

 **Main Street**
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Luke 2:1-21
“A Most Subversive Story”

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(Christmas Eve)

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“Following Christ From City Center!”

LUKE 2:1-21 "A SUBVERSIVE STORY"

Red = Echoes Of Roman Imperial Theology

1) vv.1-7 GEOPOLITICAL EVENTS: SIGN OF BIRTH FULFILLED (See prophecy of 1:30-31).

1 **IN THOSE DAYS** a decree went out from Caesar *Augustus* *Augustus* (Gk. *Sebastos* = one to be worshiped)
that **all the world** should be enrolled./ *Oikoumene* (Roman coins), Census//1:5, Taxes, *Enrolled* (4x)
2 This was the first enrollment, when (?before) Quirinius was governor of Syria./ 5 Moves, *Augustus* (44/42 B.C. - A.D. 14)
3 And **all** went to be enrolled, each to his own city./ *Acts 5:37* for alternative response, *Psalm 87:6*
4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, *Luke 1:27, 32, 69, 2:11*
which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David./ *Fulfills Micah 5:2 (Place/Lineage)*
5 to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child./ *80-85 Miles, Family Complies With Roman Law*
Uprooted, Note 6 Uses Of All (vv. 1, 3, 9, 18, 19, 20)
6 And *while they were there*, the time came for her to be delivered. *No Late-Night Arrival, No Mean Innkeeper*
7 And she gave birth to her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, *Strips, Lk. 2:22-24, 23:53, Wisd. Sol. 7:4*
and laid him in a manger (i.e. feeding trough), *Odd, Lower Of 2-Level House, Isaiah 1:3 (LXX), Luke 13:15*
because there was no room for them in the inn/guest quarters. *Gk. kataluma = Space Above Village Home, Luke 22:11*
House Filled With Higher Status Family

2) vv.8-20 SHEPHERDS' TREK AND ANGELS' CHORUS. *Source Of Much Great Art* *Angelophanies //Lk. 1:5-25, 26-38*

a) v.8 Shepherds In The Field. *Dishonest/Outside Law (b. Sanhedrin 25b), Friend Of Sinners*
8 And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, *4:18-19, Marginalized*
keeping (the) watches over their flocks by night. *Association With David As Shepherd*
Humble Birth, Glorious Announcement!

b) vv.9-11 Angelic Message To Shepherds (Emperor Language: Birthday/Benefits).

9 And the angel of **the Lord** appeared to them, *Jewish Lord, Not Roman Lord // der Fuhrer*
and the glory of **the Lord** shone round about them, *Lk. 1:78*
and they were filled with fear. (10) And the angel said to them, *Isaiah 6:1-5 For Fear*
"Do not be afraid, *Luke 7:22, 1:13, 30, 1:32-33 (v.11)*
for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; *//2:30-32*
11 *for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Christ the Lord."* *1:32-33, 3 Titles, Is. 9:6, Acts 2:36*
Emperor's Birthday: Below (9 B.C.)

c) v.12 Manger Sign Given By Angel. *Invitation To Action, Adventure*
12 *And this will be a sign for you:* *Prophecy/Fulfillment*
you will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

d) vv.13-14 Angels Sing The Meaning/Future Of Salvation *Chr.33:3*

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly **host** (army), *Is. 6*
14 praising God and saying (singing), *Angels Sing Of Present & Future*
"Glory to God (Benefit No. 1) //19:38
in the highest, *Cosmic Glory & Peace From God*
and on earth *Peace = Shalom, Eirene (4 Dimensions)*
peace among men (those) with whom he is pleased." (Benefit No. 2) Zech. 1:79
(Anthropois eudokias = "men of favor"), Lk. 3:22, 12:32, Acts 10:36

c') vv.15-16 Manger Sign Confirmed By Obedient Following. *Fulfillment*

15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, *Group*
"Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing which has happened (accomplished word),
16 *which the Lord has made known to us."* *God Keeps His Word*
And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. *v.12*
The Angels Are Truth-Tellers

b') vv.17-19 Angelic Message Shared By Shepherds. *Model Evangelists*

17 And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning the child;
18 And **all** who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. *Testimony, Worship, Contemplation*
19 But Mary kept **all** these things (words), pondering them in her heart. *//1:66, 2:51b (Reflective Response)*
Full Significance Not Yet Clear, Mary As Thinker

a') v.20 Shepherds In The Field. *Model Worshipers*

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for **all** they had heard and seen, *Acts 4:20*
as it had been told them. *Revelation, Spiritual Afterglow! Sinners As Evangelists!*
Most Christmas Readings Stop Wrongly At v.20, Miss Covenant Ceremony

1') v.21 JEWISH INITIATION: SIGN OF NAMING FULFILLED (See prophecy of 1:30-31).

21 **AT THE END OF EIGHT DAYS**, when he was circumcised, he was called *Jesus*, *Obedience: Gen. 17:11-12, Lev. 12:3*
the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. *1:26-38, Inducted Into Covenant, Parent's Faith*

I. LUKE AND THE PERVASIVE ROMAN IMPERIAL THEOLOGY AND PROPAGANDA.

Prience Inscription, Augustus Caesar As World Savior, 9 B.C., Birthday Inscription: “Providence... has brought into the world Augustus and filled him with a hero’s soul for the benefit of mankind. A Savior for us and our descendants, he will make wars cease and order all things well. The epiphany of Caesar has brought to fulfillment past hopes and dreams.”

Myra Inscription: to the “divine Augustus Caesar, son of a god, imperator of land and sea, the benefactor and savior of the whole world.”

Thus, there is proclaimed on the birthday of Caesar (in these and other inscriptions) the he fulfills ancient hopes, is the focus of divine Providence, is son of God, as *Augustus* is worthy of worship, is titled *Savior*, has an epiphany or manifestation, and brings peace to all the world as the benefactor of all. His birthday (Sept. 23) was later made the beginning of the new year. Luke believes that such claims about Augustus are idolatrous, but in Jesus they are true. Each claims to bring a “gospel about the creation of a peaceful world.” Their means of doing it are not the same. One is through violence and victory, the other through justice and the inbreaking power of God’s kingdom. Jesus gave non-violent resistance. They are rival political and religious claims, then and now. Hitler is not Feuhr (leader); Jesus is!

II. LUKE AND THE REALITIES OF JEWISH VILLAGES AND CLANS.

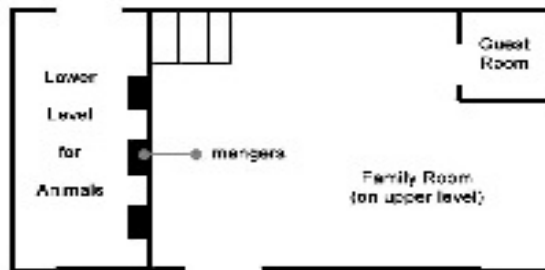
Christmas Myths

1. Lonely journey
2. Travel by donkey
3. Late arrival in labor
4. Family as strangers
5. Mean innkeeper
6. Joseph delivers
7. Rejected at birth
8. Manger as wooden cradle
9. Born in a cave

Luke’s Presentation From First-Century Middle Eastern Culture

Crowded roads, everyone on the move to ancestral towns for census
Don’t know, likely on foot
“And while they were there” implies a more extended stay before labor
Joseph’s ancestral home, many kin, “I am Joseph son of Heli, grandson of Matthat, of the family of David;” hospitality is highly valued in that culture.
In house of family members, but not in the guest “upper” room (*kataluma*, 22:11)
Village midwife delivers, as was customary in Jewish villages,
Welcomed at birth, rejected later at death.
Manger as place cut out in a stone wall at feeding height for sheep, a niche.
Lower level of village house. The guest room was normally on the roof.

Lower level = animals at night
Upper level = family space
Roof = Guest Room (*kataluma*)



Reading the text on the basis of Middle Eastern culture, the story falls into place: Joseph and Mary went to the house of relatives. When the time came for the birth, Mary delivered her firstborn and laid him in a feeding trough. In case anyone should ask why these guests were not in the guest room, Luke says, ‘because there was no room in the guest room.’ Jesus is born, not in a palace, not in his family’s own home, not even in the guest room of his relatives’ home, but in the common room of a peasant home in a small town in an out-of-the way corner of the world. Such homes were designed so that the ground floor area just inside the door was used as a place to keep livestock at night. The people in the house lived in an adjacent single room, built a few feet higher. The people would keep it clean by sweeping everything down into the “stable,” and the animals could be easily fed by cutting niches into the edge of the platform that constituted the people’s living space. These niches were the mangers. Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem weeks or days before Jesus’ birth, stayed with relatives, moved down into the stable portion of the house for the delivery, because the guest room (the “inn”) was occupied—probably by other relatives of higher social status. The angels revealed the birth to shepherds before anyone else, for the very reason that shepherds were a socially disreputable group, like those the grown-up Jesus would spend much of his time with. Joseph probably took Mary to Bethlehem not because she needed to be physically present for the census, but because she could have been harmed or killed by fellow Nazarenes incensed by her premature pregnancy (Adapted from Kenneth E. Bailey, “The Manger and the Inn: The Cultural Background of Luke 2:7,” *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 4:2:1980).

A Brief Treatment Of Luke 2:1-21

Luke's so-called *Christmas story*, when v.21 is added, stands in parallel to John the Baptist's birth in 1:57-80. Their conceptions, through different, are parallel (1:5-25// 1:26-38), as are their births and early ministries (3:1-22 // 3:23-4:15). Jesus does not just appear; his is a highly prepared arrival. The surface structure of 2:1-21 is a 9:1 concentric pattern with vv.13-14, the song of the angels, at the center (1, 2_a-b-c-**d**-c'-b'-a', 1'). The outer components 1. (vv.1-7) // 1' (v.21) each contain a major dating, the first about geopolitical events, the second about Jesus' initiation as a Jewish male through circumcision and naming. In both cases prophecy is fulfilled: he is a son born as a Davidid in Bethlehem, and he is called Jesus, the name given to Mary by Gabriel (1:30-31). The central section (2. vv.8-20) is yet a third angelophany (1:5-25, 1:26-38), this time offering revelation to a band of local *unlikelies* (i.e. shepherds) to demonstrate, as later in the gospel, that Jesus is indeed *the friend of sinners*.

A pattern emerges. Gabriel comes and goes on divine errands; Zechariah goes on pilgrimage to the temple and back; Mary goes on a pilgrimage to the Judean hill country and back; the holy family goes on pilgrimage to Bethlehem and back, and now the shepherds go on a pilgrimage to Jesus' birthplace, then back to work. To be caught up in the work of God, travel is required! Except for trips to the Holy Land *to walk where Jesus walked*, Protestants have largely abandoned pilgrimage as a spiritual discipline, but Scripture- and particularly the birth narratives- are full of such. A pilgrimage is a break from routine that puts one in a liminal state, enabling a fresh openness to God along the way. About every two years I need to leave the U.S. to have my soul *de-toxed* in a mission trip. I go in hope, and come back with a new set of eyes. Away from the props and securities of life, I am forced to stay alert to the approaches of God.

Luke delights to paint the story of Jesus' arrival against the backdrop of the world's pyramid of power. Caesar proposes, but God disposes. The world's true ruler is moved around on a chess board and by providence lands in David's city for his birth. The holy family are not Jewish political radicals, but quietly obedient to the inconveniences of living as an occupied people. Jesus is political in a much larger more lasting sense. He is born among family, tended by village mid-wives. Jesus sleeps in a trough on the lower level of a family house because the guest room on the roof is full of older relatives. He was not rejected but welcomed at birth. Mean inn-keepers and late night arrivals in caves are not part of the story.

Romantic notions of shepherds do not match first century reality. Think *sheep-rustlers* and *unauthorized-grazers* for an accurate picture. It was to working stiffs on the night watch that the Lord's angel appeared reflected in heaven's light. The telegram from God is that the Messiah has been born close enough for them to find him if they look for the right sign, a wrapped baby in a feed trough. What is ultimately for *all people* starts with *some people*, and those are the shepherds. When the heavens open further, the sky is filled with more luminous creatures, all praising God and singing of the new union between God's glory and human welfare. It is to Jesus (3:22) and his followers (12:32) that the promises are made because it is among them and with him that the new arrangements are being practiced at ground level. The church is God's peace laboratory. When heaven is zipped back shut, the shepherds first convene for a discussion, then go to confirm the sign. Do the sheep go with them? They eventually find the home, get the names of the family, and share what happened on the hillside. Apparently, even God cannot keep a secret this good! The confirmation of prophecy is a cause for joy and reflection all around, with Mary portrayed as a deep thinker. On the eighth day Jesus spills his first blood. Whatever is ahead, one thing is clear: Jesus is a Jew on a divine mission.

A SUBVERSIVE STORY

*"Do not be afraid,
for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people;
for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Christ the Lord."*

The angels invoke terms from Roman Imperial theology to announce a new king!

LUKE 2 : 1 0b - 11

If you want to inform people, give them facts. If you want to educate them, speak of principles. But if you want to shape imagination and hook them for a generation, tell the story of a hero on a long voyage or great quest. Something grand and mythic, a sort of adult fairy tale, full of strange creatures and dark forces that must be overcome. Something a bit swashbuckling with lots of sword fights and narrow escapes. Fill it with bravery, friendship, loyalty, technology, and spirituality— a connection with *something beyond*, however vaguely conceived, then make a movie!

If your story is cast in Christian terms, as with Tolkein and *The Lord Of The Rings* saga, it will make clear there are only two realities: the one personal God, and then everything God made, the entire creation, visible and invisible, with the distinction always kept between the two because in our scheme the world is not God, and God is not the world. All is two; dualism is true: there is God, and there is creation, and only God is to be worshiped. But if you cast the tale in a different mold where there is only one reality with no transcendent Creator so that the Force is impersonal and has both a light and dark side so that good and evil are both eternal, you have a very different kind of story, a *Star Wars* kind of story. All is one; monism is true; nature is everything; it is the source of the sacred, and morality is what you make it. Obi-Wan admits as much when he says, "The Force is *an energy field created by all living things*." There is no Creator and creature distinction; all is impersonal energy, force. And if you add a bit of Hollywood-style Zen Buddhism, meditation, and the call not to think clearly but to feel deeply because intuition is— after all— more in tune than rationality, you have the formula for George Lucas' amazing *Star Wars* franchise which has hooked us for nearly forty years now and has

even created its own new religion of the Jedi, a new order of cosmic knights.¹ So global is the impact of *Star Wars*, I'm told the U.N. is considering making May 4 a *Star Wars* global holiday. After all, was it not Obi-Wan Kenobi who first said to Anakin Skywalker, "Good bye, old friend. May the Force be with you!"

While I am not a secret Jedi, I admit to being deeply hooked by the first film and having some of those same stirrings return in the recent episode seven, *The Force Awakens*. Every man with a heart still beating wants to be brave and good, slay the dragon, protect the castle, and win the fair maiden. I'm embarrassed to admit I again walked out of the theatre last Friday carrying an imaginary light saber and mouthing the sounds it makes when it hums and slashes through the air. At age twenty-four in I was still young enough to want to be Luke Skywalker, but to get there I knew I needed a savvy father figure like Hans Solo to show me the ropes and an old sage like Obi-Wan to reveal the ways of wisdom. Every young man needs a father and a mentor and a priest. So when a movie or a song or a novel or a biography moves us this deeply and sets off a multi-generational phenomena— as has *Star Wars*, it's good to ask, "What's going on? What deep issues are being addressed?" I think Michael Svingel is right when he says the appeal is based on six deep human intuitions:

- * A frustration with the present world and our own lives: a sense something good and innocent has been lost
- * A sense of greater purpose and meaning— somewhere *out there*: a spiritual longing nothing else can silence.
- * A feeling of personal conflict between good and evil: a real cosmic battle.
- * The conviction this world isn't the way it's supposed to be: a sense something's gone wrong and a need for justice.
- * The hope that one day things will be better: a vision of a new age.
- * The urge to forsake all and get involved in the struggle: a sense of call.²

¹ For an analysis, see Dr. Peter Jones, "Star Wars And The Ancient Religion," truthxchange.com/?p=6410. For his full treatment of pagan monism and theistic dualism, see *One or Two: Seeing a World of Difference* (Escondido, CA: Main Entry, 2010). For a free video, www.ligonier.org/learn/series/only-two-religions.

² "The Irresistible Force of Star Wars: 3 Theological Approaches," www.dts.edu/read/theology-of-star-wars-force-awakens-svingel.

Luke 2:1-21 7

So the George Lucas adult fairy tale begins, “A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away....” But when Luke—another writer of great adventures—begins his story of Jesus the hero and his birth, it is not grounded in timeless myth but in real time, in human history, in a world where when Caesar Augustus issues a decree for a census and a great movement of peoples is set in motion, verse 1, “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled.”

Augustus is Emperor in Rome, in Syria Quirinius is the regional governor, and so down the chain of command the order comes. The world is not as it ought to be, especially from the perspective of first century Jews under Roman rule. There were hopes that future would be different when Messiah came; the good and final King would defeat their enemies and make things right, but when would that be? They knew he would be born in Bethlehem from the family of King David, but when? When would their God, one true God, the Creator, make things right? The prophets had given hints, but no one knew the details, and so there was only hoping and praying and suffering.

But God is already at work. Only no one knows it yet but a young couple from the north headed south to Joseph’s tribal village. So the holy family, Joseph- a village working guy, and his new wife Mary- an expectant mother, head the ninety miles south to the ancestral town of Bethlehem. And while they are there among family, including likely others of Davidic ancestry from Nazareth, Mary gives birth with the help of village midwives.³ No cave, no later night arrivals, no men innkeeper, no fumbling Joseph. Just a first born son- *Jesus* to us, *Joshua* in Hebrew- placed in a feeding trough on the lower level where the animals slept, so full was the house with family who’d come to town.⁴ Jesus was not rejected at his birth, only later in his ministry and finally at his death. Our hero has been born in real history in a real town surrounded by real family. It’s not “once upon a time,” but, “once in time,” the same history in which we live, not “long ago in a galaxy far, far away.”

³ On the cultural setting, see Kenneth E. Bailey, "The Manger and the Inn: The Cultural Background of Luke 2:7," *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 4:2:1980, and for a recent article, Andreas Kostenberger, Alexander Stewart, “Five Errors to Drop from Your Christmas Sermon,” www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/december-web-only/five-errors-to-drop-from-your-christmas-sermons.

⁴ See p. 3, “Luke And The Realities Of Jewish Villages And Clans.”

How clever of God. To have a ruler in Rome- a pagan ignorant of the divine designs- arrange for the biblical fulfillment of another and greater ruler. Ours is not a weak but a strong God, working in ways often not seen until afterwards, and then only to the sight of faith. That is what Luke believed, what the church believes, what I believe. When we cannot see God's face or find his purpose, his wise hand remains at work. So as the earth shakes and nations tremble, put your trust in this God and learn his ways. Jesus is the world's true future, it's good and true king, and it will all one day arrive at his feet for sorting out. The titles and accolades the world then gave Augustus: *Savior* and *Lord and Ruler of the whole world*, rightly belong to Jesus alone. His is the *good news* we need to hear. He is the one who brings lasting *peace*, not at the point of a spear but in his willingness to absorb pain rather than inflict it.

And if you are seeking adventure and its surprises, a sense of drama and meaning, it's right here. So it was for shepherds on the third shift that night. Their work was about staying alert through long stretches of boredom, hot and cold weather, rain and predators, with no public respect since you might graze on posted land when no one's looking or rustle a stray sheep from another herd time to time to keep the numbers up. Such men are hustlers, the late night truckers of the ancient world- good ole boys with a six pack. Red necks and ranchers. A little bit like this crowd! But life, even boring life, is always lived at the edge of mystery, and sometimes the other world intrudes into this one. The veil of invisibility was then unzipped, and there was Gabriel the great archangel- bathed in light- this time with a telegram that would immortalize the shepherds. "Tonight's the night," it read:

"the night everything changes. A Jewish king has arrived to impact all the world. He is Savior of all, Messiah of the Jews, the Lord come down. You'll be able to spot him because if there are other newborns in bands of cloth; he's the only one sleeping in a feeding trough!"

It was then that the veil was pulled further back so the shepherds saw what was just beyond sight. All the good angels singing the song of salvation, that in this child heaven and earth are forever joined so that what glorifies God is good for people and what is good for people glorifies God. Isn't that a great idea? Then the revelation suddenly receded; it was gone as the veil closed. So the guys agreed to go and find if it was so. Working men are the first witnesses; they testify as Mary ponders the mystery of which she is a part. In a few hours several men rouse their wives, "You won't believe what happened!" to which the reply is, "Are you drinking?"

"There was this angel and a baby in a trough, and could it be..."

I believe in divine appointments- not just because they are in Scripture, but because they happen to me. You may think me naive, but so it was with the shepherds, and I much prefer their company to the cynicism of our world.

I shared the story three years ago, and it deserves to be retold. It was 1974, and I was a junior at Wake Forest. Those days were the height of *the Jesus movement*, and Jim Morgan and I were zealous in our recovered faith. That year's January term we toured Great Britain. First London, where late one afternoon we exited the tube at Kensington Station. At the top of the steps was an old woman who reeked of gin and smelled of weeks without soap and water. She wanted money, and tourists- she had learned as a beggar- were an easy mark. My stomach revolted at her smell. After a brief word, we shoved her a few coins and left the station. About a block round the corner it hit us. We turned and stared at each other. Two students head for the ministry had been less than kind to a poor old woman. We ran back to the station, but she was gone. We fasted the next day in repentance, and agreed that- should the Lord give us another shot- we would show more love.

The night before flying home we stayed with friends in a little hotel. Nineteenth century, all stone, narrow front steps, small vestibule, a second door into the lobby, TV room to the left, steep steps up to five floors of small rooms. It was cold and rainy, late January in London. We were all tired, sitting and laughing at a British comedy show, probably Benny Hill- some of whose lines I still use in unguarded moments away from the church.

The door bell rang, really a buzzer. The Pakistani clerk was no where to be found. It rang again. I jumped up. Jim and Judy Haughee followed, Jim 6'2" to my left, me 5'6" in the middle, Judy barely 4'10" to the right. Through the lobby, open the door, stand in the umbrella room, unlock the bolt, pull open the outside door.

Before us stood a couple, early 30's perhaps, and her 10 months pregnant, an example of *great with child*. From their appearance my guess was central Europe, perhaps Hungary. She wore a head scarf against the bitter weather; his hair matted by the rain. He looked up from the stoop and asked in an accent, "Are there any rooms in the hotel?" A chill ran up my spine that had nothing to do with weather. I glanced up to Jim and down to Judy. I had to ask, and did, "What is your name?"

"My name is Yo-seph."

I looked up at Jim and down at Judy. I had to know. Looking at his wife, I asked, "And what is your name?"

She glanced at Yo-seph who nodded, then answered, "My name is Mari-gold." Close enough for a redneck from South Carolina! There stood the holy family, and I was not about to find myself in some children's play as the mean innkeeper!

In a flash all three of us went to work, grabbing bags, ushering them out of the cold and wet into the warmth of the steam-heated lobby. Someone went and roused the desk manager, and when Jim and I explained we wanted to give our room to the couple and camp out in the TV room, he'd have nothing of it. And when we told him the holy family had just showed up at his hotel, he shook his head, "They have to go elsewhere." What happened next was one of happiest events of my life. Jim and I left Yoseph and Marigold with Judy. Into the rain and cold we ran without coats or gloves, up and down the streets we ran till we found a hotel with a room and paid for it out of our pockets, then back to usher the holy family to their new digs. They did not understand why two crazy Americans were so giddy about helping strangers. But we did. "Lord," we prayed weeks earlier, "if you give us a second chance..."

I don't remember sleeping that night. All I heard in my head were Christmas carols. And since that night I've often wondered: the drunken lady, was she an angel unawares? I've also wondered if back in Hungary there's a couple, now in their early seventies, who sometime around Christmas smile and say, "Remember the three Americans. The thought we were the holy family! Joshua, what do you think?"

This is what keeps me spiritually alive, this nagging sense that every day and every person and every phone call may be a window into the other world and its vast resources. Verse 20: "And the shepherds returned with Pastor Phil, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them." Our God bends and guides history toward the vindication of Jesus Christ. To all who listen and follow, he lets them in on the delights and burdens of his work in the world.

It is through the Jews and the Jew Jesus that the holy flame has been kept lit in a dark world. The one, holy God of Israel was revealed first to Abraham and his offspring, a light to the nations and the source of the Scriptures. These are the people who gave us the Lord's noble father, his virgin mother, and the Savior himself who on the eighth day after birth- spilt his first blood as he entered the ancient covenant of his people in circumcision. Anti-Judaism is anti-God and anti-Christian. That is not so much a political statement as an abiding moral and spiritual one. There is a reason they've had such a hard history; the world just not want to deal with the holy God they know and whose stories and righteous demand are in their Bible. Don't miss out on life's biggest adventure. What would it mean for you to become a serious follower of Jesus Christ? This church are here to help you do just that. So, with thanks for the genius of George Lucas and his grand narrative, it's not "The Force be with you." It's rather, "The Lord be with you: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." The God who made it all has come down in Jesus to reclaim our attention.
