

“The King in the Manger” (Part 1)

December 12, 2010

Text: Luke 2:7

My text this morning is Luke 2:7, but I’d like to read vss 4-7.

Verses 4-7=> *“Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, / in order to register, along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. / And it came about that while they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. / **And she gave birth to her first-born son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.**”*

The question I’d like to pose today is this=> Why was Jesus (the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Creator of the whole universe) laid in a manger?

Why was the most important Person ever born on this planet relegated/reduced to such rustic/unpleasant accommodations at His birth?

Someone: Because Joseph had to go to Bethlehem, and the only place left for him/Mary to stay when they got there, was a stable—which is where she gave birth. That answer seems implied in what Luke has written here in his Gospel.

From a human perspective, that seems a very reasonable answer.

We can easily imagine David’s other descendants racing ahead of Joseph/Mary, to beat the relatives before all Bethlehem’s good sleeping-quarters there were taken.

If Joseph had tried to hurry his/Mary’s progress, Mary might have gone into labor, and today, instead of

singing *Away in a Manger*, we would sing *Away
Along a Roadside*.

But the problem with this answer is that it doesn't take into account that fact that God is sovereign; That God works all things together for good according to His own purposes.

Dan 4:35—“*He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand.*”

If God does whatever He wills among all the inhabitants of the earth, wouldn't He have done whatever He willed with regard to earth's most important inhabitant=> His own Son?

Do we actually believe the events surrounding Jesus' birth were a matter of bad-luck or bad-timing, or that they got away from God?

Or that He got into a last minute rush & lost control of the situation, not having foreseen their housing shortage?

It must have been God's will that His own Son be born in a stable & placed in a manger—an animal's feeding-trough.

That's exactly what God wanted to happen.

He did this to reveal some profound truths to us=>

- * What sort of Savior/King His Son would be, &
- * What kind of people He was coming to save.

God could have sent Jesus to earth as a young/charming Prince,
or a glorious Conqueror.

Someday He will.

When X returns, He'll ride on a white horse with
diadems on His head, & with an army following Him,
also riding on white horses.

But at His 1st Advent, God came as Someone who was
manageable;

Someone who was even weak/needy—a Man.

And not only a man, but a Baby, who needed to be nursed,
just to survive.

This is the amazing truth of what Scripture calls the
“emptying” of the Son of God.

Phil 2:6-7=> *“Although He existed in the form of God,
[He] did not regard equality with God a thing to be
grasped, / but **emptied** Himself, taking the form of a
bond-servant [slave], & being made in the **likeness
of men.**”*

The 2nd Person of the Godhead emptied Himself at His
conception as a man, taking on our weakness,
ignorance, and even our poverty.

But why?

****God sent Jesus to a manger in this world, to make it clear
to us all that He was the God/Savior of: the-humble,
the-poor, and the-sinful.**

*** Jesus Came as the Savior of the Humble**

**The only thing humbler than a baby is a bond-slave, and
Jesus came to earth as both.**

He left behind the glory that was His with the Father before
the world was, & He consigned Himself to humility
and to very humble circumstances.

If Jesus had been born in a palace, the shepherds might have been
reluctant/apprehensive about coming to see Him, with all
those royal niceties and questions of etiquette to deal with;
But there's no such thing as etiquette in a stable.
So they relaxed, and enjoyed the phenomenal truth, of
God's incarnation as a humble Baby.

X had come to the humble of this world in the form of weakness
to which they could best relate=>

As a Baby wrapped tightly in swaddling strips that were
intended to keep Him from scratching His own face
with those sharp little fingernails.

Even God—when He appears among His creatures as a
Baby—had to be managed/cared-for, by a mother.
She wasn't the “mother of God,” as some folks think;
But she was the mother of the Man who was God.

**Isaiah had prophesied on several occasions that Messiah
would come in humility=>**

* In Isa 53:2-3, he had said the Messiah would not come with
stateliness or majesty;

That men would not esteem Him, but rather would despise Him.

* Isa 42:2 said Messiah would come as a humble/quiet person=>

“He will not cry out or raise His voice, Nor make His voice heard in the street. / A bruised reed He will not break, And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish” (42:2-3).

Though He would be the most powerful King on earth, He would not be a tyrant like Herod, who trampled the people’s fields with his armies, or killed their babies, as Herod had killed Bethlehem’s baby-boys.

The Messiah’s omnipotent power would be hidden by a veil of humble humanness.

Jesus once told His disciples that He did not come to be served, but to humbly serve others, by giving His life as a ransom for many (Mt 20:28).

On the last night of His life, He demonstrated that servant-like humility by wrapping a towel around His waste and washing their feet.

But before doing so, He told them they were to follow His example=> *“Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, / and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave” (Mt 20:26-27).*

X came as a humble man to those who were willing to humble themselves under God’s mighty hand, in order to be saved.

Only the humble come to Him, seeking His forgiveness of their sins, on the basis of His grace alone.

The proud/strong prefer to rely on their own powers.

But God requires childlike humility from those He saves.

In 1 Cor 1:27, the apostle Paul wrote=> *“God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, / and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, / that no man should boast before God”* (1 Cor 2:27-29).

I.e., God has chosen the humble rather than the proud, to humble the proud.

Human pride resists humility, viewing it as humiliation and even dehumanization.

So it refuses to humble itself before God.

Pride demands to take God’s place on the throne of man’s heart, usurping His right to rule there.

Spiritual pride wants to pull itself up by its own bootstraps.

It wants to make some sort of contribution to its own salvation in order to preserve its ego and boast in its own flesh.

It also wants to preserve the delusion that it exercises control over its own destiny, rather than lying helplessly/humbly before God like a baby, resting peacefully in God’s grace alone.

It desperately longs to believe it can bring something to the table, with which to negotiate a deal with God, and get from Him whatever it wants.

But we must come to God, just as Jesus came into this world, as humble people who know they can't control their fate.

As Jesus would put it in Mt 5:5=> *“Blessed are the gentle [those who, like wild stallions, have been gentled and humbled by God], for they shall inherit the earth.”*

People who accept the fact of their utter dependence on God to love/save them, just as Jesus accepted His dependence on Mary/Joseph to care for Him, under the providence of God.

They must accept their total dependence on His grace, asking Him for life/forgiveness they cannot earn, any more than a baby could earn its own living.

Jesus came as a humble man, who would save humble men.

The ultimate expression of His humility before God took place when He died on a cross to save His fellow-men from their sins.

Phil 2:8=> *“And being found in appearance as a man, He **humbled Himself** by becoming obedient to the point of **death**, even death on a **cross**.”*

As a result, Jesus can call to anyone/everyone else who humbles himself before God, saying to them=> *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest [Those who have been humbled/wearied by their struggle with sin]. / Take My yoke upon you, & learn from Me, for I am gentle & humble in heart; and YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. / For My yoke is easy, & My load is light”* [i.e., “Rest like a baby in the arms of My grace”] (Mt 11:28-30).

Jesus came for those who will humble themselves like a child.

A baby doesn't complain about its sleeping accommodations.

It can sleep equally well on hay in a manger, or on its mother's lap, resting peacefully with perfect contentment, and trust in her care.

In Mt 18:2, Jesus called a child to Himself, set him before His

Apostles, and said *“Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. / Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*

(Mt 18:2-4).

I.e., unless you become like the humble/trusting Child in the manger, you will never become born-again, enter God's Kingdom, or find rest for your soul.

From the very beginning of His life, X was showing people how to entrust their souls to God, by entrusting His life to a teenaged girl, God had chosen to be His mother.

Then He taught His followers=> *“Let the **children** alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these”* (Mt 19:14).

Why did God send His Son, the King, to earth in a manger?

To demonstrate His own humility, and to call people to emulate that humility by submitting to Him, and humbly entrusting their souls to His care.

*** Jesus Came as the Savior of the Poor**

The manger was a poor man's crib, improvised for a Baby who would never own much in this world, even as an adult.

He'd be born in a borrowed stable, & buried in a borrowed tomb.

In between, He would say=> *"Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head"* (Mt 8:20).

When asked if it was right to pay taxes to Caesar, He would have to borrow a denarius in order to make His point, asking whose likeness was imprinted on the coin, & then saying=> *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's"* (Mt 22:21).

In order to pay His own Temple tax, He had Peter catch a fish, take a coin from its mouth, & use it to pay the tax (Mt 17:27).

When He died, He'd leave nothing behind but a seamless tunic, for which the soldiers who crucified Him would gamble. He had literally owned nothing but the clothes on His back. And even they were taken from Him in the end, so that He left this world naked, just as He had entered it.

In II Cor 8:9, Paul writes=> *"You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became **poor**, that you through His **poverty** might become rich."*

Before His incarnation, Jesus enjoyed infinite wealth in heaven.

He was the Creator who, if He had wanted for anything,
could have simply created it.

But He gave up the riches/glories/pleasures of heaven that
we might gain spiritual wealth through His death.

The shepherds who were told that a Savior had been born to
them, were poor men too.

Seeing Him surrounded by poverty in that manger, they
must have realized that their Savior was to be one of
their own.

**Jesus was born a poor man, to poor Galilean parents, so that
the poor of this world would know that God had sent
them a Champion.**

Isa 11:4 had promised that *“with righteousness He will judge
[govern] the poor, & decide with fairness for the afflicted
of the earth; & He will strike the earth with the rod of His
mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the
wicked.”*

I.e., He will rule the world from the good of the poor, of
whom wicked rules have always taken advantage.

Finally He had arrived—this One who would save the poor
from the wicked, with the rod of His mouth;
And save their souls from the tyranny of sin.

God has always had a heart for the poor.

He had provided for the care of their needs in His Law.

He told Israel’s farmers not to harvest the corners of their
fields, nor gather fruit that had fallen from their trees.

They were to leave these for the poor/needy.

In Lev 25:35, God had also commanded=> *“In case a*

*countryman of yours becomes **poor** and his means with regard to you falter, then you are to sustain him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you.”*

In Deut 15:7, God said=> *“If there is a **poor** man with you,*

*one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your **poor** brother.”*

God turns the financial poverty of the poor into a spiritual

advantage, using it to cause them to cry out to Him, seeking

His grace/help.

Jms 2:5=> *“Did not God choose the **poor** of this world to be **rich** in **faith** and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?”*

The Lord sent Jesus to earth as a poor man, in whom other poor men (people like the shepherds) might believe and find their salvation.

Jesus, being the 2nd Person of the Godhead, had a very generous heart towards the poor.

On the last night of His life, in the Upper Room, He dismissed Judas, to go out and perform his treacherous act of betrayal.

Only Jesus/Judas knew why Judas had been dismissed.

Jn 13:29 says the other Apostles assumed X had sent him out to give something to the poor.

Why, of all the possible reasons, would they assume that?

Prob. because they'd seen Jesus give gifts to the poor so many times before, from the money-box that Judas (the treasurer) carried.

In Lk 14, Jesus told the people at a dinner party=>

*“When you give a reception, invite the **poor**, the crippled, the lame, the blind, / and you will be blessed, since they do **not** have the means to **repay** you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous”* (Lk 14:13-14).

God caused Jesus to be born in a manger as a signal to the poor of this world, that He would save their souls too.

The world had often left them out;

He would never do so.

The scribes/Pharisees taught that rich men are rich because

God has blessed them; and poor men are poor

because God has withheld His blessing from them.

Jesus made it clear that, if anything, the poor are more likely to find salvation than the rich, because wealthy people place their trust in their money, instead of God.

He said=> *“It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. / And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God”* (Mt 19:24).

Why is that? Because the *love of money* is the root of all evil (I Tim 6:10).

Greed/covetousness are idolatry, and man cannot serve both God/mammon.

Either he'll put his faith in money, or in God, but not both.

Poor people, being more attuned to poverty than rich people, and less distracted by wealth, are often more aware of their own spiritual poverty as well.

Jesus said=> *“Blessed are the **poor** in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Mt 5:3).

These are people who no longer trust in themselves and their own righteousness to save them.

The truth is that every man is spiritually impoverished until he finds wealth for his soul in Jesus X.

But not everyone senses his own impoverishment.

Rich people are often so distracted by the riches of this world, that they ignore their poverty of soul/spirit.

The people of Laodicea certainly did, so Jesus told them=>

*“Because you say, ‘I am **rich**, and have become **wealthy**, and have need of nothing,’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and **poor** and blind and naked, / I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become **rich**, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see”* (Rev 3:17-18).

Jesus came as a poor man’s Savior, for those who, recognizing their spiritual poverty, will seek eternal treasure in-Him and from-Him.

*** Jesus Came as the Savior of the Sinful**

The people in the stable with Jesus knew they were sinners, and they knew they needed a Savior.

That's important=> Until a person admits that he's a sinner,
he feels no need for a Savior.

When the angel Gabriel told Mary she was going to become the
mother of the Messiah, her first words were=>

*“My soul exalts the Lord, / And my spirit has rejoiced in
God **my Savior**” (Lk 1:46-47).*

Mary was prob. a very polished/polite and possibly even a
pretty sinner, but she was a sinner nonetheless.
She knew she needed a Savior.

The shepherds also needed a Savior, because they too were
sinners.

When the angel appeared to them, he said=>

*“Today in the city of David there has been born **for
you a Savior**, who is Christ the Lord” (Lk 2:11).*

Others who came to see Jesus in the manger might have been
more obviously sinful.

Some might even have approached the level of the animals
to whom that stable ordinarily belonged.

There are such people, you know.

II Pet 2:12=> *“These, like unreasoning animals, born as
creatures of instinct to be captured and killed,
reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the
destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, /
suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They
count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime” (2:12-13).*

Peter is talking about sinners who have become
hopelessly depraved, and enslaved to some

form of sin that reduces them to the amorality
of an animal.

Sin can turn men into brutal beasts/monsters, like Saul of
Tarsus before he was saved.

**And yet there lies the Baby in the manger, ready to receive
anyone who desires to come to Him, w/o discrimination
of any kind.**

Lying there, totally unguarded/unprotected/harmless, He presents
the picture of God's gracious approachability, inviting all
mankind to come to Him and become saved, no matter how
wicked.

Babies are inherently touchable/huggable.

Unwittingly, they invite us to hold them and cradle
them in our arms.

Baby Jesus is the living image of God's words of invitation
in Rev 22:17=>

*"The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the
one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is
thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of
life without cost."*

**The religious elite of Israel would later accuse Jesus of being
a bit too indiscriminate.**

In Luke 7, a Pharisee invited Jesus to come to dinner at his home.

As Jesus was eating, a lady described in Lk 7:37 as

"a woman in the city who was a sinner," came up
behind Him with an alabaster vial of perfume.

As she knelt before Him, her tears began to fall onto His feet, so she wiped them away with her hair.

Then she anointed His feet with the perfume, kissing them as she did so.

The Pharisee considered this a maudlin/inappropriate display, by a woman of ill-repute.

He thought to Himself=> *“If this man [Jesus] were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner”* (Lk 7:38).

The Pharisee would never have allowed such a woman to touch his feet, let alone display her feelings, as this woman had.

But the woman needed to get near to Jesus more than anyone else there, because she desperately needed His forgiveness, and she knew it.

Jesus told the Pharisee=> *“You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. / For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little. / And He said to her, ‘Your sins have been forgiven.’”* (Lk 7:37-44).

The Pharisee hadn't sought forgiveness because he didn't think he needed it.

And he didn't believe Jesus had the right/authority to forgive people's sins on God's behalf, anyway.

**Jesus came to a stable that must have been permeated by all
the smells of barn animals—including manure.**

He didn't come to the antiseptic smell of a pediatrics ward.

Nor did He come to a palace nursery filled with the
fragrance of incense.

Though He came to the humble as the humblest of men, and to
the poor as the poorest of men;

He came to sinners as a Man who was absolutely sinless.

He came even to the lowest/most-sinful of men/women who,
from the world's p.o.v., were little more than animals.

He came to lepers & touched their flaky/encrusted skin, as
He healed them.

He came to a despised Samaritan woman to ask her for a
drink, and to give her the water of eternal life.

He came to the worst of the worst, to save their sinful souls,
as a sinless Savior.

There has never been another man who was more holy and
spiritually pure than Jesus, and yet there has never been
anyone more approachable/touchable/vulnerable than X.

He is the friend of sinners who now serves as our
sympathetic H.P./Advocate/Intercessor in heaven.

Sinners often feel shut out from God because of their guilt, but
He who sent His disciples into all the world to preach the
gospel to all creation, will never shut out anyone who

comes to Him in humble faith, like that woman with the alabaster bottle of perfume.

No matter what you may have done, Jesus can forgive it.

He won't shut you out, so don't let your pride shut you out from a soul-saving relationship with Him.

Ask Him in faith to forgive your sins and He will.

Chas. Haddon Spurgeon=> “In the manger there He lies, unguarded from your touch and unshielded from your gaze. Bow the knee and kiss the Son of God. Accept Him as your Savior, for He puts Himself into that manger that you may approach Him. The throne of Solomon might awe you, but the manger of the Son of David must invite you.”

That's why the King of kings was born to lie in a manger.

He came to earth as the Savior of the humble, the poor, and the sinful.

Ask He to be your Savior too, if you've never done so.

“The King in the Manger”

December 12, 2010

Text: Luke 2:7

Luke 2:4-7—“*Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, / in order to register, along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. / And it came about that while they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. / **And she gave***

birth to her first-born son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

1. Why was Jesus laid in a manger? Because Joseph had to go to Bethlehem, and the only place left for him and Mary to stay was a [14 stable].

Lk 2:4-7; Dan 4:35

2. It must have been God’s will that His own Son be born in a stable and placed in a manger; that’s exactly what [8 God] wanted to happen.

Phil 2:6-7

God sent Jesus to a manger in this world to make it clear to us all that He was the Savior of the humble, the poor, and the sinful...

*** Jesus Came as the Savior of the Humble**

3. He left behind the glory that was His with the Father before the world was, and He consigned Himself to [18 humility].

Isa 53:2-3; 42:2; Mt 20:28, 26-27

4. Christ came as a humble man to those who were willing to humble themselves under God’s mighty hand in order to be [12 saved].

I Cor 2:27-29

5. Jesus came as a humble man who would save [14 humble] men.

Phil 2:8; Mt 11:28-30; 18:2-4; 19:14

6. Why did God send His Son, the King, to earth in a manger? To demonstrate His own humility, and to call people to emulate that humility by submitting to Him and humbly entrusting their [12 souls] to His care.

*** Jesus Came as the Savior of the Poor**

Mt 8:20; 22:21; 17:27; II Cor 8:9

7. Jesus was born as a poor man from poor Galilean parents so that the poor of this world would know that God had sent them a [20 Champion].

Isa 11:4; Lev 25:35; Deut 15:7; Jms 2:5

8. Jesus, being the second Person of the Godhead, had a very [20 generous] heart towards the poor.

Jn 13:29; Lk 14:13-14; Mt 19:24; I Tim 6:10

9. Poor people, being more attune to poverty than rich people, and less distracted by wealth, are often more aware of their own [22 spiritual] poverty.

Mt 5:3; Rev 3:17-18

*** Jesus Came as the Savior of the Sinful**

10. The people in the stable with Jesus knew they were [16 sinners], and they knew they needed a Savior.

Lk 1:46-47; II Pet 2:12-13

11. The Baby in the manger, lying there totally unguarded, unprotected, and harmless, presents the picture of [12 God's] gracious approachability, inviting all mankind to come to Him and become saved.

Rev 22:17; Lk 7:37-44

12. There has never been another man who was more holy and spiritually pure than Jesus, and yet there has never been anyone more approachable, touchable, and vulnerable than [14 Christ].

13. "The throne of Solomon might awe you, but the manger of the Son of David must invite you." That's why the King of kings was born to lie in a [14 manger].