

Christmas Eve – December 24, 2015
Text: Luke 2:1-14
Theme: "Night of Omnipotence"

Luke 2 might be the best known part of the Bible in the United States because of Linus on Peanuts. All of us Boomers have watched the Charlie Brown Christmas special at least once a year every year since 1965 when it first aired. Linus has his famous soliloquy where he recites Luke 2:1-14. And for too many Americans, that and the 23rd Psalm is the only Scripture they know. But if that is the only Scripture you know, it's a good one to know and we can thank Charles Schulz and CBS for insuring that millions and millions of people grew up knowing this text because no other text demonstrates the omnipotence of our God better.

In those days, Caesar, the ruler of the known universe, leader of the Roman Empire, master of all civilization as far as he was concerned, decided that he needed more money to fund the Roman military campaigns in Gaul and Britain and Germany. Beyond that, he thought pretty highly of himself and he needed a great deal of money to fund his lifestyle. You see, Augustus is not his name. His name was Octavius. Augustus was a title that he gave himself because he wanted to be revered as a god. So he instituted a tax that would be upon the whole known world – or at least the part that mattered in Octavius' opinion. This tax would bring in the money that he needed in order to live like the god he proclaimed himself to be.

It was this pompous man's desire to be a god that forced a poor carpenter and his pregnant wife to leave their home in Nazareth and travel about 80 miles to Bethlehem. We don't know how long it took them. We don't know if they had any animals to ride on, or if they walked the whole way. We don't know a great deal about this night over 2,015 years ago. All we really know is that a pompous roman emperor demanded a census so that he could tax his people more and that's why Mary and Joseph left Nazareth and were in Bethlehem when their son, Jesus, was born. We heard Sunday that the one who would later call himself the Bread of Life was born in the House of Bread, Bethlehem. Now we hear another irony. An emperor who wanted to be a god was the reason prophesy was fulfilled and God was born in Bethlehem.

Linus was tired of all the non-sense that surrounds Christmas. Lucy had even managed to turn the Christmas play into a drama filled nightmare. No one seemed to get that Christmas is not about pageants and packages, lights and trees. Christmas is a moment we take to marvel at our God who is so great that he uses the emperor of the world to bring his Son into the world in the exact place and at the precise time that he decreed. What amazing power our God has. And this powerful God is the very God who gives us this gift of becoming flesh with us so that he could save us by taking our place in hell.

When all was still, and it was midnight, your almighty Word, O Lord, descended from the royal throne.

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.

Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,

“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

That is our God. We live in difficult times. It's not the Black Plague or World War II, but we have seen better days than we see today. So during times like these, when life seems out of control and people voice concern over the state of the world as we know it, just remember the vast power, the omnipotence of our God who sits in the heavens and laughs at the attempts of little men to control the world and remember that we are the ones he loves so much that he came into our world, our flesh, died for us and was damned to hell in our place so that we would never have to fear the petty tyrants of our age. On this night of his incarnation, when he took on our flesh, remember the vast power of our Omnipotent God and rejoice in knowing that we live our entire lives in the palm of his hand.