

Today a Savior for You!

☆ In the town of David
 ☆ Has been born ✦ Christ the Lord

In the name of Jesus our newborn Savior, dear rejoicing Christians:

Not all the songs of Christmas are happy songs. Remember this verse? *“And in despair I bowed my head, ‘There is no peace on earth,’ I said, For hate is strong and mocks the song Of peace on earth, good will to men.”* Those words were penned by the most dearly loved poet of his day, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. They were part of Longfellow’s Christmas carol during the national tragedy we know as the Civil War. Longfellow had heard that his son was seriously wounded in battle, but still was convinced everyone needed to focus on the true meaning of Christmas especially during tragic times. You may remember better the opening verse: *“I heard the bells on Christmas day Their old familiar carols play, And wild and sweet the words repeat Of peace on earth, good will to men.”*

It’s still true for many folks we know and love; Christmas can be hard. Loss of loved ones, health and wealth, troubled times that try men’s souls can easily turn people in on themselves. We can end up missing Christmas. Christ was born to bring the only kind of peace that dries the tears of those who weep. God obviously did not want anyone to miss the true Christmas. He sent His angel with a whole army of angels to sound the Good News. Stop and look at the powerful words of just one verse. See the Word of God made flesh to be our Love of loves and Hope of hopes: **Today a Savior for You!**

☆ In the town of David

It was a most unlikely place that a **Savior** should be born **for You**. Not just in a stable, but **In the town of David**. Bethlehem is far better known today than it was 2000 years ago. Go back another thousand years and no one knew Bethlehem as **the town of David**. Picture a worried prophet named Samuel hurrying to the tiny town to anoint one of the sons of an unknown Jew named Jesse. If the current King Saul found out, Samuel knew he’d be dead. Seven sons of Jesse passed in front of Samuel, but the LORD kept telling him, “Not that one. Not that one.” Finally, they had to call the youngest, David, in from the fields with the sheep. *“Anoint him. He’s the one,”* the LORD commanded Samuel.

David became king after Saul died, but there still would be no way to connect Bethlehem with Christmas for another 500 years. It wasn’t until the Holy Spirit put the prophecy in the pen of Micah. We heard those famous words you read in today’s Second Lesson: *“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”* (Micah 5:2 KJV)

The *everlasting* God would come from Bethlehem, the **town of David**. That’s how the Wisemen found out a few weeks after Christmas. When the star they had followed from the east momentarily disappeared, they inquired in Jerusalem: *“Where is the one who has been born the king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”* (Matthew 2:2) The Jewish religious leaders told the very paranoid King Herod about Micah’s prophecy, but strangely, none of them went with the Wisemen to see the newborn Savior. They missed Christmas **In the town of David** because they were too busy. And Herod brought tragic grief to every heart and home with a baby boy two years old and under. Tears filled the tiny town with the first bloodshed when Herod’s soldiers killed all the baby boys. We will hear on Sunday how Joseph escaped with Mary and Jesus.

There are so many reasons why I believe the Bible account of the first Christmas. No one could make up a story like this. All those centuries of prophecy, including the *“weeping and great mourning”* in that exact tiny town of Bethlehem, and the decree of Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus that got Joseph and Mary there. They actually lived miles away in Nazareth, but the Emperor from far away Rome was God’s pawn in this awesome history of our salvation. And in all that travel by the expecting couple, no one took notice as God hid His glory under their poverty and lowliness. Not to kings and wisemen, not to priests and churchmen, but to lowly shepherds out in the fields with their sheep came God’s holy angel to appear in the night sky. He took away their terror: *“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”*

Dear friends, are you included in *“all the people”*? Yes, of course! **Today a Savior for You – In the town of David...**

☆ **Has been born** ✦ **Christ the Lord**

Scientifically speaking, Jesus should never have **been born**. Mary and Joseph had not slept together when Mary told him she was expecting. The angel Gabriel told her, *“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”* That naturally raised a question for Mary: *“How will this be...since I am a virgin?”* The angel answered, *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God...For nothing is impossible with God.”* (Luke 1:31-37)

Such news would not be welcomed by Joseph, her fiancée, at least not until the Lord’s angel came and told him it was true: *“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take home your wife Mary, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1:20f)

Can you see what a miracle it is that the virgin promised by God for centuries finally cradled God’s own Son to her breast? How warmly and sweetly God takes our fear away by bringing His promised Christ into the world. This Son of God and Child of Mary would soon be *“anointed with the Holy Spirit and power”* (Acts 10:38) to live the kind of perfect and holy life God demands of everyone. God found a way to supply the perfect holiness we all need to get into heaven. Wars and sickness and sadness and death all came into this world because of Adam’s sin. God’s Book of books, the Bible, tells us, *“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 6:23)

Christmas truly is an awesome wonder that God would take our human flesh to become one of us. Jesus volunteered from eternity to do for us what no one else could: to live as our Substitute under God’s law, and to die as our Substitute under God’s wrath. No one could dream up such a soul-saving scenario – except God who is infinite in knowledge. No one would dare ask God to do this – except God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in infinite love. No one could pull it off – except God by His infinite power.

Today a Savior for You! We celebrate the festival of the Nativity of our Lord today and tomorrow. But no one knows exactly what day of the year it was. *“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)”* (Luke 2:1f) That’s more information than we have for any other person of antiquity. Even my great grandfather was not sure of his exact birthday. You know what **Today** is? Not just “the first day of the rest of your life.” God says **Today** is the most important day of your life: *“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart.”* (Hebrews 4:7) Don’t let Christmas pass you by. The angel said: *“for you.”* Sweep every corner of your heart clean of anger and bitterness. The Prince of Peace nestles as easily as a baby in your arms. So sweetly comes God’s Gift of faith in the Christ-Child with peace that the world cannot give. No credit card bills. No returns. The right size **for you** wherever you are. **Today a Savior for You!** Merry Christmas from God! Amen.

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