

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church -- Watertown, WI
Pastor Mark Gartner
Sermon for Christmas Day -- December 25th, 2010

Luke 2:10-14

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

Dear children of God who have come to worship the birth of our Savior.

As some of you might know, my family and I like to watch a couple of those shows where the person is found dead and then they try to solve how the person died and who did it. It takes a very careful eye and making sure that you pay close attention to some of the smallest details to figure out all the answers. By the very end of the show, they are able to determine the cause of death and the suspect. What makes these shows interesting is there is the "little detective" in all of us that is trying to look at all the facts and then trying to figure yourself who did it, before the person is identified at the end of the show.

For just a moment, I'm going to ask all of you to use that "little detective" inside of you as we try and figure out a mystery. I want you to listen and watch for all of the little clues and see if you can figure out some very important things. The assignment that you are given is: "Find out what Christmas means!" Like any good detective you start with the obvious. You look at the outward things that might help you find out about Christmas. You might through the newspaper ads. You might listen to the radio. You might watch the Christmas specials on TV. You might roam through shopping malls seeing people fighting over certain toys in short supply or cutting off one another for choice parking spots. As you examine these sources, do you think you'd be able to come up with an accurate description about the true meaning of Christmas? Personally, I have my doubts about that one. If someone were to base their findings purely on what they see and hear in our world today, how could they not come to the conclusion that Christmas is about spending lots of money on presents? Christmas is about Santa and reindeer. Christmas is about lights and parties. At the very best, Christmas might be about peace and good will among people.

But amongst all of these outward clues, your detective work pulls you in a completely different direction. It draws you closer to a completely different idea. You soon are discovering that Christmas has something to do with a baby born in Bethlehem a long time ago. You are led to nativity sets that point to a very special baby born 2000 years ago. You are led to this message being proclaimed in Churches using this book called the Bible which says that this baby is special. At this point, there comes this BIG QUESTION. The question usually sounds like this "WHAT CHILD IS THIS?"

Praise God you and I don't have to answer that question by looking into store windows and reading newspaper ads. Praise God that we have rock solid clues which our hearts of faith can see very clearly who that baby is. We have God's holy, inspired Word. On this Christmas Day we look once again in the Gospel of Luke and there we find who this child is and what he has come to do.

Sermon Theme: What Child Is This?

- 1. This is the CHILD promised to us by God the Father.**
- 2. This is the CHILD born to be Savior of ALL.**

It is that time of the year, where all the "experts" try and predict what is going to happen in the new year. They try and predict major events and what people might become important. The sad thing is that too many people, ourselves included, actually buy into this whole prediction thing. The truth be told, most if not all of these predictions are wrong and some are completely wrong. But there was one thing that has been predicted from the very beginnings of this world that was completely true. Do you know what I am talking about? Do you realize that there has been no birth in the history of the world that was

predicted more accurately than the birth of Jesus Christ? In the 49th chapter of Genesis, the prophet Moses promised that the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. Later on, the prophet Samuel narrowed it down to the family of David. The prophet Isaiah makes the most incredible promise about the birth of this child. He writes: **“A virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel, which means "God with us".** 700 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Micah pointed to Bethlehem and wrote: **“But you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”**

That is truly amazing!. All these promises were made way before Jesus was born. And yet every one of them is perfectly fulfilled in his birth! It's one thing to make predictions before they happen. But to speak so specifically about the details of Jesus' birth centuries BEFORE he was ever born and they all came true. Why that's nothing less than a miracle performed by God the Father himself!

In our text, the angels appeared to the shepherds and spoke the words of our text. These 1st century Jewish shepherds of our text probably knew some if not most of those Old Testament prophecies by heart, including the one from Micah about the town where the Israel's greatest king was born being singled out for a very important purpose. Yet no matter what those shepherds knew about Bethlehem, there was one thing they didn't know until the angel told them. They didn't know that **"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you."** For thousands of years, ever since God the Father promised Adam and Eve that "Someone" would come and crush Satan's head; believers had anxiously been awaiting the birth of this child - generation after generation clinging to God the Father's gospel promise to someday send the Messiah. Suddenly for this handful of shepherds, "someday" became "Today." Wow! That announcement must've taken their breath away.

Do those words **"Today in the town of David"** have any meaning for our lives today? Yes, they do! You see, those words declare to us that God the Father keeps all his promises. By having Jesus born in the town of David, God the Father is telling us that when he promises something is going to happen, it happens, whether it's in Jesus' life or in my life or in yours. God the Father promises you that **"in all things he works for the good of those who love him."** So when there just doesn't seem to be any answers to the problems you're facing, when the disappointments of this life feel like they're going to swallow you up alive, remember that you take that promise of your Father to the bank and you lean on it with all your heart. It is unbreakable. God the Father promises you: **"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God; I will strengthen and help you; I will hold you up with my righteous right hand."** When you feel so all alone and life becomes such a struggle that you wish tomorrow would never come, when the uncertainty of what's waiting for you in the future makes your heart tremble and your knees bang together, you take that promise of your Father and you grab on tight to it and you live on it every one of those days. It is unshakeable! Even if God has to change world history to keep his promises to you - even if he has to use the decree of some pagan Roman emperor to make sure his Son is born in Bethlehem, he is going to make it happen. What Child is this? This Child is your heavenly Father's proof that he will never ever break any promise he has made to you!

2. This is the CHILD born to be Savior of ALL.

One more amazing thing about this baby's birth. What Child is this? The angel clearly announced the role this child would play in the history of mankind when he said: **"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."**

Sometimes it's easy to think that God is a million miles away and can't possibly relate to our hurts, our disappointments, our financial struggles. Wait a minute! Our God was born in a barn. Our God was laid to sleep in some animal's dinner plate. The first thing our God smelled when he entered this world was - well - you know what he smelled in that barn! The Bible says Jesus was made like you and me in every way, only without any sin, so that he could "sympathize with our weaknesses" But God comes into our world not just to relate to our problems, He comes to rescue the whole world from its biggest

problem.

And what is this world's biggest problem? It is not world peace, or crime, or poverty. No, the ultimate problem of our world is SIN - that inborn human desire to rebel against God - to live for self rather than living for him. Sin is what keeps nations at war, families in turmoil, and lives turned upside down. Ever since our first parents chose to disobey God in the Garden of Eden, sin has been at the heart of every problem in the world, in our families, and yes, in our lives as well.

What is it that most often robs our lives of peace and joy? What are the things at this moment in your life that have weakened your relationship with God? Is it our inability to control our anger, to control our passions, to control our desires to sin? Have we allowed our jobs, our friends, our free time, or maybe even our sleep to become more important to us than our spiritual life or the spiritual life of our families? Are we frustrated by those sinful weaknesses we all have that keep on preventing us from doing what we know is right? My friends, the more we realize the grip that sin has on us by nature, the more we feel the burden of guilt those sins bring upon our lives, the more precious are these words of the Christmas angel: **"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."**

That's right! A SAVIOR! Not a policeman to lay down the law in your life. Not a coach to bark at you for messing up again. Not a psychiatrist to lead you to love yourself more. The child born in Bethlehem came to be your Savior. Someone who loved you enough to carry every last one of your sins on his shoulders to a cross and there be punished with hell in your place. Someone who has forgiven you and has now put you at peace with God. Someone who has given you both the power and the reason to live a life of love for God and your fellowman, all to the glory of his name. Here is Someone - the only person in the history of the world who can put you in heaven when you have to die. Yes, a Savior has been born to you!

At the beginning of this sermon I asked you to pretend that you were a detective trying to find out what Christmas means. I think that most of us here today already knew the answer long before we got to the end which is great and wonderful joy, but the reality is this. There are lots of people around us each day who are looking at the wrong clues and have put their faith in all kinds of things that ultimately will fail them. There are too many people who don't have a clue about what Christmas really means - people who don't know that Christmas is the fulfillment of God's promise to send his Son to rescue them from sin and hell forever. That means on this Christmas Day we still have a job to do. That job is to share with as many people as we can what that little baby in the manger has done for them. But it also means we have a special reason to be here in God's house today. You see, God has led you and me to know something that truly has changed our lives. By God's grace, you and I look at that little baby in the manger and we know beyond a shadow of a doubt WHAT CHILD THIS IS! The little Lord Jesus is our dear Savior. For that all praise and glory be to God! Amen.