

*(*This is mere machine translation without human editing due to the lack of time.)*

“In the manger.”

Luke 2:1-12

December 15, 2024

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Introduction

Just as the seventh day after six days of work is considered the Sabbath, the pastoral staff of Megumi Church is entitled to a “sabbatical leave” in the seventh year of ministry, a paid leave of absence for subsequent ministry. The word may not be familiar to you, but it comes from the Latin word meaning “Sabbath” in the Bible, and it started at Harvard University in 1880 and spread to companies and universities in various countries since the 1990s.

This year was the 7th year for me and Dr. Hong, so this summer I was also able to take a sabbatical leave and visit Nepal with Dr. and Mrs. Richan, and Korea with my relatives, Dr. and Mrs. Sunbang, and people from Taebang Church and Onsarang Church. I was able to visit Chautauqua Community Church in Nepal and Daebang Church in Korea to see the construction of both churches. I know that Dr. Himchang explained the congregation building of the Taebang Church during last week’s service.

It is not only about the building, but through the design, you can get a sense of the intention of the person who designed it, the philosophy and vision of the company, the work they are focusing on, and also their values. This is because a design is a visualization of a plan, intention, or idea.

So, what kind of salvation plan, gospel message, and values of the Kingdom of God are contained in the history of Jesus’ birth, which was designed by the Creator, the Sovereign God who began salvation history? In particular, what does Jesus the Green Man lying in a manger mean to me? Let us discover together from the Word of God.

Now, let me read today’s Bible passage. Let me read from the Gospel of **Luke 2:1-12** in the New Testament. Let’s read it. **Luke 2:1-12**

1 In those days an imperial decree came from the emperor Augustus that the whole world should be enumerated.

2 This was the first registration of the inhabitants when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

3 And all the people went back to their cities to register.

4 Joseph also went up from Nazareth, a city of Galilee, to Bethlehem, a city of David in Judaea, because he belonged to the house of David and was of his lineage.

5 He went up from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea, to register with Mary, his godmother, who was pregnant.

6 But while they were there, the moon was full, and Mary gave birth to her firstborn son,

7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son. And she wrapped him in cloth and laid him in a manger. 7 And she wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 Now there were shepherds in the region, keeping night watch over their flocks in the field.

9 Then the angel of the Lord came to them, and they were greatly afraid, because the glory of the Lord shone around them.

10 And the angel said to them. Do not be afraid. Look! I announce to you the great joy that will be given to this whole people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. This is Christ the Lord.

12 You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. That is the sign for you.

From the Edict of Augustus (vv. 1-2)

Looking at verses 1-2, today's content begins with Emperor Augustus' edict to register all the inhabitants of the world. Augustus is a title meaning "dignitary," and his name was Octavian, who became the first emperor of the Roman Empire. After his father-in-law Julius Caesar was assassinated, Rome was in a state of civil war. Octavianus ended the civil war and brought peace, so that people called him "Gospel," "Lord of Peace," or "Messiah" when he became emperor. Augustus was also called the "Son of God" because his father-in-law Caesar had been declared "God" by the Roman Senate.

What a surprise, God the Father starts the history of the birth of Jesus, the true Prince of Peace, the Messiah, the Son of God, and the fulfillment of the promise of the birth of the Savior, through the edict of the first Roman Emperor Augustus, who was called by the very same title as Jesus Christ. And Luke, the author of this Gospel, contrasts the two and turns our eyes to Jesus, the true Prince of Peace, the Savior, the Son of God.

A survey of the entire world's population. Its purpose is for tax collection and conscription. It is a massive and laborious task, but in accordance with Augustus' edict, which is also a manifestation of power and confidence, all the people are on the move and return to their respective homelands. And it is recorded in verses 4-5 that Joseph and Mary were among them.

Resident registration could have been done only by the male, the patriarch of the family. And Mary was heavily pregnant. But he went with her. I imagine that in Nazareth, there must have been misunderstandings and bad rumors about Mary, and they had no place to stay, no one to rely on, and they were anxious to leave Mary behind.

Therefore, Joseph took Mary and moved from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The distance is about 150 km, and the elevation of Nazareth is 400 m, while Bethlehem is a little higher, about 775 m. Bethlehem is a little higher, about 775 m. It was a town on a hill higher than Nazareth.

The navigation system told me that it would take 16 hours on foot from Tsuchiura Megumi Church to Kameari, which is about 51 km. 50 km a day for 3 days, so the journey with the pregnant Mary would have taken much longer. But Joseph protected Mary the whole way, and I think they moved on, believing the news of Jesus' birth from the angel and the promise of the Messianic prophecy they knew, as Mary's place was right beside them. They seemed to be moving by the edict of Augustus, but in fact they were led by God, who also used them, and by the Word of God, following the Word. This is an important historical view, worldview, and perspective for us as Christians. Believing that our steps are also in the Lord's plan and in His hands, we, too, discover God who is the protagonist of history and walk in obedience to Him, and we hope to be the fulfillment of His Word.

Birth of Fat Jesus (vv.6-7)

In verses 6-7, we finally get the record of the birth of our Savior Jesus. Almighty God the Father finally brings the Savior to the stage of history to save all mankind, but the design of God's history is surprising. The Savior is born and laid in a manger.

In the nativity play of Jesus, it is often depicted that Mary gives birth to Jesus in a stable because there was no room in any of the inns, and I learned in the biblical archaeology class at TCU that the houses in Israel were built like this (see illustration) (1 entrance 2 courtyard 3 living room 4 kitchen work area 5 roof top 6 (5 rooftop 6 livestock pavilion)).

It was made of brick and was a two-story or one-story house with a rooftop. Livestock were also valuable, and if kept outside they could be stolen, so they were often kept inside the house. In this photo, the livestock pens are on the right as you enter the house from the front door. Each house had a guest room for entertaining guests.

When I go to Korea, I often spend time at my relatives' house. When I told them that I was going this time, my mother's older brother, an uncle and his wife, prepared a space for me in their house and I spent time there. But it was the time when all the people had returned to their respective towns, so even though Mary was pregnant, there was no more available space in that relative's house, and all they had was a livestock shed. In other words, I imagine that they were not very welcoming, unlike when they went to see Elisabeth. And verse 6 says "while they were there," so I think Mary gave birth to Jesus there, not as soon as they arrived, but after spending a few days there.

A newborn baby is washed clean, wrapped in clean cloths, and placed in a clean and sanitary environment. It depends on the environment and circumstances of the birth, but I don't think they are put in a manger, a place where they put the animals' food. It is a cold manger made of stone. There is no pomp of a king's birth, no joyful bustle, no warmth. There is only the reality that no one is welcome and there is no space to welcome the Savior.

John 1:11

"He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him."

This describes the people who did not accept Jesus. Even though He is the Messiah whom the Israelites had long been waiting for, the one who would save them and give them freedom and peace. The reason for this is that none of them imagined that their Savior would be born in a dark, cold, dirty cattle shed and laid in a manger. So their ideals and reality did not connect.

For the people, Augustus was closer to their ideal Savior and the standard than Jesus. What about us? We need the Lord. We need salvation.” But do we welcome and accept Jesus, who, as in Philippians 2, for our sake, gave up His divine nature, though He was the image of God, emptied Himself, took the form of a servant, became like us, humbled Himself, and even lay down in a manger? Are we not seeking the words we want to hear, rather than the words Jesus gives us? And are you aware that the Savior is right in front of you?

○The baby lying in a manger = sign for us (vv. 8-12)

Luke repeats “in the manger” three times in these two chapters, emphasizing that this Jesus lying in the manger is our Savior.

So why did God design the birth of His only begotten Son Jesus in this way? What does it mean to us that God laid Jesus in a manger?

I looked at the construction of the house of Israel and it seemed to represent us human beings. How about you all? There are parts of the house that can be shown to people, clean spaces where people can be accepted, and there are dark, cold, dirty spaces like a corral that you can't show or tell people about and usually keep a lid on. A shabby, miserable space filled with sin, self-centeredness, hurt, pain, anger, frustration, fear, and so on. We all have spaces that we can't do anything about even if we wanted to clean them up.

But today's passage is right there. As the Savior who died on the cross to forgive us of our sins in our lowest place, our shabbiest and most miserable place. As our King, so that we can no longer live centered on ourselves, but on God. As our Healer who heals our wounds. Anger to joy. To turn discontent into thanksgiving. To transform fear into peace and bless us.

Through today's passage, the birth of Jesus, God shows us and tells us that there is no place where Jesus cannot be hope, no place where he cannot shine

as light, and no one who cannot be made alive as life. Just as it is in the darkness that light is most noticeable, shines, and comes into its own.

On our second day in Nepal, after the early morning prayer meeting in the morning, we went to see the progress of the construction of the church together and went to select the lighting for the church, and in the afternoon we went to a church member's house for bible study. This is what Megumi Church calls a home meeting. The house is a family that raises livestock and vegetables, and they live in a house made of tin, like an Israeli house, with a livestock shed first and a room in the back, and they have two lovely elementary school daughters. **(2 photos in 1 PPT)**

And as soon as we entered the house, they welcomed us, let us sit in a special seat, and treated us with drinks and food. The environment was not so clean compared to our current situation, as Dr. Richan told me from Japan that I should not drink the water.

I could only understand a few parts of the Bible that Mr. Richan taught me in English, but even so, the children and adults were happy to read the Word of God, listen to the message, praise, and pray, without being limited by poverty or environment. I was amazed at the sight of each person who was truly happy to have met Jesus and to have been saved. And I was moved beyond words, and at the same time, I was approached with the question, "What about me?"

And I was overflowing with gratitude that I was invited to be there, too, where the joy of Jesus' presence with us was overflowing. It was a day that I will never forget, and a time to experience and understand the words of today's passage in a very real way. And although the two weeks in Nepal were physically challenging in some ways, spiritually it was a lively time, with much encouragement from the Nepalese church members.

Mary and Joseph looking at Jesus lying in the manger, I think they were anxious at first. I wonder if this child is really the Christ, the Savior for us. But the angel also said to the shepherds in verses 11-12 But the angel also says to the shepherds in verses 11-12, "The midget lying in the manger is a sign that he is the Savior for them. And when they saw the shepherds coming and worshipping

Him, and the doctors coming and worshipping Him, and offering Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh, I think that Mary and Joseph's joy, gratitude, and expectation for the fulfillment of God's promise gradually increased. It took time for the disciples to truly accept Jesus as their Savior. It may take time for us, too. But just as God sent shepherds and doctors to Mary and Joseph, He will transform us into people who can accept Him.

Jesus has already come to our manger. And He is with us now. God is in the process of changing us from the inside out and making us alive through Jesus whom He has sent deep into our hearts.

John 1:4-5

4 In Him was life. This life was the light of men.

5 The light shines in the darkness. Darkness did not overcome it.

Summary

Jesus' light shines deep inside of us. What do we believe? What do we hope for? What kind of love are we living? What are we hurting and what are we running away from? What troubles us, what sins do we carry? What do we want to be and what do we long for? Where are we headed?

Christmas is a time to welcome Jesus Christ, who came to the darkest darkness of each of us, to the manger, to be illuminated by his light, to know our true selves, to know who we are loved with God's great love, and to know the great God. As Paul confesses in Galatians 2:20, from a life of trying to do what is right, believing our own words and relying on our own strength, we confess that "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me," and we experience this more and more in our daily walk, running further toward the Lord. Let us be transformed together into those who run toward the Lord, those who live with the Lord who is Immanuel, and those who praise and worship Him.

Prayer. Luke 2:11-12