

December
2012
January
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HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Words from the Cross

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(It happened) In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. This is the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

Luke 2:1-2

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I find it interesting that most modern translations leave out the very first word of the Christmas story found in St. Luke's Gospel. When translated, the first Greek word means "It happened." The New King James Version does translate the first Greek word as "And it came to pass," which is better, because it is something, although it is not quite to the point as "It happened." You may wonder why I would focus on such a seemingly small matter. Since the Bible is God's inspired, inerrant Word, it is important that we consider every single word of it, and "It happened" serves to anchor us in reality as do the names of the historical figures Caesar Augustus and Quirinius.

So often in our day and age, fact and fiction seem to get mixed up and nowhere does this seem to be more the case than with Christmas, where an overweight older man dressed in an outrageous red suit with white fur trim and the red-nosed beacon of a flying reindeer seem to be the focal points of the season. The Child in the manger, who was God incarnate, gets lost amidst the flashing lights, the desperate shopping, the feasting and drinking, and the mistletoe. But it happened, it truly happened: Jesus Christ was born, He truly lived, and He died on a cross not only for our sins but for the sins of the whole world. That is why we Christians rejoice, celebrate, and worship at this time of year. We do not worship a made-up, fictional god or gods as do all the other religions of the world. Our God actually loved us enough to come and live among us. He was born as we were born. He suffered as we have suffered. And He died, as we will all die one day, but He also really rose again from the dead, as will we when He returns.

It happened! Praise God! It really happened! May God, in His grace, through the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, grant that we always believe it. Amen.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Skelton

