

## **Gospel and Sermon Transcript -Christmas Eve - December 24, 2025**

Some of you may be wondering about Barnabas.

I like that the name means child of encouragement.

And some of you might know the story

of this individual sheep.

He kind of makes his rounds in the rafters

during Advent.

And the tradition is that on Christmas Eve,

he finds his way to the creche.

So that's where he'll be tonight.

There are other traditions, too, that I think maybe

are special and unique to this community.

As you see some angels throughout this tree,

they are ones that have adorned this tree for many years

and have been gradually added onto, I think, over time.

And certainly, it is tradition that we

would get together on a night like this for a candlelight

Christmas Eve communion service.

So one tradition that I have kicked to the curb

is the one where I bart explain until you almost fall asleep

about how communion is going to work

and how we're going to light candles.

We'll get to that.

I'll talk about it when we get to each part.

And it's pretty simple.

And I will try to not wear you down  
with lengthy explanations and long essays.

See, old guys learn eventually.

And there we are.

We are so delighted that you're here.

I know there are some folk who are together with families.

And we are pleased that you would  
share this Christmas Eve with us.

I think the only remaining note would  
be one of invitation that when we do celebrate communion,  
we invite all to the table.

And we want to be sure that you hear that invitation,  
embrace it.

And if you would like to participate,  
please join us when communion is part of the service.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the second chapter.**

In those days, a decree went out from Emperor Augustus  
that all the world should be registered.

This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

All went to their hometowns to be registered.

Joseph 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.

Joseph went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was betrothed and who was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.

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

In that region, there were shepherds living in the fields.

Keeping watch over their flock by night.

An angel of the Lord stood among them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them.

And they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, do not be afraid.

For see, I am bringing to you good news of great joy for all people.

To you is born this day in the city of David,

a Savior who is the Messiah, the Lord.

This will be a sign for you.

You will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth,  
lying in a manger.

Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude  
of the heavenly host praising God and saying,  
glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace  
among those whom God favors.

When the angels had left them and gone to heaven,  
the shepherd said to one another, let us go now.

Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that  
has taken place that the Lord has made known to us.

So they went with haste, and they found Mary and Joseph  
and the child lying in the manger.

And when they saw this, they made known  
what had been told to them about this child,  
and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told  
them.

But Mary treasured all of these words  
and pondered them in her heart.

The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God  
for all that they had heard and seen

as it had been told them.

The gospel of our Lord.

[INAUDIBLE]

Grace to you and peace.

### **The Sermon**

Not long before Jesus was born, the emperor Augustus

ordered the words, the beginning of the good news,

to be chiseled into a stone onto a calendar

that he had devised.

This so-called pranastone declares

that the good news begins on the birth date of the emperor

Augustus.

And the word good news is the same word

we now recognize as gospel.

So this might be why Luke's story mentions Augustus first.

One gets the impression that the emperor is so vain

that he is convinced the gospel is about him, to which Luke

says, yeah, no.

In short order, Luke exposes the imperial world order

for the rapacious user that it is.

On to the next detail.

At the emperor's order, the Roman installed

governor of Roman-occupied Syria named Quirinius

designs a worldwide tax system.

People sweat tears and even blood,

feed the empire beasts, insatiable appetite for power

and luxurious wealth.

That news is good only for the emperor and his totes.

For everyone else, the emperor's news is not good, notably

for one couple making a dangerous journey to Bethlehem, one

of whom in the couple nearly ready to get birth.

Now, Luke conveys us away from palaces

and overcrowded ends to an encampment of wandering shepherds.

And here we witness the contrast between counterfeit good news

and the real deal.

Cosmic glory overtakes the mundane

as the messenger's god has dispatched

announced sure enough good news for all people.

Good news for people that the empire considers nobodies,

like shepherds, for example.

Good news for people displaced by the occupying Roman empire.

Good news for people regarded by the empire as tax units.

Ones who are sent on forced and dangerous trips

to sign up for the privilege of being used by the empire.

The good news that God is with us  
comes in ways that have been called scandalous  
in their particularity.

God enters our existence embodied  
as an infant born in the equivalent of an emergency  
shelter, a newborn swaddled and protected  
by his parents, Mary and Joseph.

So does the good news for all mean all?

Is there good news for Quirinius and the emperor?

Probably not in the short run.

They likely didn't hear Mary's song of good news for the poor  
or about a time when tyrants would  
be chunked from their thrones.

Yet if all does mean all, we live in hope  
that God's not done yet, that God's world creating,  
life sustaining, raising Jesus from the dead kind of love  
and goodness, carves paths of redemption,  
even for tyrants, deposed or otherwise.

So if all truly means all, one day,

God's dream of Shalom will come true.

All will see healing and wholeness of all things.

All will truly mean all.

This is the good news of Christmas.

It is the good news of the days that follow.

It is the good news forevermore.

Amen.