would give birth and he would be called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14). It was prophesied that he was to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). As we went over, Mary and Joseph went from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and there Jesus was born. Through this birth, it was a fulfillment of God’s promise to bring the Messiah through the line of David, in the town of Bethlehem.

In this part, we see God’s faithfulness and humbleness through the birth of Jesus Christ. However, there’s one thing I’m missing. One very important aspect that has touched people's hearts from the past, present, and future. This aspect is God’s love.

**II. The Sign (8-12)**

**(slide)** *(8-12) And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.**But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.**This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger.*

So now that Jesus has been born, Mary and Joseph must have felt relieved. God decided that now was the time to spread this blessing around the nation! There were shepherds around the area and an angel came to them with a very important message. Verse 10-11 says **“I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.”**

As today’s messenger, can I share some very important and good news of great joy with you? “Today in the town of David **(slide)** a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord!!!” This Christmas time, the Savior has been born to you! This baby is not just for Joseph and Mary; It is for you!

This baby is the one who will establish an everlasting kingdom through his death and resurrection. This baby will be the one who will heal all the sick and wounded and bring eternal joy. This baby will be the man who will give his life to wash our sins completely. This baby, Jesus, will be our savior by breaking the power of death and freeing us from bondage of sin. **(slide) Heb 2:14-15** **“…by his death, he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”** This baby, Jesus, opened the way, the new and living way to the Kingdom of God so that we can come to God without fear and serve the living God freely. Jesus is our Savior; he solved our real problem once and for all and took away our sorrow. In Jesus, we can always be joyful and thankful.

In Jesus, we are not slaves to sin any more, but we become God’s holy people as his righteous instruments. So, here’s the greatest news for you during this pre-Christmas celebration. The Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord.

Knowing of this messiah, where and how can we find him? **(slide)** The angel told the shepherds in verse 12 **“This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger.”** The shepherds were probably very confused. Out of nowhere, this glorious angel is telling them of a baby. As Msn Matthew mentioned last week, it is just another baby out of 385,000. How can they possibly know which one is the messiah? The sign is that the baby is wrapped in cloths and placed in a manger. This Messiah is a baby in a manger. That is how they will find him.

During this Christmas time, how and where can YOU find this messiah? Have you found him? If you found him, this is the time to come back to the foundation of faith, **Jesus.**

As the end of the year approaches, it can be very exhausting. There are many things that can occupy our heart, such as money, jobs, family, future plans, and relationships. This causes us to forget the baby Jesus. But I want you to come back to your sign of the Messiah, the baby in a manger, so that our hearts may be filled with this amazing God’s love and grace again. Coming back to Jesus, we may build more on the relationship with him and be stronger in his word. That way, we remember the sign of our promised Savior.

For those who haven't found Jesus, take this as your sign. You have come here today to hear about the baby in a manger. Who is this baby in a manger? He is the Messiah. The promised Savior for you. We have been suffering because of sin. But God has sent down this baby in a manger. This baby in a manger has been born to you. He is the one who will beat the power of sin and death. Take this sign and follow him. Follow him because he has shown his love for you. The birth of Jesus Christ shows us God’s love for sinners. John 3:16 **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”**

As mentioned before, Jesus’ birth confirms the birth of the Messiah. Jesus the messiah will be the savior of all sinners. He will be the one to die on the cross and shed his blood for us so that we are completely cleansed of our sins. What’s amazing is that it is not because of what we’ve done but because of God’s mercy and love. **(slide)** Titus 3:5 **“he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,”** Jesus is the one who heals us, helps us, and loves us. All because of the love of God, we sinners are saved through Jesus Christ. Isaiah 53:3-4 **“He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain…he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.”** This baby has faced the worst pain, embarrassment, and suffering one could face. Although he is the king, the messiah, he humbly stepped down and looked to take it upon himself to die for your sins. All this because God loves us. It was shown through the birth of Jesus. So during this Christmas time, have fun with family and friends and open a lot of presents. But remember the greatest gift you have received, the purest and most compassionate love God gives through this baby in the manger.

**III. Glory to God and Peace on Earth**

 **(slide)** (13-14) *Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”*

After appearing before the shepherds and sharing the sign of the Messiah, **(slide)** there came a bigger company of heavenly hosts with the angel and began to praise God. They sang together, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth, peace to those whose favor rests.” This birth of Jesus reveals the glory of God. It is because God’s wisdom and power were displayed through Jesus’ birth, life, death, and resurrection. It also reveals that God’s purposes always will triumph over evil. This brings peace on earth. This praise shows us a little reflection of how the power of God affects our lives. As we witness the work of God in our lives, we become more joyful. We praise God. It’s great to remember God’s amazing grace during our everyday lives. But during this Christmas Season, Let us remember his faithfulness and love to bring Jesus down as our Savior. As we continue moving on in the passage, we see how this birth moved the shepherds.

**(slide)**(15-20) *When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.* *When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,**and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.**The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.*

We read here that after willingly accepting the word of God through an angel, **(slide)** they left to see this baby. They accepted God’s direction and when pursuing it, they became overjoyed to find this baby in the manger. They found the savior that had been born. So what was their reaction? As the passage mentions “They spread the word concerning what had been told” and “returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen…” Experiencing the amazing grace and power of God through witnessing baby Jesus led the shepherds to the praise and worship of jesus Christ and spreading the great news around to other people.

In the same way, experiencing the power and love of God brings us hope, joy, peace, and praise. We sing and worship the Lord and praise God for the almighty works that he has done in our lives. We also become encouraged to preach the gospel to our neighbors. We share this love of God with those around us. Look around you! **(slide)** We come here today to praise and worship God. We celebrate Christmas as a fellowship, which brings us joy and happiness. All of this that is happening around is because of the love of God. Together we sing, Glory to God in

the highest heaven and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.

Throughout the past few weeks, while trying to think about this passage and how to write this message, **(slide)** I've been thinking a lot about the signs that I’ve seen to come back to the Messiah. One sign that really turned my eyes towards Jesus was when I was given the word from **Hebrews 7:25 “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”** This verse helped me see that my salvation doesn’t come from the temporary pleasures of lust or greed. I saw that my salvation doesn’t come from chasing after things that I want and desire. My salvation comes from Jesus Christ. Since then, I’ve been more motivated by God’s words through praise, worship, and testimony writing. As the year is ending, I’ve been given this opportunity to think more deeply on the birth of baby Jesus. I realize that through this birth, I receive the love of God. I see that this birth of Jesus is the confirmation of the savior being brought down to this world to offer me salvation. Through Jesus Christ, I am saved.

**(slide)** Today, we looked deeper into the birth of Jesus and how we witness God’s faithfulness and humbleness. The birth of Jesus shows us what we can expect when we come towards the lord. We find a faithful father and a humble friend who is willing to do anything for us. What happens when we find him? Following the sign of the baby in the manger, we find the Messiah. Our savior who has expressed God’s love. Baby Jesus shared with us God’s purest love. Through Jesus Christ, we receive salvation. Now that we have seen this baby in the manger, what do we do? We praise the lord. We thank him for his amazing work and worship him, for he has brought down salvation in the form of a human being.

This Christmas time, have fun with your family and friends. Enjoy the wonderful fellowship with everyone. But always remember the sign of the Messiah. Remember this baby in the manger, not as another Christmas decoration, but as the fulfillment of God’s love and mercy for us. I pray that throughout the rest of this year, we may follow this sign, a baby in a manger, and find The promised Messiah. The Savior has been born to you!