

The Reverend Theo Robinson's Sermon for Christmas Eve A – December 24, 2025 Luke 2:1-14 – “A Child is Born”

Prepare our hearts, oh God, to receive your word. Silence every voice in us but your own, so that we may hear your word. Amen.

The four Gospels present four unique and yet complimentary pictures of Jesus in the way they record the birth of Jesus: Matthew presents Jesus as the King of the Jews worthy of obedience and worship; Luke shows a humane Savior that brings good tidings and liberation to the poor, neglected and marginalized; Mark presents Jesus as Lord that serves in secret and thus shows a new way, free from the fight for supremacy and status; and John presents Jesus as God, who comes as the Word become flesh and shines in the darkness to bring a new beginning in this world.

Today we heard Luke's version of Jesus' birth story. Luke's Gospel is an attempt to put in place an orderly account of the birth, ministry, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Luke wrote his Gospel primarily for a Gentile audience and focuses on the traditionally marginalized and neglected groups in First Century Mediterranean societies. Thus, Luke's Gospel is full of references to women, children, the sick, the poor, and the rejected.

This special and caring focus on the neglected and rejected also features in Luke's account of the birth of Jesus. Luke's birth narrative is the longest out of all of the four Gospels and gives special attention to the role of the Holy Spirit and to the women in the story. Here the angel appears to Mary (not to Joseph as in Matthew's Gospel) and it is Elizabeth, and then later again Mary, that each has words of praise and blessings recorded. Luke, in his human focus, records the “homeless” status of Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem, the special care given to the baby Jesus as he is born, and how a lowly feeding trough becomes a crib.

As if to further emphasize this consistent focus of the poor and the rejected of society, the angels appear to shepherds in Luke's account, not to the rich, privileged, and powerful wise men in Matthew's account. It is the ordinary shepherds that witness this glorious event and became the first messengers of God's peace and goodwill towards people on earth. The beautiful birth narrative of Jesus in Luke's Gospel illustrates God's relinquishing of the divine in Jesus, born amongst the poor and rejected, bringing good tidings of peace and goodwill to all.

So instead of singing “happy birthday to you” as we would any other baby, to celebrate the moment we happily join with millions of Christians around the world in remembering the birth of our Savior by singing “Joy to the world, the Lord is come!” We celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace with joy, and praise, and song!

And yet, despite being in a season of joy, sometimes we see and hear only the worst of what is around us, neglecting the simplest joys, and thinking that our times are so much worse than those faced by people in the past. Or perhaps we have reached the point of assuming that it's all up to us to bring the

peace our hearts long for, with God not bothering to participate at all. Where are God's caring hands in all of this desperate search for hope? But isn't Christmas about God intervening in human history? Isn't Christmas about God telling us not to give up hope after all, telling us not to believe that we are all on our own?

While we can't do it all, we can do something, and if we do this something together, just think of the great wonders God will work. Christmas is a tough time for many, and we are tasked as God's children to take the message of hope found in Jesus and to spread our love and joy to others, now and all year round. Here is our biggest challenge: how do we sing and feel joy when, for example, when so many people around the world are suffering? The world just seems so dark and hostile. When there is so much turmoil, and the angel's cry of "peace on earth" seems like more of a wish than a blessing, we who gather to sing carols, light our candles, and hear the Christmas story seem so very small against the backdrop of this troubled world.

In a world such as this, it is important that we become instruments of God's compassion and justice as we strive to put ourselves in God's service, to participate in what God is doing. Think about the angels singing that night, even though Rome had its boot heel on the throat of the Jewish people. Those angels sang anyway because they brought tidings of hope and of great joy. That is where we turn for help in dealing with the news on TV and on social media, and I hope that in some small way we might become tidings of great joy, and a word of hope, to those whom we meet each day. That work is the kind of music, the kind of singing together, that will change the world, and it is the melody God is calling us to join in and sing.

So, when you leave tonight, I pray that you will take the birth of Jesus into your hearts, and the joy and love and hope that his birth carries. In Jesus, God has brought us the light we need to shine in the dark places, to bring hope to the discouraged, insight to the lost, and the promise of peace for all those who long for it. It is this vision of the world that is indeed good news of great joy for all people.

Amen.