

A SAVIOR HAS BEEN BORN TO YOU

(Part-I by Rich Ryzewski)

Luke 2:1-7

Key Verse (7), “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.”

Good morning, Merry Christmas!

The theme of today’s message is: A SAVIOR has been born to you. I will deliver the first part with the title, "Jesus as the Firstborn Gives us a New Identity as Adopted Children of God" from verses 1-7 and Jonathan Reese will also deliver part II with the title, "A Savior has been born to you" from verses 8 to 21.

Today’s passage is about the birthday of Jesus which should be joyful. Many people like my grandma has said that this has been one of the darkest years due to the pandemic even more than during WWII because churches were not closed during that time. This is discouraging and many people say that they don’t want to celebrate Christmas like we normally do. However, we need to celebrate better than we normally do. We need Christmas now more than we ever needed it. We need to turn our lights on outside so people can know there is light in the darkness. Christmas is still coming and there is one thing that has not changed in all the changing, Jesus Christ is still the humble baby that was born in a manger and came to be a light for you and for me so we can be welcomed into God’s family. Let’s think about what Mary giving birth to her firstborn son means. What’s so important about this baby that was wrapped in cloths and placed in a manger.

In verse 1 it says, “In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.” In those days was during ½ BC. At the time, Rome ruled the world. When Caesar spoke, it was like law. He ordered a census of the entire Roman world so that taxes could be collected to rule the Roman world with the slogan of Roman peace.

However, this was not just Caesar’s way but ultimately God using Caesar to bring Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem.–verse 3 says, “And everyone went to their own town to register.” This was including Mary and Joseph as verse 4 says, “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.” It did not matter that Mary reached the full term of her pregnancy, they still had to go to register to their hometown or face consequences. I don’t know what it’s like to be pregnant of course, but my wife was once pregnant full term with twins. On the way one time to a bible conference in Lake Geneva we got lost, and a trip that should have taken an hour and a

half—do you know what? took 3 hours and after a while my wife had to stop to go to the bathroom very frequently and to get air because it was hard for her to breath. How much more did Mary have to suffer while on a donkey. Even though it seemed inhumane to put a pregnant woman through a journey like this we can see God was working. Micah 5:2 says, “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.” God was using this event to fulfill prophecy so the ruler would be born in Bethlehem, this was God’s way to fulfill his plan. This clearly teaches us that ³God is the sovereign-ruler- of history.

Not only that but they could not find a room so Joseph took her to a manger. Let’s read verse 7 altogether, “and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger.”

It is the basic desire of all parents to lay their baby in a first-class hospital room. But Jesus was laid in the feeding box of an animal. My kids would have said ewww! Probably Joseph and Mary might have been crying many tears to look at their poor baby. Then why did Jesus have to be born as such a poor baby in a manger? Why did the all-powerful Creator God have to be incarnated as a baby in a manger.

Paul explains in Galatians 4:4-7 what this means for us. “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba, Father.*” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. Jesus did not remain in heaven but obeyed his Father God and came down to earth. Jesus humbled himself to lose everything--so we could gain EVERYTHING by being adopted as sons and daughters of the Creator God. Without the birth of Jesus, we would not be able to become adopted sons and daughters of God. When we accept the birth of baby Jesus we receive a new identity as children of God. This little baby born in a manger changes the course of history. The little baby connects us to the family of God as adopted sons and daughters.

Adoption is so hard as Joseph and Faith Grady from our church know who adopted two beautiful twin babies. They had to wait for just the right time to claim them and go through the necessary steps to accomplish this. So to, with our Father God who loved us so much that he was waiting for just the right time for baby Jesus to be born so we can be adopted as his children. When we accept the baby Jesus in our hearts, we can call him abba Father. Isn’t it so amazing that the Creator of the world wanted to adopt us. This little baby who was the first born would have all the rights and privileges afforded to him of children. Now, we too as first born adopted children have the same rights and privileges. Now through baby Jesus our Father God is inviting us into an intimate love relationship with him, a relationship so authentic, affirming and available to us at any time. This is so beautiful because when we accept baby Jesus we become princes and princesses in his kingdom who are dearly loved. We have a new identify as children of God. All

the world's messages that say to us that we don't matter, that we're worthless, or inferior, or messed up, or doomed, are destroyed. Those messages are false. The birth of baby Jesus writes a new story for us as accepted, valuable and sooooo precious to our Father God that we have invaluable worth.

This personally has invaluable worth to me. Now I have a new identity as an adopted child of God. Growing up, I was made fun of because I was small and had big ears. Kids in grade school used to call me dumbo. I felt ugly and no good. I was so sad but I tried to cover it up with a smile on my face. I smiled so much that in high school they called me funny face. Now when I accepted the birth of Jesus, he accepts me just as I am and loves me no matter what anyone else says. Baby Jesus gave me a new identity as his adopted forgiven child of God and helps me to live a life to please him as a bible teacher and shepherd for others. I thank God for the good work he has done through my wonderful wife Jenna and I to study the bible with several Loyola students. I thank God that he can start the Unbounded Bible meeting that has Victor, Justin, Rachel, Rebekah and even his sister Andrianina attend. Through accepting baby Jesus, I can call God Abba, Father and have a personal, real relationship with him that I can share with others through bible study. Through baby Jesus being born I can be forgiven, have a new identity as a child of God. Praise and thank God for the birth of baby Jesus in a manger that makes it possible to receive sonship as adopted children of God and call God Abba Father.

Are you ready to open your hearts to baby Jesus? Now, we will have the 2nd part of the message from Jonathan Reese.

(Part-II by Jonathan Reese)

The year 2020 has been unlike any other year. There has been a lot of bad news. Covid-19 has changed everything so much, with thousands of people dying, being sick, and losing their jobs. There has also been social unrest, the senseless murder of George Floyd, rioting, looting, widespread violence, quarantine, lockdown, and the Presidential election that seems to have torn this country in half. But today, I am here to give you the GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY! This good news involves forgiveness of our sins, eternal life, peace with God, and is for all peoples of all nations! What is this GOOD NEWS? I will give you a hint: it involves the Savior! Who is the Savior, you ask? Let's find out....

When Jesus was born in the town of David, there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. The shepherds were of low social class in those days. These were not the most promising or noteworthy people, but they were humble men that quietly did a very important job. The message of the good news of great joy comes to those who have humble hearts, like these shepherds.

What happened to them? An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. It was a marvelous scene; and they were terrified. If this exact thing

happened to any of us, we would be terrified too. But what did the angel say to them? “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will cause great joy for all the people (v. 10).” The angel brought them good news of great joy for all the people. What kind of news can be good and joyful for all the people in the whole wide world? It doesn’t make any sense, or even sound remotely possible. However, the news that we all will receive today is indeed good news of great joy for all people!

Then, what is this good news? “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord (v. 11).” The good news of great joy for all the people is the news of the birth of the Savior, the Messiah, and the Lord to all of us today! Many of you may be asking yourselves why this is good news of great joy for all the people. It is because human beings lost paradise because of our sins. Genesis chapter 3, a direct contrast to today’s news, is the worst news and great sadness that cost all humanity everything! A deceiver named Satan, came into paradise, and caused Adam and Eve to disobey God’s command and commit sin against God. What were the consequences of sin? When they heard the sound of the Lord, they hid from God among the trees of the garden. They became full of shame and their relationship with God was broken. Through sin came all the terrible consequences like fear, anger, rage, lying, bitterness, sickness, and eventually death. “For dust you are and to dust you will return” was the sentence of eternal condemnation of God on humanity.

Because of sin all of us suffered so much and many of us are still suffering. Because of alcohol and drug use so many people get stuck in addiction and cannot get out. There are reports that say that under the surface, alcoholism and drug use have increased greatly since Covid-19 came. Many people, even Christians, are suffering from a sense of meaninglessness and depression that wants to immobilize us. We are all suffering from a sense of desperation because of our sins. There was a sweet girl, the 17-year-old high school junior, straight-A student, class officer. But one day she walked to a highway overpass and jumped off the edge. After her death, her journals were found with 200 pages of self-loathing and despair, things like “you are broken,” “you are a burden,” “you are lazy” and “you’re a failure.” It is a very sad story caused by our sins. Sin is the cause of ALL human suffering! Sin is the underlying reason for the international epidemic of suicide! Sin crushes the heart and spirit of even the young and promising and makes them so depressed that they cannot even get out of bed to live normal lives. Sin brings all people of all nations a loud and unbearable amount of bad news! Indeed, SIN is at the root of all bad news!

But we have good news of great joy! “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” The birth of Jesus is the best news of unspeakable joy for all humanity because Jesus is the Savior, the Messiah, and the Lord! Why is Jesus the Savior for all humanity? It is because Jesus died on the cross for our sins and resurrected from the dead. During his life on earth with human beings, Jesus preached the good news, healed the sick, proclaimed freedom for the prisoners, and drove out demons. This life demonstrated that he was the Messiah. Furthermore, Jesus willingly subjected himself to arrest at the hands of sinful men, being beaten with a whip that had steel and glass and rocks attached to the leather straps, had a crown of thorns forced onto his head, was beaten yet again with rods, being abandoned by all who once followed him, to carry a heavy cross up a hill, to have long, steel nails pounded into

his hands and feet, suffering the shame of being crucified between two other criminals. It was there, his wounded, broken body bent and bleeding, stretched out between heaven and earth that Jesus forgave our sins when he said from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Jesus died on the cross; but he defeated the power of death through his resurrection. In this way, Jesus became the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection opened us the way to the kingdom of God. This Jesus who is Christ was born to the world in order to save us from all our sins and give us eternal life! Is this not the good news of great joy? YES, IT IS!!

However, even though Jesus fulfilled all God's redemptive work, if you do not believe in Jesus, this good news of great joy cannot be yours. Then, what do we have to do in order to accept the good news of great joy? We have to confess our sins sincerely. We have to repent of our sins. We have to believe in Jesus personally. When you believe in Jesus personally, Jesus can be born to you TODAY and can be your Savior. This good news of great joy can be yours! But this is not something we can do by ourselves. We can receive this good news only through the work of the Holy Spirit. What we can do is to ask God to have mercy on us, to confess our sins, and to receive the grace of Jesus! I pray that all of us may accept this good news of great joy: "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."

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." The shepherds went to Bethlehem immediately to meet and worship the baby Jesus. They became the witnesses of the birth of the Messiah! And then, they returned glorifying and praising God.

I was born in a loving family and given all the things I needed as a child. But I fell into sin at a young age with pornography, stealing, and habitually lying. From the first time that I viewed pornography, something inside of me became disfigured. I suffered from a guilty conscience and fell into depression. To combat the depression and meaninglessness of my existence, I got involved with drugs and alcohol. I could not study well for school. In 1987 when I was on academic probation at Oakton Community College, I met P. Teddy Hembekides who did his very best to help me with 1 to 1 Bible study. Later M. Maria Ahn, Dr. Joseph Ahn, and P. Ron Ward also did their best to help me to accept Jesus as my Savior. But I did things My Way, like that song by Frank Sinatra. (Sing) "I did it my way" My sin of lust was practically driving me crazy. I fell so far into sin that I insisted on being high or drunk all the time. I nearly drank myself to death several times, getting rushed to the hospital for alcohol poisoning three times in a span of 18 months. One time my blood-alcohol level was .438, which means almost dead! The bad news of despair and addiction was my lifestyle.

But God had great mercy on me! My parents performed an intervention and I entered rehabilitation in October of 2009. When I got out, I started thinking about coming back to Bible study. But I felt so much shame and guilt, like I had fallen too far and could not be saved from my sins. Somehow somehow, I called P. Ron Ward and met him. I apologized to him for countless acts of heartlessness and unthankfulness; to which he replied, "It's ok. I forgave you a long time ago!" We restarted 1 to 1 Bible study, and I suddenly had a spark of hope. At the 2010

Peoria Summer Bible Conference, I repented of my sins in front of Mark 1:15 “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” And I signed a pledge card to become a missionary to a Muslim nation. Jesus became my Savior and Messiah and Lord. Jesus became my Savior by forgiving me for all my sins. Jesus became my Messiah by being the one whom I follow earnestly. Jesus became my Lord by enabling me to live a new life by faith in him.

In a short time, I became a member of the lay pastor team, assisted with the 6pm SWS as a presider, and began to teach the Bible 1 to 1 and in groups. The Lord Jesus sent me to Indonesia, by God’s amazing mercy, as a missionary and servant of God’s word. God also enabled me to marry the most beautiful and wonderful woman of God, Frida! I just recently got to 11 years of sobriety! How did all of this happen? It was Jesus my Savior who did all of this! Praise Jesus who became my Savior! Therefore, my decision is: (Sing) “I will live in Jesus’ way” I believe that only Jesus can save us from the pit of hell, where our sins are leading us! Indeed, Jesus is the good news of great joy for me and for you because Jesus is our Savior! Let’s all come to Jesus, the Savior, at this time! May God give you the good news of great joy that is for all people when you accept Jesus personally into your heart by confessing your sins and receiving the Savior, Jesus Christ!