

CP— 12/22/24

Luke 2:1–7 – Glad Tidings: The Manger Throne

“What we celebrate at Christmas is not so much the birth of a baby, but the incarnation of God Himself.” (R. C. Sproul)

*Luke contrasts Augustus, as a man, promoting himself as a god with Jesus, the Son of God, becoming a human of our salvation.

1. The Throne in Rome (2:1–7)

*Unworthy Exaltation: An adult man claims to be the son of a god.

*Caesar Augustus

- born in 63 BC as Gaius Octavian; great nephew of Julius Caesar; named in Caesar's will as his adopted son and heir.
- Octavian, Mark Antony, and Marcus Lepidus defeated Julius Caesar's assassins, divided the Republic, and ruled together
- Lepidus was exiled in 36 BC, and Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra in 31 BC
- In January 27 BC, he returned power to the Senate - However, he was defacto emperor because of military royalties and financial power.
- That same month, the Roman senate gave him the title “augustus,” meaning “illustrious one, majestic, holy” - more of a religious title than political; ruled until AD 14 - first emperor to encourage emperor worship
- Inscriptions of him include:
 - [Augustus] is the father of his divine homeland Rome, inherited from his father Zeus, and a savior of the common folk. His foresight not only fulfilled the entreaties of all people, but surpassed them, making peace for land and sea, while cities bloom with order, harmony, and good seasons; the productivity of all things is good and at its prime, there are fond hopes for the future and good will during the present which fills all men, so that they ought to bear pleasing sacrifices and hymns.
- Inscription discovered in 1800s called him a god whose “birthday signaled the beginning of good news [*euangelion*] for the world.”
- He used the title “son of a god” - called “the divine Julius,” “son of the deified one,” “son of the divine Julius” - imprinted on his coins

*The plan of man puts people in motion. (Joseph and Mary head to Bethlehem)

2. The Throne in Bethlehem (2:4–7)

*Undeserving Humiliation: the Son of God comes as a human baby.

- Phil. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 8:9; Matt. 20:28

*The plan of God puts redemption in motion!

*C. S. Lewis : Non-Christians seem to think that the Incarnation implies some particular merit or excellence in humanity. But of course it implies just the reverse: a particular demerit and depravity. No creature that deserved Redemption would need to be redeemed. They that are whole need not the physician. Christ died for men precisely because men are not worth dying for; to make them worth it.

3. The Throne in Our Hearts

*Caesar or Christ? Pride or Surrender?

*Has Christ been born in you? He came for us!

Quotes:

“The Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as this truth of the Incarnation.”
(J.I. Packer)

“The glory of the incarnation is that it presents to our adoring gaze not a humanized God or a deified man, but a true God-man - one who is all that God is and at the same time all that man is: one on whose almighty arm we can rest, and to whose human sympathy we can appeal.” (B. B. Warfield)

“The Lord did not come to make a display. He came to heal and to teach suffering men. For one who wanted to make a display the thing would have been just to appear and dazzle the beholders. But for Him Who came to heal and to teach the way was not merely to dwell here, but to put Himself at the disposal of those who needed Him, and to be manifested according as they could bear it, not vitiating the value of the Divine appearing by exceeding their capacity to receive it.” (Athanasius of Alexandria)

“He who was born at Bethlehem is God, and “God with us.” God—there lies the majesty; “God with us,” there lies the mercy. God—therein is glory; “God with us,” therein is grace. God alone might well strike us with terror; but “God with us” inspires us with hope and confidence.” (Charles Spurgeon)

“Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord
Late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel.
Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth. (Charles Wesley)

“Christ who in eternity rested motherless upon the Father’s bosom and in time rested fatherless upon a woman’s bosom, clasping the Ancient of Days who had become the Infant of Days. What deep descent: from the heights of glory to the depths of shame; from the wonders of Heaven to the wickedness of earth; from exaltation to humiliation; from the throne to the tree; from dignity to debasement; from worship to wrath; from the halls of Heaven to the nails of earth; from the coronation to the curse; from the glory place to the gory place! In Bethlehem, humility and glory in their extremes were joined. Born in a stable! Cradled in a cattle trough! Wrapped in swaddling clothes of poverty! No room for Him who made all rooms! No place for Him who made and knows all places! Oh, deep humiliation of the Creator—born of the creature! But in His descent was the dawn of mercy. Because we cannot ascend to Him, He descends to us.
(R.G. Lee)

“The Son of God became man to enable men to become the sons of God.” (C. S. Lewis)