

***Message: “Faith of the Lowly”***

**Jesus sat on a hillside and taught, saying these words,**

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3-10).

**With these words, Jesus affirmed what was begun at his birth.**

Jesus comes to those who are spiritually poor, who realize they need God’s blessings and love for life. As we gather on this Christmas Eve, may we reflect on Jesus’ words in our hearts and minds.

**Jesus came into the world in a way that frustrates the intelligent, the wise, the powerful, the wealthy and the famous.** Jesus didn’t ride in on a white horse with a sword in his hand, accompanied by angel armies, ready to make all of the world’s rulers, systems and institutions right.

**Jesus came into the world in the most humble way possible,** born to an unknown couple in an occupied land filled with conflict, injustice and religious legalese. Jesus, God made flesh, wasn’t born in a palace filled with luxury, comfort and everything one could possibly want to succeed. He was born in a manger to parents who had to flee to another country to escape the anger of a corrupt ruler.

**Jesus’ arrival wasn’t broadcast by an announcement from the king and queen.** No one in the court or church even noticed. Jesus’ arrival was announced to the lowliest of the low, the shepherds, those who served in the one of the worst jobs. Yet the lowliest of the low were serenaded by angels. They were the first ones to visit Mary, Joseph and Jesus at the manger. They were the first to spread the word of his birth. We have much to learn from their example. Don’t be afraid!

**Let us humble ourselves before our God as we pray ...**

**Isaiah 9:2-7 (CEB)**

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.

You have made the nation great;

you have increased its joy.

They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest,

as those who divide plunder rejoice.

As on the day of Midian, you've shattered the yoke that burdened them,

the staff on their shoulders,

and the rod of their oppressor.

Because every boot of the thundering warriors,

and every garment rolled in blood

will be burned, fuel for the fire.

A child is born to us, a son is given to us,

and authority will be on his shoulders.

He will be named

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

There will be vast authority and endless peace

for David's throne and for his kingdom,

establishing and sustaining it

with justice and righteousness

now and forever.

**Luke 2:1-20 (CEB)**

In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.

Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you - wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.