

Responsive Reading – December 13 2020

Pastor: About this time Caesar Augustus, the Roman Emperor, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the nation.

Congregation: Everyone was required to return to his ancestral home for this registration.

Pastor: And because Joseph was a member of the royal line, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, King David's ancient home – journeying there from the Galilean village of Nazareth.

Congregation: He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was obviously pregnant by this time. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born.

Pastor: And she gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped Him in a blanket and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in a village inn.

Congregation: That night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly an angel appeared among them, and the landscape shone bright with the glory of the Lord.

Pastor: They were badly frightened, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid," he said. "I bring you the most joyous news ever announced, and it is for everyone."

Congregation: "The Savior – yes, the Messiah, the Lord – has been born tonight in Bethlehem. How will you recognize Him? You will find a baby wrapped in a blanket, lying in a manger."

Pastor: Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others – the armies of heaven – praising God. "Glory to God in the highest heaven," they sang, "and peace on earth for all those pleasing Him."

Congregation: When this great army of angels had returned again to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Come on! Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

Pastor: They ran to the village and found their way to Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby lying in the manger. The shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child.

Congregation: All who heard the shepherd's story expressed astonishment. But Mary quietly treasured these things in her heart and often thought about them.

Pastor: Then the shepherds went back again to their fields and flocks, praising God for the visit of the angels, and because they had seen the child, just as the angel had told them.