

Christmas Eve always begins with a history lesson. We hear that Caesar Augustus issued a decree that all the world should be registered for taxation. We hear that this was the first such registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And that's nice. We learn, and re-learn, a little history every time Luke 2 is read.

But does anyone here really care that much about Caesar Augustus and Governor Quirinius? So, how about skipping over them and getting to the good stuff? You know, Mary and Joseph, Bethlehem, the shepherds, and the baby in a manger.

Yet, back in "those days" as Luke puts it, the good stuff for the people living then was not that part about Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and a baby. They were not important, not at all. Rather, Caesar and the governor were the most important people in the entire land.

But here's the thing, they're all important, vitally important. Had Caesar Augustus not issued his decree back in history when Quirinius was governor of Syria, Mary and Joseph would not have traveled to Bethlehem, and Jesus would have been born in Nazareth. Ugh! Can you even imagine singing, "O Little Town of Nazareth"? And those poor shepherds outside of Bethlehem, they would not even be in the story. So, they're all important, including Caesar Augustus and Governor Quirinius, because it was necessary for Jesus to be born in the city of David just as Luke records it for us.

Now here is a question for you to ponder on this Christmas Eve. Are you included as an important part of the story of Christmas in Luke 2? What I mean is that when the angel said to the shepherds, "*Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord,*" does that *Unto you* also mean you? And this is an important question, because if that *Unto you* is not you, then Christmas is simply gathering with family, good food, presents, Santa, and It's a Wonderful Life on TV. So, are you here in Luke 2? Are you the *Unto you is born...a Savior*?

Well, only my friend, if you are a sinner, and a great sinner at that. You see, Jesus was not born to be a helper; born merely to assist you in getting into heaven. If all you need is a helper, then Jesus is not for you. *Unto you is born*, not a helper said the angel, but *a Savior*.

Jesus doesn't help anyone get to heaven. But He does save people from their sins; people who cannot save themselves. He does grow up to suffer and die for sinners, even the worst sinners, like that thief dying next to Him. Jesus did not help that thief get into heaven, but He did save him. He gave heaven to him as a gift of pure grace.

And that is what He does for you. If you are a sinner, if you are willing to admit this and freely confess this; if you need a Savior, and not just a helper, because you are not able to save yourself, then "*Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord.*"

And I have the privilege of declaring to you that all of your sins are forgiven. Every last one of them. You are a sinner, yes, but you are a forgiven sinner because you have a Savior in Jesus who gives you, yes, gives you, no strings attached, through the forgiveness of your sins, the precious gift of life in heaven. And that, really, is what Christmas is all about. Amen.