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Christmas Eve: Luke 2:1-20  
December 24, 2017

Christ is born! Glorify him!

Finally, it is Christmas Eve; some of you are expecting to receive gifts and to have a good dinner with your family and friends. You are expecting to have a lovely time. You might have lots of expectations for Christmas and New Year. The center of the Christmas is Jesus Christ and the story of God who does the unexpected. It is the story of God who loves us and wants to become one of us to redeem and to give us eternal life. It is the story of God who concerns the despised and defends the oppressed.

The evangelist Luke emphasizes that God reveals and show God's wisdom to the poor and despised people. I'm going to explain to you how the evangelist Luke demonstrates that God cares about the poor and oppressed.

Firstly, God chooses Mary, a poor and unprivileged woman, to be the mother of Jesus. In her song, or the Magnificat, Mary praises God for looking on the lowly estate of God's servant, that is Mary, and exalting those of humble estate (Luke 1:48, 52). Martin Luther, in his commentary on the Magnificat, states that "though [God] he could have found a rich, famous, noble, mighty queen, or the daughter of a prince or lord. He [God] could have found the daughter of Annas or

of Caiaphas, men who held the highest position in the land, but instead he [God] cast his [God's] pure and gracious eyes on and used a lowly and despised maiden.<sup>1</sup>”

Secondly, the Emperor Augustus ordered that the world of the Roman Empire should be registered. Citizens of the Roman Empire were to go and register their names, their occupation, their property, their family, entered into the Rome IRS agency. The purpose of the census is to “regularize the collection of taxes especially the poll or inheritance tax in the Roman provinces.”<sup>2</sup> The Romans imposed heavy taxes on the Jews, but God used this census to fulfill the prophecy of Old Testament. The registration paved the way for Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem and for Jesus be born there. Augustus aims to exploit people, but God aims to redeem them. It is clear that God’s purpose is higher than Emperor Augustus’.

Thirdly, Jesus had to be born in Bethlehem, not in Jerusalem. Jerusalem, not Bethlehem was well-known to Rome and the Jews. Bethlehem did not enjoy a high status as Jerusalem. David came from Bethlehem, but he established his throne in Jerusalem. Another term for Jerusalem is “the City of David.” Jerusalem was and is still more important than Bethlehem because the temple was located there. God did the unexpected by choosing an unimportant town like Bethlehem to be the birthplace of Jesus. Because of Jesus Bethlehem becomes very important.

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<sup>1</sup> Hendrickson, Peter A.. Luther and Bach on the Magnificat: For Advent and Christmas (Kindle Locations 321-323). Wipf & Stock, an Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary On the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.,1997), 126.

Tonight, all Christians in the world are paying attention to Bethlehem, not to Jerusalem. Jesus has elevated the status of Bethlehem.

Fourthly, the angels shared the good news of the born Messiah to the shepherds. The shepherds were not wealthy people. They may have small land, but because of heavy taxation, this land would not be enough to meet the demands of the families. They ended up hiring themselves out to work for wages like working as shepherds. “They were, then, peasants located toward the bottom of the scale of power and privilege.”<sup>3</sup> The good news comes to peasants, not to the high priest of Israel or an important ruler, but to the unprivileged shepherds. As the Apostle Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians, “God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important”(1 Cor 1:28).

Finally, the angel announces to the shepherds that “I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people” (v. 10). Luke reveals to us the universal implications of Jesus’ birth. Jesus did not come only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. The Jews considered the Gentiles unclean and did not belong to God’s people. They believe that God does not favor the Gentiles but favors the Jews. The evangelist Luke changes this perspective by illustrating that the good news is for all the nations. There is no favoritism in God’s eyes. The Gentiles are part of God’s family. This was another unexpected message. God does the unexpected.

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<sup>3</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary On the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.,1997), 130.

Tonight, the birth of Jesus teaches us that when life fails to meet your expectations, you are invited to expect God to do the unexpected. We become discouraged when life, loved one, and God do not meet our expectations. I invite you to expect God to meet you in the unexpected place and moment.

As the gap between rich and poor is getting bigger and bigger, the birth of Jesus invites us to cultivate a special concern for the poor and the unprivileged and to direct significant resources to relieving their misery. Jesus' life and ministry reflect his care about the well-being of the poor. Therefore, Jesus desire for his church is to care for the poor and marginalized because he was a poor and unprivileged person living under the Roman Empire occupation of Palestine.