

## **GOSPEL MESSAGE**

**December 24, 2020**

### **NATIVITY OF OUR LORD, CHRISTMAS EVE**

#### **To You This Day**

Luke sets the stage for Jesus' birth by placing it within the royal history of the Roman Empire: "In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus" (Luke 2:1). Prior to this chapter, Luke tells us the story is also set in the days of King Herod. World history is often told as a story of powerful rulers and wealthy people. We frequently have the impression that these people are the ones who truly matter. Most of us do not see ourselves in the pages of history, common folks living ordinary lives.

Luke, however, is writing a very different kind of history in the gospel story. While the story is set in the times of particular kings and emperors, these powerful men aren't the focus of the story. Instead of sending out the royal birth announcement for the King of kings in a gold-embossed birth letter to Herod, Augustus, and other so-called important people, God first shares the news of the newborn Messiah and Savior with shepherds camped out for the night in lonely fields. Lowly Mary and humble Joseph hunker down in the back of a crowded house where the animals eat. Jesus, the royalty of God, is born into a world barely aware—except for a few nobodies who are invited to notice.

Along with the shepherds, you also are invited to notice. "You" is the operative word in the shepherds' story. "To you is born this day . . . a Savior" (Luke 2:11). In the story, "you" refers to shepherds, the last people one would expect to be the first to receive news of Jesus' birth. But today, in this divine night, in this sacred story, in this liturgy of the nativity, "you" is *you*. To *you* is born a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord. You are receiving the royal announcement because God brings good news to common folks living ordinary lives. This lovely, lonely night is for you because Christ is God's love for *you*.

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