

Jesus, the Hope of the World is Born (Luke 2:1-7)

Prepared and preached by Pastor Steve Rhodes for and at Bethel Friends Church in Poland, OH on December 24, 2022 (Christmas Eve)

*J.R.R. Tolkien, author of The Lord of the Rings, coined the term “eucatastrophe,” which means “good catastrophe.” When it looks like a hero is doomed . . . but then the plot turns.<sup>1</sup>*

Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection were many “eucatastrophes.”

Luke 2:1–3 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup>*In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.*

<sup>2</sup>*This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.*

<sup>3</sup>*And all went to be registered, each to his own town.*

**I. The decree: The detail that God makes happen in order to bring Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem.**

- a. Earlier in Luke’s gospel we find out that Mary is chosen of God to give birth to a Son and he is to be the awaited great King of Israel.
- b. So, now she is greatly with child and the king orders a census.
- c. This census, though small is great. This is a very important detail of the Christmas story as this will cause Joseph and Mary to come to the place where the Savior is to be born.
- d. However, this could seem like a catastrophe. This could seem tragic.
- e. Here Mary is pregnant, and they must travel. The traveling would not be easy either. Mary is around 13 or 14 years old. She is pregnant traveling with her betrothed, but as far as we know there was not a midwife with her. There were not any family members with her. We see pictures of her riding a donkey, but we do not know if that was the case.
- f. This must have brought fear into them. They must have thought, “Lord, what are you doing?” Remember, it was common knowledge that Joseph was not the baby’s father. She is already looked down upon. Now this.

**Luke 2:4–5 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup>*And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>5</sup>to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.todayintheword.org/issues/2019/december-2019/devotions-december-2019/devotion-december-06-2019/>

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## II. Traveling:

- a. Bethlehem was a very important town, though most would not believe this to be true. It was a small town and the scripture from Micah 5:2 even says that it was the least of the clans of Judah. But this town is where the future King of Israel was to come from.
- b. Because of this Mary and Joseph traveled for days. Bethlehem is 2,654 feet high so they had to journey UP to Bethlehem. It was not an easy journey. Though she is pregnant they traveled. But Mary and Joseph are not choosing to make this journey. No, as we just read, Caesar Augustus made this choice for them. The census made this choice.
- c. Again, *eucatastrophe*, *good catastrophe*.
- d. This was a detail God worked out. God is a God of the details. Nothing ever catches God by surprise. He had planned from the beginning, from hundreds of years before that the Savior of Israel was to be born in Bethlehem and this happens.

## III. Jesus' birth:

- a. Luke 2:6-7 (ESV) <sup>6</sup>*And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*
- b. Now, we see Jesus is born.
- c. Through all this difficulty. Through all of these apparent *catastrophes*, Jesus is born. Through all of the challenges, what looks like catastrophes of traveling and of being an unwed mother, God brings about His purpose. Jesus is born. Our Savior is born. Mary's Savior is born. It looks like the hero is doomed because an unwed mother could face serious consequences in that day, it looks like our hero is doomed because of the census. But no, Jesus is born.

Mary would go through many *eucatastrophes*, *good catastrophes*, being the mother of the Savior and the Savior to be born would go through many *eucatastrophes*, *good catastrophes*, bringing us salvation.

So, in a nutshell Christmas is all about Jesus' birth. God became a human being so that He could die for our sins. God brought events involving kings, common people, and shepherds in order to bring His Son into the world. Jesus lived among us for 33 years and then died in our place. He died for our sins.

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Do you believe that? I want to ask you a personal question:

Have you come to a point in your life where you have accepted Jesus into your heart for forgiveness of your sins. Jesus didn't come to earth just to live with us; He came to instruct us and to die in our place.

The Bible says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The Bible says that the penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23). The Bible says that Jesus is the way the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except by Him. (John 14:6). The Bible teaches that sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2). The Bible says that God will not let the guilty go unpunished (2 Thess 1:8-9). Yet, the Bible teaches that God loves the people of the world (John 3:16). That is a dilemma. God can't tell a lie, or He wouldn't be God (Numbers 23:19). God doesn't change His mind (1 Sam 15:29). That is why God sent Jesus. The guilty must go punished. Jesus took our punishment on the cross. The penalty of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life.

One of the most exciting things that you can do while celebrating Jesus' birthday is to make it your spiritual birthday as well. You can accept Jesus' free gift of salvation right now.

**Prayer**