

Laid In A Manger for the Likes of Shepherds

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 February 2025

Preacher: Pastor Dave Thompson

[0 : 0 0] you can be turning to Luke chapter 2 Luke chapter 2 the last time we were in Luke we were at the circumcision and naming of John oddly enough the neighbors and friends were trying to name John themselves and when Zechariah wrote on the tablet John is his name God had compassion on Zechariah he loosed his tongue filled him with the spirit and caused him to prophesy of the Messiah his son would announce the Messiah would visit and redeem his people Mary she's the one God called to carry the Messiah she had been with Elizabeth and stayed with her three months and left just before this happened just before John was born just before he was circumcised to name and she was now back in Nazareth and from the end of that verse the end of chapter 1 until chapter 2 six months go by now if you've read the book of Matthew now we're in Luke so don't get confused there but if you've read the book of Matthew you know that Jesus was prophesied to be born in Bethlehem but Luke does not give us any of the information that we find out about in the book of Matthew he does not give us what we'll call the perspective of prophecy we find in Matthew that Jesus comes to Bethlehem is born in Bethlehem for a very particular reason but Luke doesn't address that at all he mentions Jesus being born in Bethlehem but he mentions it more in relation to being a hardship than the answer to prophecy and I think Luke has another aspect of God's work that he wants to emphasize as he writes his gospel so follow along as I read

Luke chapter 2 I'm going to read verses 1 through 20 Luke 2 1 through 20 in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered this was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria and all went to be registered each to his own town 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 to be registered with Mary his betrothed who was with child and while they were there the time came for her to give birth and she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn and in the same region there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night and the angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were filled with great fear and the angel said to them fear not for behold

I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people for unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior who is Christ the Lord and this will be a sign for you you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased when the angels went away from them into heaven the shepherds said to one another let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us and they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger and when they saw it they made known the saying that had been told them concerning the child and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them but Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart and the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them let's pray together father I thank you for being able to look at your word and I thank you father for the details that you put in it

I thank you for the way you have had men and men write it down so that it gets across things that are applicable to us but also just truths the truths we need to know of the gospel the truths of what we need to stand on and also father the ways you display your great character your great power so lord as we look at your word I pray that your spirit would bless that you would help me to share and you would help us to hear and father we would be fed and would grow and would worship you and father that we would seek you we pray in Jesus name amen birth stories can be very interesting the weeks before a delivery we imagine how things will go if you have children if you have you know any children of all before the baby was born you thought all kinds of things we're going to do this and we're going to do that and this is how it'll go and this is what we want and you have all your plans laid out and often it goes nothing like we imagine sometimes we give birth in a car sometimes we drive a 15 passenger van 85 miles an hour to get to the midwife on time

I imagine Mary and Joseph things were no different for them as I pointed out Mary went back to Nazareth before John was born and she's been in Nazareth for six months that's where she grew up she grew up in Nazareth and Joseph lived there also he lived in Nazareth it was in the more northern part of the nation of Israel and they lived there and at this point he had already taken her as his wife but not had not had relations with her so they were in a home together in Nazareth and I'm positive I mean they're just human they were making plans they were making preparations where would we put the baby all kinds of things to consider there I don't know exactly what the culture would be about do you keep a baby in bed with you or do you do this or do you do that we don't know but they were making plans and I'm sure they were readying the house for the arrival of this baby

[7 : 56] Joseph was a carpenter maybe he made a crib we don't know an interesting thing you will not find here you won't even find it in Matthew they had not been told to go anywhere it appears that at this point in their life they had no plans to go anywhere else it's not hinted at or suggested either in Luke or in Matthew that Joseph one day said you know I was reading the other day or I heard it in the synagogue the other day about the guy was reading Micah and something about Bethlehem and we have no indication that any of that happened they were in Nazareth and it was their plan to stay in Nazareth but one little man made a mess of that he happened to be

Caesar Augustus but one little man said I want everybody to be registered it was for taxation but I want everyone to be registered so he sends out this decree everyone has to return to the place their family was from to be registered you can picture it I don't know they didn't have a post office I'm sure or a mailbox probably it was a town crier Joseph comes home from work and he's been talking with people in the shop and he says Mary I heard something today I don't like the sound of this what did you hear Joseph Augustus Caesar wants everybody to go to the home or the town where their family is from oh Joseph I'm nine months pregnant and we're both from

Bethlehem what would you have done what would you have done at that point if all this never happens to us huh if all your plans are suddenly shattered everything you thought you had ready and these are godly people they're probably making plans for the sake of glorifying God and now their plans are shattered Joseph and Mary are required by Caesar's decree to go to Bethlehem even though Mary was almost full term carrying the son of God God now we don't know so much of it from Luke but in Matthew Joseph is exhorted to take Mary as his wife but both and he was told that the child inside her was the son of

God was the savior so both Joseph and Mary knew that this was the savior that this was to be Jesus but the timing the hardship the plans they're all gone they're all they're all messed up I would imagine they were a bit discouraged but Joseph and Mary obeyed it's normally a four day walk from Jerusalem or from from Nazareth to Bethlehem we mentioned that when we talked about Mary going to visit Elizabeth four days and she's thinking of the trip I'm sure and she's thinking you know she's thinking like this nine months pregnant it was four days and all of you ladies who have been nine months pregnant we're going to walk for four days because some king hasn't in his head that we need to be registered how long did it take for the couple who were great with child to make that four day journey an inconvenient decree of man brought

Mary to the place God ordained for his son to be born man but they didn't know that are you discouraged and confused about how things are going in your life you had your life all planned out you had some of the things about your children all planned out you thought you were making godly plans and they're not turning out the way you thought God would want them to turn out do you get discouraged with how things are going in your life and somebody makes a decree or somebody pulls out in front of you or something happens and all of a sudden your life is no longer the way you planned it and instead of being the way you planned it and thought would be just a huge blessing now is full of trials and now is full of heartache and now every step is a trudge because things just aren't the way you planned have you noticed how

[13 : 39] God uses trial and suffering to bring about his will in your life here's Mary and Joseph no plans to go to Bethlehem but God moves a man who happens to be Caesar to make a decree and God is bringing about his will but in the midst of it Mary and Joseph don't know what's going on James 1 verses 2 and 3 count it all joy my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness count it all joy I'm glad for what God is doing how can I be glad for what God is doing in the midst of things that just throw our life into all kinds of unplanned scenarios and difficulties that we had no concept how can we count it joy we can count it joy because we know the truth that God is in control and God is doing something good in this

Romans 8 28 and we know that for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are the called according to his purpose and just like these situations where God used these hard circumstances to bring Joseph and Mary to the place where Jesus was to be born so we God uses in our lives circumstances and trials to carry out his will in our lives so in the midst of it all Joseph and Mary end up in a town a small town with no room for them no room verses six and seven start out and while they were there I you know I don't know about you but growing up in Christmas pageants and different things that

I'd heard I'd always envisioned that they trudged all night and all day and all night and the steps that were that were you know one mile from Bethlehem Mary's going Joseph Joseph this is happening and that it all happens on the way and she gets there just in time but that's not necessarily the case it says while they were there while they were there the time came for her to give birth we don't know how long that they were there was but that's the way it happened while they were there the time came for her to give birth and she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn now the inn keeper gets a bad rap the word inn here is more like well it's the same word that

Jesus when he says to the disciples go prepare the guest room for the Passover it's an extra room in someone's house it's not necessarily an inn like we think of an inn but it was probably more like he had family in Bethlehem and he stays at their house but there's no room in the guest room of some family member's house it could have been an inn but it's probably more that there was no room there were already people there in Bethlehem because of the census and Joseph's family's house all of them were full and there was no room in the guest room and so they were relegated to the stable not very private there could have been other guests relegated to the stable oft times servants slept in the stable and we're going to make reference to this in just a minute but I want you to think about this this was not a closed door sealed away situation that no one could look into this was a situation where shepherds had to be able to walk through town looking for that sign that we'll talk about in just a minute and find this baby in the middle of the night by walking through town and looking for that sign so what I'm getting at is not very private not very private at all the scripture says that when she gave birth she swaddled him and now I know that's part of the sign but swaddling it's the same thing as people do today it's to take claws now there were a couple different ways and we won't go into all the ways but they would take claws and they would wrap the baby tightly now there are reasons for that now maybe the same reasons but they're they're thinking at the time it was very loving because you would wrap the baby very tightly his bones would grow straight and he would be a good healthy baby and so they would swaddle him and it was a sign that people loved this child there were people who would take their children and just throw them away that was not uncommon in those days but this child was a loved child these were loving parents they swaddled it but they had to do some makeshift parenting here they were in a stable how public it is we're not sure and she gives birth in the stable it's not always not always clean as she gives birth delivers the baby wraps him she lays him in a manger now the manger is a place where you feed animals it's not always clean but it's probably one of the cleaner places in the stable hardship and necessity caused

Joseph and Mary to figure the best place to put Jesus in the midst of the situation was to lay him in a stable it was a lowly place to give birth certainly not what Joseph and Mary had imagined when they lived in Nazareth it's just such an interesting situation the greatest event to this point in all of history and the baby lays in a manger the greatest event to this point in all of history and nobody but Mary and Joseph know just these two people and here they are in a situation can you imagine what they are thinking if you were

[21 : 05] Mary you heard this from the Lord and behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus he will be great and will be called the son of the most high and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and if you were Mary and you heard that what would you expect as you sit there looking at the son of God laying in a manger and nobody knows and nobody cares and if you were Joseph and you had heard from Matthew 1 20 to 23 but as he considered these things he was considering whether to put Mary away as his wife behold an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying Joseph son of David do not fear to take

Mary as your wife for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit she will bear a son and you will call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken!

by the prophet Emmanuel which means God with us and here is Joseph who has heard these words from the angel of the Lord as he watches the son of God lay in a manger and I'm sure they're looking at each other and the thoughts are going round and round in their head and they're thinking really really a manger for what I have heard what did they experience at that point the noises of a busy city at night no one caring about the birth of this baby no one notices a baby born in a stable to poor out of town parents nobody knew what was God doing and we know from other gospels that

God had fulfilled prophecy by bringing them here to Bethlehem that Jesus might be born there but Luke doesn't mention that and Joseph and Mary will not know that God brought them to Bethlehem on purpose for months maybe years not until the wise men come and say we went to Herod and asked where the king was to be born and he brought some prophets out and they said oh Micah 5 2 says in Bethlehem because that's what's prophesied and for years they would not know the truth of why they went through that trouble until that point but here they sit the night Jesus is born and they're looking at each other and they're thinking what I have heard this doesn't make sense what I know this doesn't compute what is God doing God is doing many things but

Luke points to a particular thing that God is doing as he then takes us to a scene on a hillside it's a normal scene just outside of town Luke 2 8 and in the same region there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night shepherds were watching sheep that's what they do these sheep were most likely because that was what normally happened these sheep were normally the sheep used in the temple sacrifice so these were shepherds who were raising sheep who would probably be sacrificed in the future in the temple and they were just doing their job but the interesting thing them doing their job put them in a very bad situation being out in the country all the time having to take care of the sheep all the time shepherds almost never did the things that the law required they couldn't they had to stay with their sheep and so shepherds were considered thieves and liars they because they couldn't do what the law required were considered ceremonially unclean the people in

[25 : 49] Bethlehem never gave shepherds a second thought if they did they mocked him despised him so just a normal night out on the countryside the hillside of Bethlehem but suddenly a normal night is not normal anymore as they're watching their sheep an angel appears to the shepherds I want to remind you that there's nothing said here that it says these shepherds were so godly that God decided to send angels to them these were just shepherds doing shepherdly things they had done nothing to deserve this God is gracious and he's gracious to the undeserving and to the outcasts because of who he is not who they are so a normal night out shepherding shepherds all of a sudden are face to face with an angel and he announces in 2 verses 10 through 11 the angel said to them fear not for behold

I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people for unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior who is Christ the Lord stop and think about this these are the absolute first people in the whole world who hear that announcement they're the first people in the whole world to know that a savior has been born and they have been waiting I'm not talking about just the shepherds I'm talking about all the world but all of Israel have been waiting at least 4,000 years for this thing to happen and as a few shepherds sit out on the side of the hill this angel comes and says it's happened a savior is born they were the first to hear that this good news was for all people had to be for them because the news was given to them oh we're just shepherds nobody likes us everybody thinks we're thieves and liars and maybe we are but good news for you for all people a savior is born and then a sign is given and this will be a sign for you you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger the sign of the sign is the oddness of a swaddled baby in a manger swaddling is not odd that's normal it's pointing to loving parents who cared for this baby but the odd thing is to take and put a swaddled baby in a manger that they will be able to see so this angel gives him a sign the sign of the swaddled baby lying in a manger and the giving of the sign is an invitation to the shepherds go and see go look that's what the angel was intending and it's exactly what they did but before they did that suddenly the shepherds get to hear the angels reaction a multitude the things and no one in the world knows about it except

Mary and Joseph and now these shepherds but there's been quietness too long there's been silence too long because that point the angel or suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God and saying glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased we say that we've heard that said in a pageant over and over and over again and that's great but we don't often understand what is conveyed in what the angel says there this is the most glorious news to this point in history this is the most glorious news that an angel has ever announced the savior is born and the angels who watched

God create the earth and sang his praise at the beginning of the earth the angels that watched God give promise after promise after promise the angels who watched God interact with people as he made covenants with them and showed his grace and mercy to them the angels who watched over this whole process the angels who came and told Zachariah that he was going to have a son the angel that came and told Mary that she was going to carry the son of God all those angels at this point come to the pinnacle of what God has done in all creation to this very point and they're overwhelmed with what God is doing and the angels recognize their responsibility to give glory to God for what he's doing they can't hold it in anymore here they are they've watched God do it they've watched this baby be brought to Bethlehem miraculously sovereignly and even though these parents don't understand what's going on

God has done it and in their midst the son of God has taken on flesh and the angels burst into heaven say glory to God in the highest I think what they're saying is!

[32 : 11] we're! giving glory God haven't taken on flesh is now born on this earth for the sole purpose of living and dying to save a people for himself the angels just couldn't take it they just had to shout God deserves all glory the greatest glory because God has done for men what man does not deserve who would imagine that a being so high and glorious humble himself to such a point as to take on flesh and suffer for fallen creatures oh the wonder of that moment of seeing the angels give

God the most glorious praise they could ever muster now I think there's coming an even greater day and we can read of that in revelation 5 where all the angels all of the angels and all of God's people and even those who would not submit to him will fall down and worship the lamb but this is the beginning of his act and it's the greatest act of God to this point on behalf of humans and so they burst forth the angels recognize the blessed position to those God has shown grace God is about to provide peace to his people between them and each other but especially between them and him God is blessing them with the greatest blessing he could ever bless and he's fulfilling the promise he made right after the fall I will put enmity between you and the woman between your offspring and her offspring he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel glorious well the shepherds didn't say well that was nice pass me some water they reacted to the announcement they believed what the angels said they obeyed and they left their sheep maybe somebody was left there

I don't know but they left their sheep and they investigated middle of the night a group of shepherds walking through Bethlehem trying to look into stables and they're looking for that one stable where there's a baby in a manger and they found that baby and they talked with Mary and Joseph about what they had seen and they walked away and they told everyone that would listen what God has done and Mary ponders it all in her heart the news is out the news is out but take note of the messengers just a small band of outcasts

I'm guessing at numbers three five ten know the best news since the fall of man Savior is born and they couldn't keep it to themselves and when they saw it they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child that's what they did God has done the most amazing thing for us let me tell you let me tell you what I heard what will you do with this announcement Christian do you believe now yes I'm a Christian I'm trusting Christ do you rehearse this gospel to yourself do you remind yourself that God in his greatness sent his son to take on flesh and he did it in this kind of situation and he did it to provide redemption for us do you believe it do you rehearse that gospel to yourself do you let the good news of

Christ coming and working for you feed your faith do you remind yourself of what your savior has done for you do! you believe! do you tell others is this such good news that you cannot keep it to yourself does it flow out of your life every day do you glorify God the angels were not even the object of what God was doing they were not singing about what God was doing for them but as they watched what God was doing for us their joy their desire to glorify God overflowed they couldn't help but sing his praise they opened their mouths and filled the heavens with his praise do you glorify God what God did here was for us us people not angels are your lips silent

[38 : 48] Robert Robinson wrote a hymn we've sung many times mighty God while angels bless you verses five and six brightness of the father's glory shall your praise unuttered lie fly my tongue such guilty silence sing the Lord who came to die hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah amen from from the highest throne in glory to the cross of deepest woe all to ransom guilty captives flow my praise forever flow one one of the things I've hinted at but not spoken of directly is remember I talked about the shepherds God didn't tell Caesar or Herod or the religious leaders he told people that didn't look like they deserved it and I think

Luke's whole purpose for telling this account everything he said was true he left nothing important out and he said it accurately but he was pointing to the fact that what Christ has done he has done for the lowliest for those who know they're nothing who know that they need a savior who know that they can't make themselves right before God so unsaved friend this savior has not only been born he's lived a perfect life he's taken the sins of his people upon himself and suffered God's wrath for their sin this news is not just for Christians it's for those who need Christ the savior of the world is born the God of the universe loved us so much he was willing for his son to humble himself and take on flesh and be born in this fashion where nobody knew so that he might live and die for you and if you're here and you're feeling the weight of your sin that's hope that's something to cling to trust him he calls you to trust in what he has done for you let's pray together thank you father for the greatest news the world had known to this point and lord thank you for the news how good it is for us i pray that it's something we always consider that we remind ourselves of frequently and i pray that you would open our eyes to see the wonder of who god is and what he's done in jesus name amen let's stand and sing hymn 239 you'll recognize it's who who is this so weak and helpless to