



Hope: The Gift of Hope

December 24, 2011

About this time Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the nation. (This census was taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) Everyone was required to return to his ancestral home for this registration. And because Joseph was a member of the royal line, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, King David's ancient home—journeying there from the Galilean village of Nazareth. He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was obviously pregnant by this time. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born; and she gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the village inn. That night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly an angel appeared among them, and the landscape shone bright with the glory of the Lord. They were badly frightened, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone! The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born tonight in Bethlehem! How will you recognize him? You will find a baby wrapped in a blanket, lying in a manger!" Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God: "Glory to God in the highest

heaven," they sang, "and peace on earth for all those pleasing him." When this great army of angels had returned again to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Come on! Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." They ran to the village and found their way to Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. The shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story expressed astonishment, 19 but Mary quietly treasured these things in her heart and often thought about them. Then the shepherds went back again to their fields and flocks, praising God for the visit of the angels, and because they had seen the child, just as the angel had told them.

Luke 2:1-20 (TLB)

Hope

And his name will be the hope of all the world."

Matthew 12:21 (NLT)

The Gift of Hope

You see, all of creation has collapsed into emptiness ... Still He placed within it a deep and abiding hope that creation one day would be liberated from its slavery to corruption and experience the glorious freedom of the children of God. For we know that all creation groans in unison with birthing pains up until now. And there is more, it's not just creation – all of us are groaning together too. Though we have already tasted the first fruits of the Spirit, we are

longing for the total redemption of our bodies that comes when our adoption as children of God is complete – for we have been saved in this hope and for this future. But hope does not involved what we already have or see. For who goes around hoping for what he already has? But if we wait expectantly for things we have never seen, then we hope with true perseverance and eager anticipation.

Romans 8:20-25 (TVNT)

"This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again.

John 3:16-17 (MSG)

My Next Step Today Is To . . .

- Receive this gift from God by faith, choosing to trust believe and put my hope in Him.
- Ask God to work in me so that I may have this hope
- Express my thanks and praise to God for the gift that He has so freely given to me through His Son, Jesus Christ.
- Meditate and/or memorize Romans 8:24a
For we have been saved in this hope and for this future. (TVNT)