

Gospel: Luke 2.1-20

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3All went to their own towns to be registered. 4Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

8In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” 13And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 14 Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!”[15When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” 16So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; 18and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.]

SERMON—

Odd that Mary and Joseph, at the heart of Luke's story about Jesus' birth don't speak. How would they have told the story?

Angels provide melody and lyrics for God's Good news for everyone. Heaven comes to earth on this very day in Bethlehem where a baby is born. This baby will bless and save the world.

The Shepherds speak— reporting the angelic message they've heard. They recount their own experience of a thin place where the holy seeps into the everyday. Now the shepherds can't keep silent as they too sing and tell the story about God's messengers announcing to them Good News for everyone.

Mary is silent. She knows plenty. As she ponders, maybe she recalls her own exuberant revolutionary song from months before. She proclaims that God looks favourably on the lowly and tyrants are relegated to a footnote.

Tonight, taking up the tradition of the shepherds, we bear witness to God's faithfulness.

We sense the wonder and mystery that a baby born in Bethlehem embodies Good News for everyone. We might even celebrate the ways we have witnessed that Good News for everyone. And at the same time, we wonder and hope that "everyone" truly includes "everyone"

Is it possible that the news is good for the governor or the emperor, who know nothing of this child....yet?

What does this Good News mean for all of those conquered people who are sent on a wild-goose chase to sign up for the privilege of paying taxes?

What does the Good News mean for the young women in Afghanistan who in the last few days have been banned from receiving an education?

What does the Good News mean to people in Ukraine hiding in shelters as bombs and missiles destroy their homelands?

God's chosen thin spaces and interventions aren't always dramatic. Even when angelic choirs appear, they sing to a small band of sheep herders...the Saviour is born so far from the seat of power he's unnoticed by the world's movers and shakers. In fact, God seems fond of working in the margins, thin spaces, and behind the scenes.

Luke tells us the Saviour's birth takes place in the city of David. David was nearly overlooked when a priest named Samuel and his delegation come to Jesse's home looking for a king to rule all of Israel. The delegation almost left without a nominee because David's father didn't think to mention him because he was young and insignificant. The priest Samuel asks to meet the lad anyway. Sensing God's Spirit within the boy, Samuel finds his country's next king.

A millennium later in the city of David, shepherds follow heavenly directions to a swaddled baby lying in a feed trough—

God shows up in places where we might dismissively say “nothing to see here”.
God shows up in places we might think of as God-forsaken.

Tonight we yearn to see how God is with us and how Jesus continues to bring Good News for **all** people. Tonight we yearn to witness the ways Jesus is born anew among us....and within us.