



# Merry CHRISTMAS

The Divine Intervention

**December 25, 2016**

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## Scripture

### **Luke 2:1-14**

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled.

This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town.

And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son.

She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock.

The angel of the Lord appeared to them

and the glory of the Lord shone around them,  
and they were struck with great fear.  
The angel said to them,  
"Do not be afraid;  
for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy  
that will be for all the people.  
For today in the city of David  
a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord.  
And this will be a sign for you:  
you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes  
and lying in a manger."  
And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel,  
praising God and saying:  
"Glory to God in the highest  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

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## **Our Scripture Reflection**

Every Christmas as we listen to the beautiful nativity story from Luke, we hear the words, "and she laid Him in a manger." What is a manger? A feed trough for domesticated animals. Surely not the most soft and cozy of beds. But there is something profound going on behind the scene. The baby in a feed trough. This baby, Our Savior, would grow up to one day feed 5,000 people. This baby would grow up and sit at table the night before He died and give His apostles bread while saying, "This is my Body." This baby would one day be known by His disciples as "The Bread of Life." Food and feeding. And it all began in a feed trough 2,000 years ago. Now you know.

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## **Food for your Journey**

On a cold, dreary December evening, several hundred people gathered at a large downtown church in Winston-Salem to celebrate the Christmas season. I had gone down a long hallway to help a small boy who was pushing against massive oak doors trying to get outside. The boy appeared to be about 2 years old. He was crying as if his heart would break.

I picked him up, thinking he belonged to someone at one of the Christmas parties. Investigation, however, revealed nothing.

I rushed outside and spotted an old-model car speeding away in the darkness. Gradually, it began to dawn on me that the child had been abandoned.

I made a few calls, and soon the church was filled with people wanting to help in any way they could. Within moments, the local TV stations interrupted their usual programs to ask if anyone knew the identity of the little boy. The next morning, one of the city's newspapers had the child's picture on the front page. Under the picture there was an article describing the events of the evening before. The reporter began his story with this striking line: "Someone trusted the church last night, and the church came through!"

It will be a long, long time before I can forget that newspaper headline. So much of the world's future depends on the faithfulness of the "People of God" to the "Great Commission." There is a deep hunger across our land as countless people grope for answers to the deepest questions of the human spirit. The message of Christ speaks to these questions, bringing hope and light to people who now stumble in the dark and live in despair. Our world will be changed as the hearts of people are changed. Evangelism is no longer an option for the church. It is essential to the survival of our world.

The line in that Winston-Salem newspaper is a haunting reminder of what the world expects of the church. "Someone trusted the church last night, and the church came through!" May that always be true! -- Bishop Ernest Fitzgerald, "Someone Trusted the Church," *Michigan Christian Advocate*, May 5, 1997, 8.

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## **Prayer from the Heart**

Dear Jesus, You came into this world to teach me and to give Your life for me. Help me this Christmas to be both humble and profoundly grateful. May I show my gratitude by living each day in imitation of You. Amen.