

**Christmas Reflections 2012**  
**December 24, 2012, 6:00 P.M.**  
**Luke 2:1-14**

Merry Christmas! The time for waiting is finally over! Greetings to you again, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth *peace among those he favors!*” Our Messiah has been born!

Our Scripture reading tell us that the shepherds “*were terrified*”, when an angel showed up and God’s glory blazed around them. Other Bible versions have a similar expression, “they were sore afraid.” How are you? Are you in peace? While I was reading about the shepherds’ fear and anxiety, I reflected upon our fears and anxieties in our world and in our lives.

What is happening in this world? I read an article about genocide in Darfur in Sudan. More than one hundred people continue to die each day; five thousand die every month. In the Africa continent, sixty thousand children die from dehydration due to diarrhea caused by water-borne illness. The civil war in Syria has claimed tens of thousands of lives. This week, a Syrian warplane bombed a bakery and a hundred people were killed. Due to a complicated relationship between Israel and Palestine, over a thousand Palestinians have died in the last two years. More than 16.6 million AIDS orphans were reported in 2011 worldwide. In our country, the horrific mass shooting happened at the elementary school in Connecticut last week. A confused man fired his semiautomatic gun and he killed 26 people in minutes. Twenty of them were 5- to 8-year-old children. We live in a scary and fearful world, don’t we?

How about your lives? You didn’t have any struggles this year? The economic downturn has been continuing and pressuring our lives. Some of us have lost jobs, houses and dreams. Some of us are still grieving over the loss of loved ones who died recently or years ago. Some of us have serious health concerns. I have been praying for church members and their family members who have been undergoing chemo treatments or recuperating from illness, but some of them are still struggling. You know that when a family member is ill, it totally affects the entire family. Some of us have a hard time because of difficult relationships. Divorce, experience of betrayal from a close person, financial problems and other life issues are shadows in our lives. It seems that our life is not a peaceful journey, but a travel with fear and anxiety. Where is peace in this darkness of our life tunnel? We easily become vulnerable and weak. We seek peace in this difficult time. Where can we find peace?

In our Bible story, there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch

over their flocks by night. The shepherds were not a significant group, but a humble people in Jesus' times. They were surprised to hear what the angel shared with God's great news. They thought that they were not favored by their God, but God cared for them. The shepherds were the first people who heard God's good news. When we think that nobody knows my troubles and worries, but God knows our hearts. God knows our fear, pain and sorrow.

God's angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord." When they heard this wonderful news, they ran to the small town of Bethlehem to a stable behind the village inn, where the Messiah was born. Well, wait a minute. What has happened to our New Messiah, mighty God, and King of kings? Why was he born in such a humble place like a stable? If you were in charge, would not a Mighty God have at least a king suite in a four star hotel?

The Messiah was born in a stable as a baby wrapped in a blanket lying in a manger. I guess if you were with Mary and Joseph at a stable in a cold winter, you would have grabbed an extra blanket to put it over the baby Jesus so he would not catch his death of cold. There must be no heater in a barn, but bad smells, flies and unsanitary things there. What about Mary and Joseph? Mary was a teenager and Joseph was responsible for her. Can we understand their fear, responsibility, anxiety and uncertain future in this difficult time? All of a sudden, their life has been changed and they didn't know how to handle these life challenges.

What do these situations like the shepherds, a stable, manger and Mary and Joseph represent to us? Mary and Joseph are not special people, but they are one of us, ordinary parents of children in a tight budget. These illustrate our real life stories and struggles. God's angel brought the shepherds good news of great joy when they were alone and terrified. When Mary had to give birth to the baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph couldn't fully understand God's master plan, but the birth of their baby brought great joy and peace to their humble place. Mighty God and prince of peace became a great blessing to the weak and vulnerable.

Tonight, our Messiah is born to those who are struggling in their lives, and those who are weak and vulnerable. We all seek God's peace and joy. If we are ready to accept the angel's good news of great joy for all the people, let us race to the town of Bethlehem and find a child at a stable behind the hostel. And then we will all hear a huge angelic choir singing God's praises to us: "Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" O Come and let us adore him!