

## “Life and light for all”

*John 1:1-14 (December 18, 2022)*

It was such an ordinary thing: A woman having a baby. Why, it happens all the time! In 2021 there were 367,684 babies born in Canada.<sup>1</sup> And many more throughout the whole wide world!

So here’s Mary giving birth ... to Jesus. The circumstances were not ideal. Forced by the emperor’s order to return to Joseph’s ancestral home in Bethlehem, Mary was a long way from the comforting presence of her family. But Joseph was with her. Perhaps there was a midwife to help.



Mary had a baby. And the only really thing we can see, *at first*, was the act of placing this new-born in a manger. No fancy cradle for him!

See this picture? It shows Mary and Joseph, proud parents that they are. And look, there is a cow at one side, wondering what on earth is happening. Or does she know?



“The Adoration of the Shepherds by Gerard van Honthorst,” 1622.

And over on the left there are shepherds – a little rough, but still thrilled, as all of us are, when new life is born.



And this is where the story becomes really interesting. Although we didn’t read it today, we certainly sang about it. Do you remember how it goes?

Some shepherds were out on the hills, minding their own business ... when an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. And it scared the living daylights out of those poor souls!

The angel announced good news of great joy for all the people. Even for those lowly shepherds. Perhaps *especially* for them. This child, you see, is no ordinary baby. This child, born in the city of David, is a Saviour, the Messiah, the Lord.



What we have here is an astounding combination of ordinary and *extra*-ordinary. When you focus on the thing itself it *seems* to be a birth like any other. But when you stand back, and take it all in, you can see that there is something more. God is present. Things are happening – full of marvel and mystery!

<sup>1</sup> [The Daily — Births, 2021 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-661-x/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)



“In the beginning was the Word,” says the Gospel writer John. The Divine Word that called all creation into existence. “Let there be light,” said God, when the world began.

Our passage from John is majestic and beautiful! It invites us to step back, and see the length and breadth and height and depth, of God’s great love in the birth of Jesus. God made the world to have relationship with it. God so *loved* the world!

But somewhere along the line the world fell out of relationship with its maker. God spoke, but we stopped listening. So now God speaks *again*. The God who created all things steps into the very fabric of God’s creation. A child has come. And through this child, God’s light and life is given.



Where love is lost, and the Word forgotten, God reaches out to put things right. “The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory ....” Have you seen it?

Step back now, and take it in. Here, in this birth, this ordinary birth, is an *extra*-ordinary act of God. A movement of God’s love to reclaim a world that has become alienated from its Creator.

God works to bring us back into *right*-relationship - with God, with all humanity. With the earth beneath our feet, and the stars that shine in the heavens above. The God who spoke at the beginning of time, is still speaking!



This image was painted by a Dutch artist about 400 years ago. He’s particularly well-known for his use of light and shadow.

See the light that glows in the manger? “The life that comes in him is the light of all people. ... The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it.”

We see the light of Jesus reflected in the face of Mary, especially. But also the shepherds. And in Joseph. And yes, maybe in the *cow*. Maybe also in you and me! A birth so ordinary, yet so extra-ordinary!



Today we come to church to hear a story about an ordinary birth, in a time long ago, in a land far away. But it’s more than that! At first glance, we see the ordinary. But when we take a second look, we see the awesome presence of God bringing life and light to all the world.

“To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.” Will you open your heart to receive that life and light? I pray it may be so. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.