

*In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3All went to their own towns to be registered. 4Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*

*8In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." 13And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 14"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" 15When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." 16So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; 18and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.*

Come with me to Fairview hospital. We'll enter through the lobby, down the corridor past the information desk, past the elevators to the patient's rooms. All the way to the end of the hall, then right. A few more steps and two more elevators are before us. Up we go to the third floor. The doors open and around the corner and down the hall there is glass. We look and see a nurse caring for a newborn.

Whom does she hold? If we were close enough a name on a little tag around a wrist would be apparent. Maybe if we knew the name we would know something. Maybe mom is an important psychologist, Harvard educated. Or maybe Dad is a professional athlete, a name we all know. More likely the name would mean nothing to us.

Whatever the name we know nothing of what will be with this child. Will she one day be a surgeon saving the life of the very nurse who holds her now? Or a drunk driver whose irresponsibility will take that life in an accident? Will he marry your daughter, or granddaughter? Who knows? We only know that most anything is possible.

Just as it was in Bethlehem that night. A child was born to a mother who was not yet but soon to be married. She was poor. Her soon to be husband was a carpenter. But what of this child?

Would he be the brightest student ever in Israel? Would he get a scholarship for study in Rome?

Would he be an outstanding athlete honored in the games?

Would he become a soldier, or a revolutionary, changing the world by taking lives?.

Visitors from beyond, angels, told Mary and Joseph that God was coming among God's people in a special way in him. What would that mean? Would this child leave a trail of destruction, God's holiness burning, charring all that was unworthy?

Would he come with rules and instructions for a select few?

Would he end the world as we know it and start all life over again?

For now, he looked no different from the little ones we might encounter up at the hospital. His future was as much a mystery to Mary and Joseph and shepherds as those little ones are a mystery to us.

They could not see then how in Jesus God would be gentle with sinners, forgiving, embracing. They could not yet know how Jesus would teach to fill hearts with love. They could not yet sense that his touch would be healing. They only had an angel's word that God was in this little child, that God had entered the world and life and every day in this child.

In a way, you and I are just like them. Messengers have spoken to us about this child. We have heard his story of miracle and healing and teaching, his story of being betrayed and arrest being mocked and crucified, his story of breaking the hold of death and living once more. Though we know Jesus story we are still very much like Mary and Joseph and shepherds for we still don't know all that he will mean to our today and our tomorrow.

Jesus' story is not finished yet. Will he fill your heart with faith? Will this child of Mary make you one who is gentle with sinners, forgiving? Will God be part of all of your life today, tomorrow in Jesus? Will the love of God touch the people all around you through Jesus in you? Will you live in faith, die in faith, be raised forever to live with God in faith?

We come to see the baby. Not one of us knows what all the baby will mean for our tomorrows. But we trust that with this baby Jesus God will be the center of our life, for now and for all eternity. O Come let us adore him, Christ our Lord.