

Thank God You're Here!

Luke 2:1-7

"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to his own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:1-7 (NIV)



If you've ever seen the comedy show, "Whose Line Is It Anyway?" you know it is a comedic improvisation show in which four comedians must make up various comedic routines right off their heads. Some of the routines they do include a "Dating Game" type routine. Another is a spoof of the news in which characters must do impersonations of others and behave in unusual ways.

One of my favorite skits (no, it is not "Hoedown") is a game called "Superheroes." They think of a catastrophe like, "Hey superman, everyone's losing their hair." Then each of the four comedians comes in as a superhero to "save the day." Each time they enter center stage, the main character says, "Thank God you're here." Then, each character improvises a role through which, eventually, they "save the day."

There was probably a lot of "Thank God you're here in the Christmas story."

- ?? *Elizabeth*, when Mary found out Elizabeth was pregnant, went to see her and rejoice with her. "Thank God you're here!" Elizabeth must have thought.
- ?? *Zechariah* must have rejoiced when his son, John the Baptist, was born. Having been struck dumb—unable to speak—for the nine months of John's conception, at his birth, God restored his speech. "Thank God you're here, John. Thank God you're here!"
- ?? *Joseph*, when considering leaving Mary, his mysteriously impregnated fiancé, probably said, "Thank God you're here" to the angel who told him "Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife."
- ?? Perhaps Mary and Joseph both responded, "Thank God you're here" when, after finding there was no room for them in the inns, that someone *finally* directed them to a manger where Mary, in birth pangs, was already overdue to give birth.
- ?? *The Shepherds*, hoping, wondering and waiting for God to send His Messiah, must have rejoiced when the angels appeared to them, "Born for you this day, in the City of David, is a Savior, Christ the Lord. You will find Him wrapped in cloths, lying in a manger." Thank God you're hear, angels!
- ?? When the *Wise Men* finally, after much searching, found the child Jesus, they most certainly must have said, "Thank God you're here, Jesus" as they laid their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Perhaps most significant of all those who came to see Jesus, the greatest one is Mary. Even as she “pondered all these things in her heart,” the birth of Christ—and all the events surrounding it—must have made “Thank God you're here” a broken record in her life.

- ?? After hearing the angel's words that she would give birth to Jesus, she must have thought, “Thank God you're here.”
- ?? When she saw Joseph tell her of the angel's words to stick with her and marry her, she must have said, “Thank God you're here, Joseph. I love you.”
- ?? When she saw the shepherds, the wise men and others who came to see Jesus, she said, “Thank God you're here.”
- ?? When she and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised on the eighth day, and heard Simeon's prophecy that Jesus would be the Messiah, she must have reflected, “Thank God you're here, Simeon.”

But through it all, perhaps the most central response to the birth of Jesus was, “Thank God you're here, Jesus.” Because that's what Christmas is all about. Thanking God that He's here... Thanking God that He is “Immanuel”, a Hebrew name for Jesus given by Isaiah, which means, “God is with us.” Yes, if we were to imagine what Isaiah would say if he could have seen the newborn King and seen the fulfillment of God's prophecy spoken through him, no doubt Isaiah would have said, “Thank God you're here, Jesus.”

Tonight, there's a lot of “Thank God you're here”—ness being spoken. Many of us have family or friends worshipping with us. Christmas is a special time for family. “Thank God you're here.” And yet it's also a painful time for those who have lost loved ones through divorce, death or relationship strain. In those tears, we experience the emptiness, the loneliness and the sense of loss. “If only they were here,” we say. “If only we could be together to celebrate Jesus' birth as a family. If only they were here.”

Unfortunately, it's only through this deep experience of loss, pain, grief and emptiness that we really understand the exhilarating, life-altering impact of the phrase, “Thank God you're here.” Nowhere is this more evident than in the coming of Jesus Christ to us. As we prepare for the “Procession of the Manger” in just a few moments, the overall joy which all of us can celebrate is simply this, “Thank God, Jesus, that you're here.” “Thank God, Jesus, that you've come to save us.” “Thank God, God, that You kept your promise made to Adam and Eve—and to virtually every prophet through the ages—to give us Jesus. “Thank God you're here, God. Thank God you're here!”

But there's one more “Thank God, you're here.” What is it? Let me illustrate.

Melanie Griffith was once the featured actor on the documentary, “The Actor's Studio.” Interviewer James Lipton asked her numerous questions during this hour-long interview.

The questions involved her professional life: her philosophy of acting, the experience in her movies, the leading men and directors she worked with.

Lipton's questions also dealt with her personal life. He asked about her husband, her family and her recovery from drug addiction.

At the end of the interview, James Lipton asked this simple question.

“If there's a God and you go to heaven, what do you want God to say to you?”

Without any hesitation, Melanie said, “Thank God *you're* here.”

So much of Christmas focuses—and rightly so—on the fact that *Jesus* is here. “Thank God you're here, Jesus!” Yet, the real celebration of Christmas is *not just* the fact that Jesus is here. But that you and me are here, *too*. Why? Because it illustrates the *most* important thing about Christmas, namely, “Jesus Christ came to save sinners.”

He came to save you. He came to save me. He came to give comfort to those in grief. He came to bring light to those in darkness. In a way greater than John the Baptist, He came to straighten out our crooked lives and smooth out those places so that He could enter in. Tonight, as we say, “Thank God you're here, Jesus,” we know that Jesus is saying—and celebrating—His birth with the same words. “Thank God you're here.”

Tonight, we are celebrating the “Eucharist.” “Eucharist” is simply a Greek term for the Lord's Supper which means, “Thank You.” As we come before the altar and the manger of Jesus, we say, “Thank you, Jesus, for being here.” As we receive the Lord's Supper—the Eucharist—we say, “Thank you, Jesus, for truly being present here in these simple elements of bread and wine.” And, as we receive His forgiveness, we can resound with a loud “Joy to the World” that Jesus is here in our lives...and will never leave us or forsake us.

After all, He's our Savior, isn't he???

Indeed He is. So Jesus, “Thank God You're here!” People of God gathered in worship tonight, “Thank God you're here!” Yes, he's truly here.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

Yes, a child is born tonight. Is is Christ the Lord. Jesus, Thank God You're here! Amen.