

# *Christmas* – Luke 2

Too often the words of traditional carols can lose their impact if we are not careful. The sentiment expressed in these incredible words is not to be missed. Underline or circle lyrics that are impactful to you.

This household hymn traces its origin back to 1847 when a French poet named Placide Cappeau de Roquemaure was asked to pen a poem for Christmas mass. Using the gospel of Luke as his inspiration, Placide quickly created the “Cantique de Noel” not knowing the amazing and unlikely story these words would tell over the next several years. “O Holy Night” became a song through the musical work of a Jewish man named Adolphe Charles Adams who brought the poem to life despite his differing religious views. It was brought to America by an abolitionist named John Sullivan Dwight who saw the words as proof that Christ came to free all men and in 1906 it was the first song ever sent through the air via radio waves thanks to a chemist by the name of Reginald Fessenden.

It is easy to highlight the fact that this song is now sung millions of times in churches in every corner of the world. What is important to highlight is what it can show us about the scripture that it was inspired by.

Like this song, the story of the birth of Jesus can also be overlooked due to its familiarity and notoriety. And similar to O Holy Night, where unlikely men and events led to the creation, popularity and message of this incredible song, the elements of Jesus’ birth are in some ways ordinary and unexciting. Baby Jesus as savior seemed unlikely in light of Cesar’s presence, the surroundings of his birth were humble, the circumstances were commonplace. Even the first recipients of the message were the most average Joe’s you could have found in that culture.

And this is exactly the watermark of how God works. He takes the average and turns it into extraordinary, He takes the last and makes them first, He takes the unholy and makes it holy, He takes the overlooked and makes it the center of attention.

This insight into the story is what makes it so extraordinary and amazing. His faithfulness to work in spite of and through unlikely circumstances is a theme woven throughout history. How have you seen that in your life? How has God surprised you by using the ugly, common or overlooked facets of your life to work His will and tell His story? He is faithful. As we look at this story and our own, we will see His faithfulness show itself over and over again.

## **Luke 2:1-20**

1In those days(A) a decree went out from(B) Caesar Augustus that all the world should be(C) registered. 2This was the first(D) registration when[a] Quirinius(E) was governor of Syria. 3And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 4And Joseph also went up(F) from Galilee, from the town of(G) Nazareth, to Judea, to(H) the city of David, which is called(I) Bethlehem,(J) because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5to be registered with Mary, his betrothed,[b] who was with child. 6And(K) while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7And she

gave birth to her firstborn son and(L) wrapped him in swaddling cloths and (M) laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in(N) the inn.

8And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9And an angel of the Lord(O) appeared to them, and(P) the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. 10And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all(Q) the people. 11For(R) unto you is born this day in(S) the city of David(T) a Savior, who is(U) Christ(V) the Lord. 12And(W) this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby(X) wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." 13And suddenly there was with the angel(Y) a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14(Z) "Glory to God(AA) in the highest, (AB) and on earth(AC) peace among those with whom he is pleased!"[c] 15When 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." 16And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby(AD) lying in a manger. 17And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. 18And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19But(AE) Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20And the shepherds returned,(AF) glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

### Opening questions:

1. How has God used some of the common/ordinary things in your background and experiences for His glory?
2. What are you looking forward to in the new year?
3. How did Sunday's teaching impact you?

### Read Luke 2:1-20

Observation from the text: When studying a familiar text, we can often take things for granted. It's easy to jump over words and phrases because they are so familiar. We "know how the story ends" and opportunities to learn new and fresh from the scripture. As you go through this study, take the time to pause and make the observations and focus on the applications for your life.

## CONSIDER THIS...

O Holy Night! The stars  
are brightly shining;  
It is the night of the dear  
Savior's birth.  
Long lay the world in sin  
and error pining.  
Till He appeared and the  
Spirit felt its worth.  
A thrill of hope the  
weary world rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new  
and glorious morn.  
Fall on your knees! Oh,  
hear the angel voices!  
O night divine, the night  
when Christ was born;  
O night, O Holy Night , O  
night divine!  
O night, O Holy Night , O  
night divine!

Led by the light of faith  
serenely beaming,  
With glowing hearts by  
His cradle we stand.  
O'er the world a star is  
sweetly gleaming,  
Now come the Wiseman  
from out of the Orient  
land.  
The King of kings lay  
thus lowly manger;  
In all our trials born to  
be our friends.  
He knows our need, our  
weakness is no  
stranger,  
Behold your King!  
Before him lowly bend!  
Behold your King!  
Before him lowly bend!

4. List the names mentioned in this story – who they are, where they are from, and what actions they initiate.
  
5. Describe in your own words the angels visiting the shepherds. How does each one react?
  
6. What are the words of the angel to the shepherds?
  
7. What's the response noted in verse 13?
  
8. After the angels left, how did the shepherds respond (verse 15+).
  
9. From verse 19 & 20, how did Mary and the Shepherds respond to what they heard?

## CONTINUED...

Truly He taught us to  
 love one another,  
 His law is love and His  
 gospel is peace.  
 Chains he shall break,  
 for the slave is our  
 brother.  
 And in his name all  
 oppression shall  
 cease.  
 Sweet hymns of joy in  
 grateful chorus raise  
 we,  
 With all our hearts we  
 praise His holy name.  
 Christ is the Lord!  
 Then ever, ever praise  
 we,  
 His power and glory  
 ever more proclaim!  
 His power and glory  
 ever more proclaim!

### Application from the text:

10. As you re-read this passage, which person in the story do you most identify with and why?
  
11. According to verse 10, the good news and great joy is for “all” people. A savior for all confused the religious elite. Today, the exclusive nature of Jesus as the only way can frustrate our post-modern conversations. How do your friends, neighbors, family, or co workers respond to Jesus as the only way for salvation?

12. It seems trite, we read the familiar Christmas story and then we're supposed to go away changed and renewed. But honestly, does that happen? This news caused the Mary and the Shepherds to praise God. Right now, what's your honest heart response to the birth narrative? In light of Mary and the shepherds response, what could your response be?

13. If you'd like your response to be different, what needs to change?

Close in a time of prayer with your group. Praise God for his Son, the season, and pray specifically for the needs in your group.



**PARK**  
COMMUNITY CHURCH

© 2010 Park Community Church. All Rights Reserved.  
1001 N Crosby St, Chicago, IL 60610  
[parkcommunitychurch.org](http://parkcommunitychurch.org)

© 2010 Park Community Church. All rights reserved.  
Download more small group studies online at [parkcommunitychurch.org/smallgroupstudies](http://parkcommunitychurch.org/smallgroupstudies)