

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Luke 2:16

So the shepherds hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer.

Dear friends who have come to see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about;

A child is born. It is placed in the loving arms of its mother. Its father looks on with pride and joy. Friends and relatives come to see the new arrival, and they say, "How precious!" Children are precious gifts of the Lord.

Tonight we have come to worship a Child, Child with a capital C, a precious Child, **the** precious Child that gives a deeper meaning to that word precious, the baby Jesus, our little brother, our Lord, our God, our Savior from sin. Precious Is The Child!

It was the great privilege of angels to first announce the birth of this Child. They appeared to the shepherds out in the fields near Bethlehem and told them: "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." The shepherds immediately dropped everything and hurried off to see the precious Child.

So we have taken time out of our busy Christmas season, time out of our lives to come and see this Precious Child. This child is precious to us not because he is a cute baby, not because we have a sentimental attachment to infants, but because he is our Savior. He is what Christmas is all about. He is what our lives are all about. For what other reason has God given us our lives than that we might see his precious Child, his one and only Son given for our salvation, worship him and take others by the hand to show them their precious Savior.

What did those shepherds find when they arrived in Bethlehem? They "found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger."

They likely met Joseph first, the Child's father? No! His stepfather. The Child's Father is God. The angel had had to explain this to a confused Joseph a few months earlier: "That which is conceived in Mary is of the Holy Spirit." That precious Child is God's Son, true God himself.

Though that child looks so small, so weak, so helpless, he is the all-powerful Son of God, through whom all things were made. The boisterous winds and waves must obey his command, "Be still." The five barley loaves and two small fish must multiply at his bidding. Demons must flee before him. Sickness and disease are subject to his control, and death itself must listen to his voice.

As God's Son, this child is without sin, perfect and holy in every way. At his baptism and at his transfiguration God the Father would proclaim in a voice from heaven: "This is my Son." After viewing that precious Child, the Shepherds could declare with the apostle John: "We have seen his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father." This Child is precious because he is the Son of God.

The shepherds saw Mary, the Child's mother, biological mother, yet a virgin at

this time. Mary was a sinner just like any other natural descendant of Adam and Eve. Unworthy though she was, God chose Mary for that greatest privilege of being the mother of the Savior of the world, her own Savior too. The Child was born of a woman, with our human flesh and blood.

We can trace the child's flesh and blood back to the garden of Eden, to Adam, the father of the human race, and the wife created from his rib, Eve. In rebellion against God they ate of the forbidden fruit, destroying themselves for all eternity, destroying their descendants for all eternity, poisoning the entire human race with sin. If not for the precious Child, we and our children would have nothing to look forward to but an eternity of misery. But Adam and Eve, and we, the children of mankind, were precious in God's sight, so precious that he gave that which was most precious to him, his own son, "born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." Already to his fallen creatures in Eden, God promised that precious Child, the woman's seed, who would crush the devil's head. That precious Child was promised to the patriarchs, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that through their offspring, all nations on earth would be blessed. That precious Child was promised to King David, that his descendant would be the Savior of the world. This is the Child who said to his heavenly Father: "A body you prepared for me."

God's Son was born on earth with human flesh and blood, true God and true man. He is our flesh and blood brother, come to make us children of God and heirs with him of eternal salvation. Precious is the child.

The shepherds saw that Child lying in a manger. There was no room for him in the inn. The Lord of the universe, whom the heavens cannot contain, lies in a manger, the lowliest and poorest creature on earth. He was born to take our place, to endure our poor lowly life and live it perfectly for us, and then to suffer our hell and die our death for us on the cross, to win for us eternal life. Precious is the Child. Though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, so that we through his poverty might become rich.

The words of the hymn describe what the shepherds saw, and God willing what we see tonight: "O Jesus Christ, thy manger is my paradise at which my soul reclineth. For there, O Lord, doth lie the Word made flesh for us; herein thy grace forth shineth. He whom the sea and wind obey doth come to serve the sinner in great meekness. Thou, God's own Son, with us art one, dost join us and our children in our weakness."

This is the Child whom aged Simeon would hold in his arms and say, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." This is the Child who at the hand of John the Baptist would be baptized as the Messiah, the Christ, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This is the Child who in the wilderness would battle off the temptations of the devil for us. This is the Child whose little hands and feet would one day be pierced through with nails, whose head would be crowned with thorns, who would die on the cross for our sins. This is the Child who would leave the grave empty on Easter morning. This is the Child who would open the door of heaven to us sinners. Precious is the Child!

Tonight as we view him who came to save the children of mankind, our Lord, our God, our brother, our Savior; what else can we say? Precious is the Child!

Amen.

Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.