**Isaiah 9:2-7** The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. **3**  You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. **4**  For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. **5**  For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. **6**  For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. **7** Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

**Titus 2:11-14** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, **12** training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, **13**  waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, **14**  who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

**Luke 2:1-20** In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. **2** This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. **3** And all went to be registered, each to his own town. **4** 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, **5** to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. **6** And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. **7** 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. **8** And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. **10** And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. **11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. **12** And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” **13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, **14**  “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” **15** 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.” **16** And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. **17** And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. **18** And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. **20** And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Why do we need this story of Christmas?

* This story actually can saves sinners unlike false saviors.
* This story God provides personally for your good.
* This story is public and cannot be silent.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father who sent us His Son born of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen. Some stories over time become classics. “A Charlie Brown Christmas” is an example as it celebrates an anniversary of 50 years. Yet, even Charlie Brown along with Snoopy and the rest draw attention in the 21st century. Trying to lift up the meaning of Christmas is hard even for them. Complaints in the state of Kentucky lead to a school district opting not to show Linus reading the Gospel of Luke. Likewise, the president’s general words about this classic film on ABC made the social media erupt. Even the well-known company “Coca-Cola” once helped to air the original show. Guess that ship sailed for them in what would be “good” business for today.

Whatever the case, the story of Christmas does not rest on Charlie Brown needing to save it. The birth of Christ did not have the support of schools, leaders, or even a company name. It is far more than a classic or part of tradition. Mary’s child seeks to reach out to all generations, times, and peoples. This is what those in the Old Testament longed to see and what the New Testament celebrates because of what they saw. Tonight, it is more than replaying a story like watching a rerun on TV. Reruns rarely get attention and often something new takes its place. Yet, nothing can replace God becoming flesh and being born of the Virgin Mary. The question that must be asked is this, “Why do we need this story of Christmas?”

This story actually can saves sinners unlike false saviors. Adam and Eve believed in a world fabricated by the Devil’s lying Words that led into the sin. This same darkness continues through the generation of humanity with no way of escape. At the time of Christ’s birth, we heard that “…a decree went out from Caesar Augustus.” Nothing wrong with government, God likes good order for life. However, this demand was to register the resources and power of an empire. Mary and Joseph did not have any say in the matter. There were forces at work bigger than what they could manage. Matter a fact, if the title “Caesar” was equivalent to king, “Augustus” was a claim to religious authority like God. Yet, beneath the delusions of men, God arranged the conditions for the birth of Christ.

Beyond concerns over a leader today claiming the title, “Augustus.” Each person as a sinner is prone to be our own kind of religious authority. So curved into self, even those that would deny God or religious doings do not see their captivity. Martin Luther summed it up this way, “Whatever you fear, love, and trust. This is your God!” There are plenty of stories offering nice traditions or entertainment, especially at this time of year. “How the Grinch Stole Christmas, A Christmas Carol, Home Alone, Rudolph, and National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation,” all offer glimpses of what starts as bad works out for good. However, none of these offers a solution to sin, death, and the Devil. Only God facing this darkness in our flesh has found a way. Jesus is that “great light” seen first crying in a manager, but fit to cry out from the cross for a sinful world.

Why do we need this story of Christmas? This story God provides personally for you. He fixes this salvation right into the heart of family as with Mary and Joseph. Even the angels draw close to shepherds not like Caesar Augustus who simply wants to crunch the numbers. It comes with compassion to shepherds already wearied by life, but also in what they see of God’s glory before their lives. So they hear, “Fear not…” that shines with all hopefulness for them. This is hope that actually has an answer, “…for behold, I bring you good news of 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.” God is a jealous God and wants none to be without Him. The birth of Jesus reveals God deals with any as one person to another. Shepherds move from the glory of angels to God gloriously come in our flesh for us.

This story of Christmas still goes out to every individual in the darkness. It comes with light personally directing attention to Christ born for you, born for me. To God you are more than a number to manage in this world. The cradle of His Son is bound to the cross to crush Satan’s head. “Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end…” Jesus has made the way for your salvation, for your life, for your comfort against all fears that would keep you from Him. As He was born in our flesh, now we are each born from Him by baptism into a kingdom of grace, a Church that is His body. His sacrifice of suffering and death has more than angels but Him now declaring, “Fear Not.” Whatever the shame of sin that drags you down. However deep the heartache that seems to have no end. Regardless how much death shrouds your life in darkness. Your story is to meet the Christ child whose story is for you.

Why do we need this story of Christmas? This story is public and cannot be silent. What God gives personally never remains private for long. Political correctness was not present that night at the manager. The shepherds received the story set upon good news for a sinful world. “And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.” Later Jesus in His public ministry proclaimed, “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” (John 7:38). St. Paul does not shrink from making the point, “For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” (Romans 10:10). The wonder over what the shepherds broadcasted was a witness to the salvation God wanted to put before all people.   
 The shepherds were unable to leave the manger the same way they came to it. Neither can any of us when it comes to this story of Christmas. We have the fullness of what the child of Mary completed by His sacrifice. It was to the Father in heaven on our behalf and publicly before a sinful world. The tolerance of today is in many ways intolerant. Yet, there is still something to tell to those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. St. Paul encourages us, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people…” Christmas comes with celebrating how God calls people by using you to share Jesus’ saving work. More important than a manger scene, a billboard, or some symbol are words announcing Christ dwelling among us now by His Word and sacrament. The public needs to wonder over the mystery set in this story of Christmas, but the fullness of this joy to the world will be for us in heaven.

Why do we need this story of Christmas? It speaks for itself, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” Nothing is more pleasing than to receive God’s Christmas presence wrapped up in our flesh. This gift no darkness can overcome for Jesus Christ is the light and life that has no end. Blessed Christmas for in this story you share in wealth not from the world, but in what God gladly gives. Amen. Now may the peace of God guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.