

## **This Will Be A Sign**

**Luke 2:1-20** In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> And all went to be registered, each to his own town. <sup>4</sup> And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>5</sup> to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. <sup>6</sup> And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. <sup>8</sup> And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. <sup>10</sup> And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" <sup>15</sup> When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. <sup>17</sup> And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. <sup>18</sup> And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

*In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

1        The signs are everywhere. Christmas is here. Stores are closed. Churches are full. Lights are lit. Meals are prepared. Gifts are wrapped. They weren't the signs of the first celebration of the birth of the Lord. But they are signs today, signs of the popularity of Christmas.

2        These signs will not last forever, though. There will be signs of the end of the season, too. Trees will come down. Decorations will find their mothballed homes for eleven months. Balls of wadded up wrapping paper will make their way to waste cans. Your vacation will end. The credit card bills will herald new debt. These will be a sign to you of the end of the season.

3        Certainly not all signs are good. For some, Christmas is a disappointing, downright depressing, time. Some look to the holiday with dread, fearing the resurgence

of memories of lost loved ones, the reminders of those who are no longer with us. Even in the midst of a festive season, a season when most celebrate life, there are signs to the contrary. There are signs of death, even when we'd rather ignore them. Tragedies don't take the holidays off. Wednesday's newspaper will still have stories of car wrecks and home wreckers, homicides and house fires, catastrophes and calamities. These will be a sign to you that all is not calm and bright all the time. These will be a sign to you that the world does not sleep in heavenly peace. Sin and its attendant consequence—death—disrupt an otherwise silent night.

4 The calm of the night was broken when an angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds, as well. The angel appeared and the glory of the Lord shone around them. And the shepherds shook with fear. Rightly so. But the angel said, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly with the angel there was a multitude of heavenly host—warrior angels—praising God and singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!"

5 Not the angel, not the blazing glory of the Lord, not the fear in their guts, not the innumerable singing armies of angels, those were not the signs of the Messiah who had come. This will be a sign: the baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger. This is the sign of great joy for all people everywhere: a baby in a feed trough. This is the sign of the Savior: God has taken on humble human flesh, joined Himself inseparably to your flesh in the womb of a Virgin and took His first nap in a place where animals dined.

6 This will be a sign for you: light in the midst of darkness. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, all mankind has been cursed with the darkness of sin. It's why the shepherds were terrified in the presence of the angels and the glory of the Lord. The glory of the

Lord is destructive to sinners. In the presence of the glory of God, Abram, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, the Apostle John, people seemingly far holier than you fell on their faces in fear. What hope do you have? Because of your sin, the glory of God should terrify you. But fear not. Light shines in darkness; good news resounds amidst fear, joy overwhelms terror. This will be a sign for you: God in the flesh in the manger.

7 This will be a sign to you of God's mercy: a baby wrapped in clothes in a manger. A baby in a manger two thousand years ago does you little good, but the baby grew up. This will be a sign to you: you will find the baby grown into a man, wrapped in human flesh, clothes stripped off of him, nailed to a cross. This will be a sign to you: the glory of God was revealed in suffering and death. Fear not: God has spent His wrath not on you, not on sinners, but on this sinless baby in the manger. Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people: there is hope for you beyond today. Fear not, good news of a great joy: there is hope for you beyond the despair, beyond the gloom, beyond the grave. The baby the shepherds ran to see is the Christ, the Savior, who died for you on the cross.

8 This will be a sign for you: you will not find a baby in a manger or a Messiah on a cross. This will be a sign for you: the blood that flowed from the Crucified is still here for you today. The sign is what you can see. This will be a sign for you: in ordinary water you receive a new birth. Through the font, you become the Virgin's sons and daughters, as well. He who was her firstborn was the firstborn of the dead. And you, His brothers and Sisters by His gift of faith, united with Him in His death through Holy Baptism will likewise be united with Him in His resurrection. You will rise. This will be a sign to you: in Holy Baptism, your Lord gave you faith and forgiveness of sins.

9 This will be a sign for you: your Lord has sent to you messengers, men appointed to speak the very forgiveness won by Jesus on the cross. Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. In the stead and by the

command of the Baby in the manger, my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins. This will be a sign for you: you will find the Lord wrapped in bread and wine, given to you to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of your sins. As the shepherds left their sheep and ran to the manger where the Lord was revealed to them, so you may leave your despair, your sin, and come where your Lord reveals Himself to you. Here at His altar is the same body that was wrapped in swaddling clothes and in a manger. Here is the same blood that dripped from the nails that held the Savior to the cross. Here is forgiveness. This will be a sign to you. You will find the Lord where He has promised to be for you: here at His Altar, in bread and wine, for the forgiveness of your sins.

*In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Soli Deo Gloria*  
Pastor Jeff Hemmer  
Hope Lutheran Church, Jerseyville  
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