

Christ the Lord

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[0:00] Thank you, Chloe. Oh, thank you. Thank you, Chloe. That was awkward, right? Thank you, Chloe, for serving us. Would you please read the birth narrative, the story of the birth! The birth of Jesus here in Luke chapter 2, and then we're going to continue on from this in our text.

We'll start our preaching today, Luke 2, verse 8. But for now, listen as Chloe reads Luke chapter 2, beginning at verse 1. 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 cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Thank you. When the judge enters the courtroom, you will not hear the bailiff or the clerk say, hey, everybody, Bob is here now, so we can get started. Instead, you will hear the clerk or the bailiff say something like this, all rise. The district court of Cass County, North Dakota, is now in session. The Honorable Judge Steele presiding.

If you are at a political event, you are not going to hear the master of ceremonies say, hey, everyone, I want you to know, Bob is here and going to speak with us today.

Instead, you will hear someone say, the president of the United States. And then the band will play Hail to the Chief. I like that part. Favorite part.

[2:14] We call her Jenny, or mom, or sister. But earlier this fall, at the Perry Center fundraiser, our friend Jenny was introduced as Dr. Brotland.

If you're on a team, I know none of you kids are calling out to the person in charge on the sidelines, hey, buddy, what play do you want us to run next? No, that is coach to you, isn't it? And if you're flying, which maybe some of us will do this season, if you are flying, you won't hear someone come on to the PA system on the airplane and say, hey, it's your friend Bruce. Just wanted to let you know what's about to happen.

No, you are going to hear someone say, this is the captain speaking to you from the flight deck.

Titles tell us something about who someone is. They tell us about the office that that person holds, and they tell us how we should respond.

Perhaps you have heard the name Jesus Christ, and you assume that Christ is his last name, like Martinson or Cut.

[3:49] But Christ is not a name. It is a title. It is more like the honorable, more like doctor, more like coach or captain.

When the angel says Christ, this title tells us something about who Jesus is, and the office that he has been installed into, and how we are to respond to him. We've already sang this title multiple times today.

We use the word Christ in our songs. Here's where we're heading. God sends those smeared by the Holy Spirit to bring the life of heaven into the stuff of earth.

That's where we're going. Look with me at Luke chapter 2 and verse 8. In the same region, in other words, nearby Bethlehem, where the story that Chloe just read happened.

Nearby, in the same region, there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

[5 : 09] If you were with these shepherds, and you were out in a field, away from town, middle of nowhere, you would want a flashlight, or, I guess, a lantern, because it would be dark.

It would be dark. And I am afraid of the dark. And maybe you are too. I would want a light or a lantern. So when the glory of the Lord is suddenly shining around these shepherds, I expect that they are squinting, and shielding their eyes, and stumbling around just a little bit.

This brilliant glory recalls Zechariah's prophecy from the end of Luke 1. And since we sang about it, I wanted to draw this line for you, so if you're into taking notes, you can draw a line.

Look at Zechariah's prophecy back in chapter 1, probably just a few verses away. Chapter 1 and verse number 78.

Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, is prophesying, and he says this, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace.

[6 : 39] So you're with these shepherds. You're out in the field. It is dark. It is quiet, except for the occasional bleeding of a lamb, and then wham!

A blazing light. I suspect we all would be filled with great fear. And while your eyes are trying to adjust to this light, you hear a voice speaking.

Verse 10. 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.

Fear not. Don't be afraid. Are you kidding me? I am scared to death right now. How can you possibly say don't be afraid?

[7 : 40] Well, the angel tells us, because this good news that I am bringing will replace your great fear with great joy. Do you see that in your Bible? Great fear is about to be replaced with great joy.

What is this good news? Well, good news is the word that we see elsewhere in the New Testament translated gospel. And this good news isn't just for some.

Did you see it? It's for all the people. That's good news. What is the good news? Today is the birthday of a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

Verse 12. And this will be a sign for you. Here's how you can know that I am telling you the truth. Here's how you can validate the words that I've just said.

Here's how you'll know. This will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

[8 : 56] Now, think about this. A newborn baby in Bethlehem. Not notable. A newborn baby in Bethlehem wrapped in swaddling cloths.

Again, very normal for their time. Not special. Nothing that's going to be a sign for them that this angel's message is true.

But how about a newborn baby lying in a feeding trough? Oh, yeah. That would be weird, wouldn't it? I mean, kids, imagine a newborn baby.

That tiny, little, beautiful newborn baby. And you go to visit someone's house and their newborn baby is lying on the mat in the closet or maybe in the garage where the dog sleeps.

You would go, oh, that's unusual. That's weird. That would be a sign for us that we really did see and hear an angel.

[10:07] If we found this baby in a manger, that would be something. And then, as if this dark, silent night was not already shocking enough, look what happens next.

Verse 13, And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, the army, there is now an army of angels praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest.

Christ 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 they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they, the shepherds, made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child, and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. If you're taking notes, follow with me this thread that we get, it gets lost in our translation, but I want you to follow this thread that Luke is weaving with.

[11:48] Look at Luke chapter 1 and verse 37 and 38. We talked about this a couple weeks ago. 31, or sorry, Luke 1 verse 37 and 38.

The angel says, for nothing, this is the, this is the, the word underneath this, no word, no word, nothing, no word will be impossible with God.

And Mary said, behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word. And then in Luke chapter 2, 15, the verse that we just read together, the angels go away from heaven and the shepherds said to one another, let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing.

Thing there is the word word. Let us see this word that we have heard. We've heard a word from the angel. Let's go see this thing, this word.

And having found the newborn baby in a manger, verse 17, the shepherds make known the saying, the word that they heard from the angel.

[13:09] And finally, in verse 19, Mary treasures all these things, and underneath things is again, the word word.

She's treasuring all of these words that she has heard. think about this. If God didn't send his angel to reveal what he was doing to Zechariah and to Mary and to Joseph and to the shepherds, how would we ever have known what he was up to?

how would we ever have known and understood that God had reached down into time, that God the Son had become a baby?

We would never have pieced this together. look at the shepherd's response.

How did they respond to this word from the angel? In obedience to that word, they go. And in Bethlehem, in a manger, they see baby Jesus and their faith is confirmed.

[14:31] They share the good news, the good word that they had heard from the angels. they become witnesses to the gospel. And then, just like the angels, they glorify and they praise God.

The shepherds become not just witnesses, but worshipers. Verse 20, and the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them.

I read a book a while back that talked about how a sermon is like skiing down a mountain.

Most of us, most of us, when we go skiing down a mountain, we don't tuck our poles and just bomb our way down the mountain.

Most of us are going to do something like this, right? We're going to slalom back and forth and make our way down this mountain.

[15:59] I say most of us. I don't know about all of us. Most of us are going to do it that way. This is how a sermon works, too. We start somewhere, we need to get somewhere else, and along the way, we're going to slalom a bit back and forth.

Now, occasionally, when you are hearing a sermon, you may hear the preacher who may take a long slalom out there before coming back, and you might wonder, I don't know, I don't know what that was all about.

Felt a little distracting there for five minutes, but he did kind of come back, and so it's all going to be okay. We did this last week. We took kind of a longer slalom out so that we could get Isaiah 7, 8, and 9, and we could hear about Emmanuel.

in order to grab Christ and understand what is in this title, and how should we respond to this title.

We've got to take a little longer slalom in order to come back, and then we'll land this. Okay? A couple weeks ago, we learned that Juan and Jan and Sean and John, right?

[17:17] I even learned later that Ivan, they are all the name John just in different languages. In the same way, Jesus in English is Jesus in Greek, which is Yeshua in Hebrew.

All the same name, just in different languages. languages. Similarly, Christ in English is a transliteration of the word Christos in Greek, which is the same word translated Mashiach in Hebrew.

Mashiach means anointed one, or more literally, the smeared one. Now, I am not a big fan of greasy, oily things, but I'm going to make an exception for this one thing.

In the Old Testament, God directs his people to make a special kind of oil, a fragrant oil, a precious oil made with spices and smelly flowers and things, and this is a special oil, and they are to use it to mark people and places as holy.

Genesis 28. Jacob, he's fleeing from his brother Esau. He stops for the night, he uses a stone as a pillow, and he dreams about a ladder that is reaching up to heaven, a ladder from heaven to earth.

[19:06] And then when he wakes up, he does something so interesting. Genesis 28 and verse 16. Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, surely the Lord, Yahweh, is in this place, and I didn't know it.

And he was afraid and said, how awesome is this place? This is none other than the house of God. And this is, notice these words, the gate of heaven.

So, early in the morning, Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head, and he set it up for a pillar, and he poured oil on the top of it.

The Lord is here. This is a special place. This is a bridge or a gateway between earth and heaven. We should mark this place.

So, Jacob takes his stone, flips it on its end so that it stands up and it looks like a little obelisk or something like that, and then he pours oil over this stone to mark this place as a special, holy, sacred place.

[20 : 27] When God gave Moses the instructions for building the tabernacle in Exodus chapter 30, he says this, prepare from these a holy anointing oil, a scented blend, the work of a perfumer.

It will be a holy anointing oil, and with it, you are to anoint the tent of meeting, that's the tabernacle, the ark of the testimony, and so on.

Why would you smear oil? Why would you pour oil over a tent, and over the ark, and over all of the furnishings in the tabernacle?

Why would you do that? This is a sacred, special, holy place. Why? This is the gateway, the bridge between heaven and earth, a place where God's glory is going to come down and touch earth.

we should mark this place with this anointing oil. In addition to places and things, people were anointed.

[21 : 37] For example, priests and prophets and kings. Each one of them is a Mashiach, an anointed one.

But then, as the story of the Old Testament progresses, something changes. The Hebrew scripture begins to speak about another one, another Mashiach, an anointed one.

We read about this in Psalm 2. We read it together. Ryan called it out during our call to worship. Psalm chapter 2. I love this text. The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers conspire together against the Lord and his Mashiach, his anointed one.

the psalmist sing, and prophets like Daniel in chapter 9 proclaim, and Isaiah in Isaiah 61, and they search, and they are wondering, who is this Mashiach?

Who is this anointed one who is yet to come? We've got prophets, we've got priests, we've got kings. who is this one? And for centuries, God's people wait, and wait, and wait.

[23 : 14] and then one dark night, outside of Bethlehem, an angel appears in the sky, and the angel says to the shepherds, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a savior who is Mashiach, Christ the Lord.

Heaven has come down, and at his baptism, we see it again.

John dips the Lord Jesus Christ into the waters of the Jordan, and as he comes up out of the water, what happens?

The spirit of God descends upon Jesus like a dove. This is a special place. More importantly, this is a special person.

Heaven has come to earth. earth. It's Jesus. He is God's Mashiach.

[24 : 47] He is the anointed one, the promised one. And then, in Luke chapter 4, Jesus stands in the synagogue in Nazareth, opens the scroll of Isaiah, and reads this quotation from Isaiah chapter 61.

Jesus is speaking, and he says, get this, the spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me.

I am Mashiach. I'm the anointed one from Psalm 2. I'm the anointed one from Isaiah 61. I'm the anointed one from Daniel chapter 9.

It's me. Jesus continues to proclaim good news to the poor, to proclaim the year of our Lord's favor.

Listen again to what the angels say to the shepherds. Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace among those with whom he is pleased, with those whom he favors.

[25 : 59] it's all coming full circle and it is all about Jesus. Christ is not Jesus' last name.

It is his title, like the honorable judge or Christ. Jesus is the promised Messiah, Mashiach, the anointed one.

we know who he is. We know what office he holds. How should we respond to this one?

Well, after his death and resurrection, something interesting happens. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit.

the Holy Spirit comes down from heaven to dwell inside of God's people.

[27 : 09] You know what that makes us? The smeared ones. This is the exception that I'm making for greasy, oily things. We are the smeared ones.

We are the ones smeared by the Holy Spirit, filled with the Holy Spirit. We are the anointed ones who follow the anointed one.

And this is why followers of Jesus are called Christians. we also are anointed with the Spirit like He was anointed with the Spirit.

And that means wherever you go this week, you don't go there alone. You carry God's presence, the Spirit's anointing with you.

Like Jacob's ladder, or like the tabernacle, or like Jesus himself, wherever you are becomes a place where heaven touches earth.

[28 : 28] And so when you forgive instead of retaliating, or when you tell the truth instead of trying to protect yourself, or when you choose humility instead of control, or when you speak the name of Jesus, instead of staying silent, through your ordinary obedience, and through your simple faithfulness in whatever circumstances you find yourself, you, yes, you, child of God, smeared by the Holy Spirit, bring the life of heaven into all of the stuff of earth.

Here's a question to carry with you this week that I know will be busy and in some cases will feel stressful and we are going to face temptations and hardships and adversities perhaps this week that we haven't even considered yet.

Here's a question to carry with you. Where is God inviting me to bring his presence right where I already am?

If Jesus is the Savior who is Christ, then God keeps his promises.

And if Jesus is the Savior who is Christ, the Lord, then you must respond to him.

[30 : 09] And I love how Paul writes about this in his first letter to Timothy. He says this, chapter 1 and verse 15, Christ, Mashiach, the anointed one, the smeared one, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Are you a sinner? Can you admit that? Sinners need a Savior. This is the good news of the gospel. Christ, Jesus, came into the world to save sinners like me and like you.

Philippians, chapter 2, tells us that a day will come when every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth. And on that day, something else I think very interesting will happen.

In another echo of the angel's words, every tongue will confess. What will every tongue confess? That Jesus Christ is Lord.

Lord, all of this to the glory of God the Father. Are you looking forward to that day, child of God? Are you eagerly looking forward to that day when everyone, every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord?

[31 : 42] Lord, until then, by God's grace, we go as those smeared by the Holy Spirit, sent by God to bring the life of heaven into the stuff of earth.

earth. If you are looking for a Savior, then Jesus came for you. If you are looking for someone to follow, then follow Christ, God's anointed one.

If you are looking for hope, call upon the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, death, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Let's pray. Good Father, we are grateful to receive your word.

We're grateful to have our hearts stirred by this reminder, this beautiful title that we sing that we remember Christ.

[32:59] Would you please take your word? Would you please take this phrase, Jesus Christ is Lord, and implant this word deep down in our hearts so that we live in light of this reality that the Savior, Jesus, who is Christ, your anointed one, has come, and that he is Lord, and because he is Lord, all owe allegiance to him.

Perhaps, good Father, today would be the day when someone would call upon the name of Jesus for the very first time, and their allegiance would be transferred from the things of this world, from the kingdoms of this world, to the kingdom of our God and of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today could be that day. Blessed Holy Spirit, please do that kind of life-giving work among us so that some poor, hurting, conflicted, convicted sinner responds by repenting and believing this gospel, this good news, that the Son has come to dwell with us, that he is the anointed one.

Father, would you please help us as we consider our lives in light of who Jesus is? If we are Christians, then would you please help us more and more to look like Christ, to act like Christ, to sound like Christ, to respond like Christ, would you please help us?

We live in a dark, painful world so often contrary to these beautiful things of Jesus and who he is.

[35:10] And we find it hard to be faithful, hard to be gentle, hard to be reasonable and peaceful and calm and humble. Oh, but Father, you have called us and you have given us the Holy Spirit, smeared us with that spirit so that we can be like Jesus.

Would you please help us? We ask that we could this week bring the light of heaven right into the ordinary stuff of earth.

earth. We ask this for your glory and our good and for the advance of the kingdom of light and life and love of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is in his name that we pray. Amen. Amen.