**Jesus Christ, the Healer and Lord of Restoration**

***“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.” (LK 2:1-12, kv. 11)***

***“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (Isai 53:5)***

Merry Christmas!! In this passage, an angel of the Lord exclaimed to the first worshipers to a new-born baby, Jesus, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.” As the world today is full of news of death, pain and sorrow due to covid 19, the angel exclaims that there is good news of great joy that will come to all. It is the news of the birth of the Savior, the Christ Lord. The historian Luke tells us that this news of the birth of Christ also reaches us today. The historian’s point of view and interest lies in conveying the present meaning and future message of an event by carefully investigating the beginning and reason of an event in detail. Let us also become historians like Luke the historian and hear the good news of great joy from the angels today.

1. **Today, a Savior has been born to you. (Lk 2:1-12)**

According to vv. 1-3, Luke paints the historical setting of the birth of Jesus. “In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.” At that time, Rome ruled the world. When Caesar spoke, it was like law. Each one traveled to his own city to register. Joseph, a poor carpenter, too headed to the city of Bethlehem. How miserable must Joseph’s heart be when he goes to his hometown with his pregnant wife, Mary, just to register with the dictator’s greed and demands? When they arrived in Bethlehem after a long journey, the full-term Mary gave birth to her firstborn son, wrapped in cloths and placed in a manger. Because there was no guest room available for them. (7) How sad and fateful story is this? However, apostle John describes this fateful story of Jesus’ birth as follows: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” With the new-born baby Jesus, in a manger John saw God’s glory of his son’s incarnation, grace and truth.

St. Luke, as a historian, portrays Caesar Augustus as the unwilling agent of God, whose decree leads to fulfillment of the prophesy in Micah 5:2, “*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.*” God used Caesar’ decree of census to fulfill God’s salvation plan, prophesied in Scripture. A historian Arnold Toynbee in his monumental study of world history, defined the world history as “Challenge and Response” to explain how civilizations rise and fall. Some argue that history is cyclical, while others argue that history is evolving. However, this clearly teaches us that God is the sovereign ruler of history. “Our God reigns,” with his sovereign plans and goodness. Today we live in Pandemic situation. When the year of 2020 began, people planed a new things and the hopeful plans. Beyond our human expectation, all the world has been locked down under the power of Covid 19. An unprecedented number of people have died, and people all over the world are groaning in constant pain and fear. Scholars have often labelled human history through BC and AD, but now scholars are considering changing it to BC and AC—'before corona and after corona’. However, we should know that even pandemics are under the sovereignty of God’s divine hands. God can use this terrible pandemic as the handle of advancement of his kingdom. In the history of America Great Awakening, there have been 4-5 times Great Awakenings, and Awakenings have happened every 70 years following a sine-curve shape, occurring in the darkest times of wars, sufferings, and severe pandemic diseases. Our God is the God of Restoration of this world. Behind all events, God has his sovereign plan. Following the 70-year cycle of the American Great Awakening, we should consider that this plague is God’s divine precursor to awakening and revive American churches. We should also know that this is by God’s sovereign will for a new awakening and revival.

Now the passage shifts attention to shepherds who hears a heavenly announcement of Messiah’s coming. The first Christmas message was delivered to the common people like the shepherds living out in the fields nearby.

What happened to them? An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified and speechless. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for the people.” (10) How earnestly do people wait to hear a good news? Every morning people search the newspaper for the good news, and open their email, face-book, and twitter etc. Proverbs 25:25 says, “Like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a distant land.” What kind of news are you eagerly waiting for? New job position, marriage news, or news of winning superball lottery? Any good news cannot satisfy all the people, because all worldly news are relative.

In 2007, when I applied to Graduate school for my PhD course of theology, most of my classmates applied to the same school for one slot because of high level and good conditions provided. At the due day, I opened my computer to check the result with a trembling hearts, I received the good news of great joy, “Congratulations on your admission!” However, that day I saw all my classmates’ sad and desperate faces due to bad news to them throughout the class. This good news also did not last 2 days! What kind of news can be good and joyful for all the people in the whole world? However, here is the good news of great joy that will be absolute and eternal for all the people.

Then, what is this good news? “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. (σήμερον Σωτήρ, ὅς ἐστιν Χριστὸς Κύριος,)” In Greek version, “good news that will cause great joy,” is described ἰδοὺ γὰρ εὐαγγελίζομαι ὑμῖν χαρὰν μεγάλην. At that time, when the new Emperor was born or the Emperor visited their land, they shouted “Evangelion, gospel! (εὐαγγελίον)” (birth of new Caesar, visiting of Caesar to their land,). Through Evangelion of Caesar, there will be “Pax Romana,” which literally means “Peace by Roman,” in their land and lives. Historically, Evangelion through “Pax Romana” caused serious sorrows and punishment with blood in their lands. However, the angel exclaimed the real good news of great joy for the whole world, εὐαγγελίον, that is, the birth of a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. So then, why did the birth of a baby Jesus in a manger bring the good news for the whole world? Because he is the heavenly king of Savior, who will deliver all human being from their sins and death. Savior, Σωτήρ, originally the military terminology, describes a deliverer from enemies and perils of death.

Grasshoppers do not need a Savior but human beings need a Savior because he is created in the image of God. Like Luke the historian, let’s return to the fall of human beings in Gen 3 as a historian. Through Adam’s fall, all human beings fell into the reign of Satan, who domains the world through sins and death. Rom 5:12 says “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.” Through sin came by Adam, our ancestor, all the terrible consequences like fear and shame, despair and sorrow, anger and hate, bitterness and sickness, and eventually death. Listen to the whole world’s groaning with pains, shame, and fear of death! Listen to the shouting of all human beings who are seeking for Savior under the power of Satan, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?” (Rom 7:24) Therefore, every human needs a Savior to deliver us from sin and death more than the luck of winning the Powerball lottery. [what the most needed to you? Money, house, health…the Savior]

How many people are tortured under the power of Satan’s domain? How often do we suffer and groan under the power of death and shame of guiltiness? Nobody can overcome and escape from the bondage of death of Satan by themselves. \*\*We need a Savior, who will rescue us from all these bondages of death. [examples of rescuing the domain of Satan ] “Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (25a) Praise God for sending the good news of great joy, “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you!”

Then, what kind of Savior? He is the Messiah (promised and came with Isaiah 53, suffered and healed us with suffering and death for our sins; providing peace with God…), the Lord (Restoration of the whole world).

**First**, *He is the anointed Messiah, who has healed our painful wound of death.* Jesus is the everlasting healer in our souls! Jesus did not rescue us with his brutal power like Caesar or the worldly conquerors. Jesus as our anointed shepherd rescued us from our sins and death penalty through his sufferings and death on the cross. 700 years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Isaiah foretold the work of the Messiah who would come as the Savior of sinners. “*Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed*.” (Isaiah 53:4-5) Here, “pain” comes from “” in Greek, which means sickness and disease that is accompanied by pain. The word of “suffering” indicates sorrows and guiltiness which were produced by our sins. When Adam rebelled and sinned against God, the ground was cursed and produced thorns and thistles which pierce through our body and souls. Like Covid 19 virus, thorns and thistles of sins-sickness pierced through all human beings with pains, pangs, sorrow from curse, fear of death, and painful disease. Sin sickness has the power of the sting like a bee. Apostle Paul says “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.” Sin sickness has the power of the sting like a bee. Do you have experience of being stung by a bee or of being stricken by snakes? Americans hate the pain and are scared of pain, and in one day millions of paccinkillers were consumed for sleep. More than that, there is no mysterious medicine that can cure/heal the pain of our sin-sickness stung by the pang of death. The wounded souls with sins stings others severely like a wounding machine.

Only Jesus took our pains and bore our sufferings, paying our debts on the cross and shedding on his blood. When Jesus bore our transgressions by being pierced by the spear of a Roman soldier, God softened the curse of his wrath against us. When Jesus was smitten with a whip and was crushed for our rebellions, God forgave our sins and recovered our blessings and life. “*By his wounds we are healed*.” When we confess our sin sickness and pains of wounds in our soul and look at Jesus who are shedding his blood for our sins, we are healed! We don’t need to live in misery because of our sins and inability. Rather, we should come to Jesus and lay down our burdens and shames at the cross. Amazingly, the cross of Jesus has the healing power and has the power of restoration of souls. Jesus is the healer who heals our painful wounds with our sins and iniquities, even the pains of death.

I was born in 1959, and I met my God in my army service. I was sentenced to military jail due to leaking a 2nd level of the military secrets in 1981. Waiting for the military jail, I lost 25 pounds in weight with the stress and fear of death for a month. In a deep agony and fear, I cried out to God to save me from this pit of death for the first time in my life. “Lord, save me, save me. Then I will become your servant!” with many tears and cries, God heard of my cries and set me free from all punishment with his miraculous hands. God called me as his servant just as I vowed in my days of despair, forgiving all my sins of sexual immorality, hate, anger and selfishness. In 1994, when I was a fulltime shepherd, one student committed suicide after joining Sunday worship in my church. As a shepherd, I suffered from condemnation and fear of death, which I by myself could not overcome. I came to the cross of my Lord, and cried out his forgiveness and healing, then Jesus healed my hearts with his love, “Neither do I condemn you.” (Jn 8:11) In 2005, I came to US for studying biblical studies of PhD with my family, and after 9 years of studies of theology I got a PhD degree with God’s wonderful grace and mercy. With my pride I wanted to be honored and respected from the people in UBF churches. However, I was marginalized and neglected without any position, and I suffered from many shames and despair. Because of hate, despair, and anger, I was not really happy and could not overcome these with my own powers. I come to Jesus my Lord and kneel down before his cross, who is shedding his blood stricken with my sins. The Lord has completely healed me of all my pain, hatreds, and shame. Praise God, my Savior and healers in my life. Jesus commands me a lovely commands, “Take *my yoke upon you* and learn from me.” (Matt 11:29) I need my Savior, Jesus’ healing and mercy. I worship you, who is born in my hearts as my Lord and Savior through all my life. Amen!

God has 5 names in Scripture such as “Jehovah Jireh (Gen 22:14), Jehovah Nissi (Ex 17:15), Jehovah Shammah (Ezekiel 48:35), Jehovah Shalom (Judges 6:24), Jehovah Rapha (Ex 15:23-26), which means “God the Healer!” During the Covid 19 we heard of bad and dark news of sickness and even death with disease among our mission coworkers. Recently, new variant of Omicron virus has been rampant over the world, and we are scared on this disease. On UBF prayer topics list there are full of news of sickness and disease of death. We feel we are forgotten from God’s protection and his love. However, Rom 5:8 says how God’s own love was revealed on us, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” This passage has the present tense, not the past or future. (5b) When we look at Jesus’ wounds at the cross, my sickness and disease, even the pains of death, are healed. M. Paul Choi’s disease will be healed on the blood of Jesus.

**Second,** *He is the Lord of Restoration over the world.* The reason the Savior’s birth is the good news of great joy for the whole world is because He is the Lord of the Restoration. Isaiah 53:5b says, “…he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us *peace* was on him.” To Israelites, the peace, (שָׁלוֹם) *Shalom*, does not mean a personal comfort or safe security, but the restoration of relation with God and the restoration of the whole world. When the wrath and punishment of God were poured on his shoulders, the peace of God was restored upon us. I saw a board of church, saying, “*God created the world; Satan destroyed the world; Jesus Christ recreates (restores) the world.”* Through Jesus’ death in his sufferings, God restored our relationship with God, so we cry “Abba, Father.”

Further, Jesus himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, through his body. (Eph 2:14) Among people, there are occurring the racial conflicts, the broken relationship in hostility, and the hate between the generations. As a wish for peace, these words are also written on the wall of the UN headquarters building in NY, “They will beat swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation.” (Isaiah 2:4b) However, in this world the news of war and conflicts does not cease. In Jesus’ reconciliation through his body only

Finally, Jesus’ sufferings gives us the hope of ultimate restoration. Through Jesus’ chastisement on the cross, God gives us the hope of Shalom, the restoration of the whole world and creature. “…in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.” (Rom 8:21) In this corrupted world, the whole creation has been groaning in the pains of bondage of slavery, and we also with our deadly body are groaning with pains and despair. But Jesus is the Lord of restoration who will liberate us from these mortal and perishable body and restore into his glorious body and image!

***Third,*** *The angel exclaimed the good news of great joy, “Today.”* “What is currently taking place in Bethlehem is *of timeless significance.* “Today” began from Gen 3:15, Proto-evangelium, and “Today” was fulfilled with the birth of Jesus. In Latin word, “Hinc et Nunc” “*Here and Now*” ‘the current-ness of the saving event as it occurs “today.” The timely today become the timeless, current today, we accept Jesus birth now! Today is your new day if you accept this good news of the Savior’s birth. Lk 23:43, “Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.” God invites us today to a new-born baby Jesus, the Messiah and the Lord. Today, do not harden our hearts for this angel’s voice , but let’s accept Jesus our Lord in our hearts! In this Christmas season, in these dark year of Pandemic people are fearful of death and pains of disease with Covid 19, concerned about their healing and uncertain future. People tried to forget this with drinking, addiction to opioid, and

The author Luke now presents a sign of the birth. Look at v. 12. “This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” One hardly expects to find Messiah in an animal room. Our savior did not came as a superman nor in the luxurious palace. In a humble manger, with the form of a new-born baby our Lord Jesus was lying. However, in him there is God’s eternity and mighty power of God. His is name is Wonderful Counselor, Everlasting Father, and Mighty God. Like three magi, with a humble heart let’s come to Jesus, our Lord. Let’s bow down and worship our Lord Jesus with our whole hearts! Amen!

In Conclusion,