

We Still Go to Bethlehem.

Text: Luke 2:15

Suggested Hymns:

Ade: 34, 632, 33, 633, 634

- 1) We still go to Bethlehem
- 2) Jesus must live in our hearts
- 3) There is the Saviour
- 4) The proper outlook on life
- 5) How far is it to Bethlehem

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 2:15 ¹⁵ *So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Just over 2,000 years ago a Child was born at Bethlehem in the Judea of Palestine. The birth of that Babe did not make news in those days. Little attention was given by man to this blessed event. But God pinpointed this hour as the fullness of time and sent angels from heaven to proclaim this Gospel.

There was no room for the mother and Child at the innkeeper’s quarters, but the angels sang the Glory Hymn. Joseph was compelled to place the Boy in a manger, near oxen and sheep — the Boy who is the Mighty God and the Prince of Peace.

At the inn Mary and Joseph were strangers who had come to Bethlehem for the census, and they were poor. That night angels came to Bethlehem’s fields, where shepherds were watching their flocks, to tell these humble folk that the greatest event in history had taken place, *“Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”* Then the heavenly host sang the hymn of praise *“Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”* For the angels of heaven this was a memorable night.

The shepherds went at once to see. They found the Child. They worshiped the newborn Babe. They rejoiced. Not even for a moment did they question or doubt that the miracle of the ages had taken place.

Since those days many things have happened in this world of ours. Millions of babies have been born, some into a world of poverty and sorrow, others to riches and thrones. Great changes have taken place in history. The Roman Empire has crumbled into dust, new continents have been discovered, and satellites travel in space. Men have risen to power and then passed away and are forgotten by the masses.

But the Christ Child lives as the risen and eternal Lord. His influence has grown from year to year. Millions upon millions are worshiping Him at the present moment. His Gospel has given hope and peace to the hearts of people. His cross is held high above the tumbling forces of man and stands as symbol of our eternal salvation. His blood cleanses. His resurrection guarantees eternal life and heaven. Therefore today “We Still Go to Bethlehem.” May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. We Still Go To Bethlehem

We still go to Bethlehem because the Christ Child lives. He lives in glory. At Bethlehem mankind saw Him in His deepest humility, having laid aside His glory as He became man. True, even in His humility He revealed rays of His glory, healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, opening the eyes of the blind, and making the lame walk. He even raised the dead. As He spoke and taught, the people heard Him gladly, for never spoke any man as He.

For a short time His followers thought His cause lost as He hung on the accursed tree on Calvary. They did not realise, for the moment, that He was to fulfil His task by dying. But when He rose on the third day and 40 days later ascended to glory, they were sure — and we too — that He was God-with-us, the Immanuel-Messiah. We, His followers, worship Him this very hour as the everliving Saviour and the King of glory and eternity.

This Jesus, one time Babe of Bethlehem, is still upon the throne, as God of Very God, and has all history in His hands. This we want to know and stress in a world hectic in its despair. The Caesars, the Herods, the dictators of modern

times have not usurped His throne. They may have their little day, but Jesus Christ still is the omnipotent Lord.

Nothing gets out of His hands, even though at times we look through a glass darkly and fail to understand why certain events and tragedies come into our lives, and nations and people, fail to develop goodwill toward one another.

Today we remember, that wars and rumours of wars continue, as oppressors and dictators strut across the stage of time, as missiles shoot across space, that nothing gets out of His hands and control. He weaves the pattern of our lives and history so that all things work out for the well-being of those who love Him.

That is why we still come to Bethlehem to be comforted amid the uncertainties of life. At the manger we can confidently believe that we shall not perish, that no one can pluck us out of our Saviour's hand.

2. Jesus Must Live in Our Hearts

This Jesus — and this is most essential — must live in our hearts at this very hour. Otherwise we shall never go to Bethlehem to find God's peace. Jesus must be our All in all and abide.

Many things may be taken from us without causing us to perish. Loved ones, friends, jobs, and fortunes may be lost within moments. However, the Christ of the ages no one can take out of our hearts — none but we ourselves. We may fill our day with endless activities and thereby crowd the Saviour out of our lives. No room for Him.

By the grace of God the doors of our hearts are opened, and then this Christmas loses none of its significance. His peace remains. The hope He gives never fades away. No sorrow, no pain, no imprisonment, no hunger and want, can take from us His abiding presence. From any place in this world we can come to Bethlehem and worship the living Christ and join angels and shepherds in praising God. That is the glory of this hour. We still can go to Bethlehem.

3. There Is the Saviour

We come to Bethlehem to find that Jesus still saves us from all sin. *“Unto you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”*

He saves us from hopelessness. We cannot undo our yesterdays. The sins we have done — stand. The record is against us. The hymnist writes, *And Could my tears forever flow, All for sin could not atone.*

However, the angels brought the Good News to all. This Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Our redemption and deliverance He brought about on Calvary, where He was wounded for our transgressions that we might be healed and restored by grace. As we come by faith to this Jesus all our sins are blotted out.

We are acquitted in the courts of God, not because we are innocent but because Jesus paid in full for our disobedience. Now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

This Jesus cleanses our conscience. *“If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves.”* It is impossible for us to claim sinlessness, a complete and perfect obedience of God’s Law. This sense of guilt makes us afraid. We hide from God. However, Jesus came to remove this guilt and purify our consciences. Through Him we are at peace with God. The fear of judgment is removed. Hopelessness and despair are banished from our lives. As long as we go to this Jesus and stand beneath His cross, we can hope.

This Jesus saves us from the fear of dying. We all die, and we know this to be a fact. Tomorrow may be the zero hour of our earthly journey. But to the believer death becomes the door to heaven. Death is a home-going to the heavenly Father. Therefore we fear no evil as we pass through the shadows of the valley of death. On the other shore the Saviour welcomes us home.

As death comes to our family and into our friendship circle our sorrows are mellowed, our tears are dried. We know there is in heaven one more person freed from the cares and sorrows of life.

This Jesus, then, saves us from the eternal separation from God. This Jesus said, *“I go to prepare a place for you.”* Then He promises: *“I go to prepare a place for you.”* ³ *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”* ⁴ *“And where I go you know, and the way you know.”* ⁵ *Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?”* ⁶ *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”* ¹ This takes the hopelessness out of

life, for the glory of this message centers in these two words, ***“For you.”*** This Jesus saved you and me.

That is why we still go to Bethlehem to worship Him who was born there and laid into a manger.

4. The Proper Outlook On Life

We still go to Bethlehem because this Jesus gives us the right outlook on life, a sane and well-balanced philosophy of living. He keeps our feet on the ground and stabilises our-thinking and directs our conduct in the right channels. We live in a world that “has gone mad.”

Nations stand against nations in terrorism and on battlefields. Families are divided and driven to distraction. The front pages of our daily papers are overrun with stories of crime, hold-ups, rape, and murder. Time-honoured traditions are thrown out of the window, culture and refinement has gone to the winds, standards of noble living are laughed at and regarded as irrelevant in today’s age. Many television programs lack sense and an insult to our intelligence.

Moral decay is in evidence on all sides. Alcoholism is on the increase. Divorce is the order of the day in many circles. We are a bewildered people.

However, as we go to Bethlehem and kneel at the manger of the Christ Child we find that peace which passes all understanding. We are made sure of our salvation. We are directed into those paths which keep us in grace and lead us to glory. Amid the chaos of time and the godlessness of our age we can remain calm and composed, lifting high our heads, knowing that beyond time and decay is this Jesus, who day after day welcomes home the weary pilgrims of the Jericho road of life.

Today, and this is eternally true, Christmas is just as real and true as it was that first night when the angels announced to the shepherds, ***“Unto you is born this day a Savior.”*** This is one truth that cannot be shaken: Jesus saves. He came that all might have eternal life. That is the reason why we still go to Bethlehem.

5. How Far Is It to Bethlehem?

Bethlehem is very far for those who are proud in spirit, conceited and self-righteous. They are satisfied with self and want no help from God. Very far,

also, is the road to Bethlehem for those whose hearts are without love and sympathy. They live selfishly, demanding their pound of flesh and refusing to give an inch. They live hard, bitter, and unforgiving lives. To them a Saviour who abundantly pardons is foolishness. They have no room for the Babe of Bethlehem.

How far is it to Bethlehem? Not far for those who see in this Babe the Immanuel, God-with-us. Those who are contrite in spirit and humble at heart recognise their own helplessness and sin. They know that they cannot make sufficient appeasement for sin to be accepted by God. They seek a Saviour. They seek the road to Bethlehem.

And how do we find this Bethlehem and the Christ Child? The very same way that the Wise Men found Him — through the Word. The very same way the shepherds were led to Him — by faith. The very same way that Mary found Him — by grace.

How far is it to Bethlehem this very moment? We are there right now by faith and the grace of God!

Let us, then, go now in spirit to Bethlehem and kneel at the manger and worship, the Christ Child as Saviour and King. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ John 14:3-6