Our scripture this morning comes from Luke 2:1-7. While you’re finding that, something to think about this Christmas - Mother Teresa had a saying - When you give what is not needed, it is not giving. When you give – what is not needed - it is not giving. Sacrifice is important. Giving what another needs is important.

**Luke 2:1-7 And it came to pass in those days *that* a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. 4Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. 6So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. 7And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.**

Jesus - born in Bethlehem, just as Micah 5:2 prophesied 700 years before Christ – **But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be the Ruler of Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.** Last week, we saw that Isaiah foretold the Virgin Birth 700 years prior! Now, we see Micah giving the city. We know, through various archaeological evidence, that there was indeed a census taken during this time and the Syrian Pro Consul governing at that time was Publius Sulpicius Quirinius – in fact, we even have a small clay seal, called a Bulla, with his name inscribed. How wonderfully dependable God’s Word is in these undependable times!

This morning, we’re reading of the arrival of our Savior – the Christ Child. It’s hard to find offense in a baby isn’t it? Babies are cute, huggable, and need so much love. It’s hard to find a baby that isn’t a precious, precious gift from God. Even the hardest hearts will melt in the presence of a baby – grown men cry, tough men coo at the child. We find no offense in babies. People find no offense in Jesus, just as long as He stays a cute little baby lying in a manger.

We sing a verse in O Little Town of Bethlehem - How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given! So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven. No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in. Meek and humble souls receive the infant truth of Jesus Christ even today. Where meek souls will receive Him still, Christ still enters in. We receive the newborn truth of Jesus like a child in our lives. In each new believer, Christ is born when He’s humbly welcomed.

But Jesus must not remain an infant lying in the manger in our lives! He must grow in our hearts. Later in Luke 2, 12-year-old Jesus amazes the scholars in the temple. In Verse 47, it says And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. In verse 49, He asks - Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?

In our hearts, we too must experience astonishment at the Wisdom and Understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ through His Word! He can no longer be the silent gift given, not really impacting our life. We must grow in understanding of His Word. We must be astonished that living in a way that the world doesn’t teach is the Wise way for us to live. In order to receive, we must be willing to give. In order to be first, we must be a servant to all. In order to live forever, we must die to ourselves. It’s counter-intuitive. It doesn’t make worldly sense – how can we give to God and end up living more abundantly? We must allow Jesus to be about the Father’s business in our life. We must allow the Holy Spirit to guide our walk.

Yet, Jesus must not always remain the 12-year-old Jesus, He must grow still. He must become the adult Jesus, teaching the beatitudes, healing the sick, delivering life altering Wisdom and Love to all people. In Matthew 11:6, Jesus answers John the Baptist. When asked if Jesus is the Messiah, he answers, “And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.” Jesus was saying, “Blessed is the person who continues to believe in Me and doesn’t fall away.”

Jesus, as an adult, delivers hard sayings. His commandments continue to go against the world. We must love our neighbor as ourself. Our neighbor is everyone! We must not judge lest we be judged. We must enter by the narrow gate, expecting, and indeed welcoming, tribulation and persecutions, counting it all joy when we suffer for the Savior.

We know Jesus was crucified, but He didn’t stay dead. He rose and lives even now! He willingly laid down His life that we might live. He became sin, so we might stand in righteousness. He became the curse that we might live a curse free life.

We too must die to sin and rise to righteousness. We mustn’t die to our sin, but return to it daily, like a dog to it’s vomit, to the place where it’s buried to be sure it’s still dead. Christ nailed it to the Cross. We need not check up on His work. He said it is done and it is done! It’s our call now to live as the Holy Spirit guides us to live. We are to spread the gospel to all. Some will receive. Some won’t. We’re called to plant the seed. It’s our job to drop the dragnet!

There was a movie a few years ago called Talladega Nights. It had a scene where the man prayed to the Little Baby Jesus. He said he loved the little Baby Jesus. He found Little Baby Jesus to be unintimidating, unchallenging. He found a baby easy to understand. He found the big Jesus scary. There were people who found this scene funny… I found it sad. How sad that this man’s faith remained weak, unable to stand anything more than a silent baby lying in a manger.

This week, I’ll be thinking about the Jesus that is changing my life daily. Jesus must not remain a babe lying in a manger. He must grow up to be Lord of lords and King of kings. He must become Lord of all in our hearts! We meet Him as a Baby, we learn from Him as a 12-year-old, we grow with Him into an adult, and we must die to sin in Him, so we might live forever. Jesus begins as a baby in the manger, but He must not remain a baby in the manger of our hearts. He must grow and control every area of our life. At Christmas this year consider, why did we seek Him? Who is He in our life? What is His business in your life today?