

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Penrith

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ENCOURAGEMENT LETTER – 24DEC24

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

How are you today? I praise for the Saviour's birth. Christ has been born and he grew up to die on the cross for us! God himself did what was needed to save because of his great love.

Thank you for everyone who has completed the Congregation Snapshot survey. If you have not completed the Congregational Snapshot survey, please stop now and take some time to fill it out as the survey will close soon. You can access the survey here: <https://forms.gle/L5qbATyXHJtP88377>

Today our Encouragement is “Come let us adore him – Christ the Lord” by Ben Pratt before we move onto church matters.

ENCOURAGEMENT: Come let us adore him – Christ the Lord (Ben Pratt)

This month Steve has graciously given me the opportunity to share some words of encouragement with our church, and with this being December, it felt right to explore different aspects of the encouragement to “Come let us adore him”, as that famous Christmas Carol declares.

Did you know that Christmas was not, previously, a major event in Western Christian-based nations like it is nowadays?

Yes, Christians have for a long time recognized the date and most who were able to attend a church service (Christ-mass, mass meaning church service, and Christ meaning that the service was specifically to celebrate the birth of the Christ), but it was only one holy day in the calendar, rather than being weeks or months with songs, special foods and even outfits, and all the trimmings that seem to go with Christmas these days.

In fact, it was only in the mid 19th century that such started happening, when businesses saw it as an opportunity to make money by convincing shoppers to spend money buying gifts for one another, hosting lavish meals, and so on.

The event that led to Christmas was, likewise, a much more humble affair than how many think of it.

What am I talking about?

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

*And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, **“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”***

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

Luke 2:1-21

A young man and his wife travelled to their ancestral home for a government ordered census, and while there, almost certainly staying with family in said ancestral home, the wife gave birth there and wrapped him up, placing him in a manger, as the guest room was not available (having probably been given to older family members who were due the privilege of such). Honestly, a fairly normal setting for a birth, and by all accounts, a fairly normal birth, even if it was unusual that he was using a manger as a crib.

In fact, the only truly wondrous thing that happened was the angels who appeared to the shepherds to announce the birth of the Messiah, and who sang out to the glory of God.

In response to receiving this good and miraculous news the shepherds made haste for Bethlehem to see this promised Saviour for themselves, and upon seeing that what the angels had said was true, they left and began to share with others this same good and miraculous news, praising God, just as the angels had done.

From the lips of angels to the lips of men and women, the simple invitation to come and meet Jesus was passed on from person to person, and it is an invitation that over two thousand years later still forms the heart of the Christmas message, despite the glitz and glamour that our society tries to use to distract us from the truth of this season.

Whether you are able to attend a church service in person or not, whether you are able to gather with other people or not, that same invitation to come and meet Jesus is extended to you today.
Come and meet your Saviour.

And, having met him, spread the good news to others. Who has God put in your life that you can share that good news with?

Pray and ask God who he would have you reach out to with that invitation, an invitation that has been passed on, person to person, for more than two thousand years now, and then reach out to them with your own invitation.

Come let US adore him, Christ the Lord.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

*Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
Born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given!
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing!*

*O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.*

As always, love and prayers,
Steve