

*Southeast Circuit Reformation Update: Week Eight*

**Luther Hymn: From Heaven Above  
to Earth I Come**

**LSB 358**

Rev. Dr. Matthew Richard

**Merry Christmas From the Pastors of the Southeast Circuit**

God sure has a pattern of choosing misfits, nobodies, and ragamuffins in carrying out His work, does He not? For example, Israel, a slave nation; David, a shepherd; Peter, a fisherman; and Matthew, a tax-collector, to name several. In the Christmas Story, the Lord chooses to do the same. One would think that God would announce the birth of Jesus to the great theologians of the synagogues or the prestigious priests in the temple, but God does the exact opposite. The announcement of Jesus' birth is given to shepherds.

Indeed, the message of the Son of God coming from heaven above to earth is given to shepherds. These shepherds had nothing special about them. They were a rough bunch, working a manual labor job with little pay. They were most likely known as being religiously inconsistent with their piety. However, God's Word comes to these rough shepherds through His messenger – the Angel of the Lord.

Typically when angels visit humanity, humanity is struck with fear and terror. Who wouldn't be afraid of an Angel of the Lord? That is exactly what we see with the shepherds; they are scared stiff. The brilliance of light signaled the glory and presence of God, and the shepherds were filled with fear. Instead of striking the shepherds down with power and might, the angel announced the grand news of Christmas, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

The angel simply announced the good news – a birth of the Savior! As a result of this grand announcement, the shepherds went to see the babe in the manger and then glorified and praised God for all that they had heard and seen.

Why is it important to understand all of this? It is important to understand because in the hymn, 'From Heaven Above to Earth I Come,' we are singing an interpretation of this story. We are singing about the angel announcing the birth of Jesus to the shepherds.



**500 Years of the Lutheran Reformation**  
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In other words, in this hymn – a hymn that was written by Martin Luther for his family's Christmas Eve devotions – we hear the angel's words to the shepherds in the first five stanzas. Therefore, in a way, when we sing this hymn, we are placed alongside the shepherds to hear the grand news of Jesus coming from heaven to earth. As we hear this great news of Jesus' birth in stanzas 1-5, we are then granted the opportunity in the remaining stanzas to sing the response of the shepherds. In a way, we are singing with the shepherds and also singing the meaning of the Savior's birth for all the world.

Like the shepherds, we are not people of a prestigious birth. Most of us are common folks who live quiet and peaceable lives. However, God decided to make the announcement of Jesus to you through pastors, parents, other Christians, and even this hymn. Indeed, the Lord announces through this hymn that unto 'you' a Savior was born. You have this on the highest authority: that Christ was born – for you. He was born to join you and love you. He was born to go to Mt. Calvary and win forgiveness for you in His death and resurrection.

So, glorify and praise God with the shepherds this Christmas, especially as you sing the hymn, 'From Heaven Above to Earth I Come.' With the shepherds, know that God is well pleased with you in Christ – that a Savior has been born unto **you**.

**From Heaven Above to Earth I Come LSB 358**

- 1 "From heav'n above to earth I come to bear good news to ev'ry home:  
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,  
Whereof I now will say and sing:
- 2 "To you this night is born a child  
Of Mary chosen virgin mild;  
This little child of lowly birth  
Shall be the joy of all the earth.
- 3 "This is the Christ, our God Most High,  
Who hears your sad and bitter cry;  
He will Himself your Savior be  
From all your sins to set you free.
- 4 "He will on you the gifts bestow  
Prepared by God for all below,  
That in His kingdom, bright and fair,  
You may with us His glory share.
- 5 "These are the signs that you shall mark:  
The swaddling clothes and manger dark.  
There you will find the infant laid  
By whom the heav'ns and earth were made."  
6 How glad we'll be to find it so!  
Then with the shepherds let us go  
To see what God for us has done  
In sending us His own dear Son.
- 7 Come here, my friends, lift up your eyes,  
And see what in the manger lies.  
Who is this child, so young and fair?  
It is the Christ Child lying there.
- 8 Welcome to earth, O noble Guest,  
Through whom the sinful world is blest!  
You came to share my misery  
That You might share Your joy with me.
- 9 Ah, Lord, thou You created all,  
How weak You are, so poor and small,  
That You should choose to lay Your head  
Where lowly cattle lately fed!
- 10 Were earth a thousand times as fair  
And set with gold and jewels rare,  
It would be far too poor and small  
A cradle for the Lord of all.
- 11 Instead of soft and silken stuff  
You have but hay and straw so rough  
On which as King, so rich and great,  
To be enthroned in royal state.
- 12 And so it pleases You to see  
this simple truth revealed to me:  
That worldly honor, wealth, and might  
Are weak and worthless in Your sight.
- 13 Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,  
Prepare a bed, soft, undefiled,  
A quiet chamber set apart  
For You to dwell within my heart.
- 14 My heart for very joy must leap;  
My lips no more can silence keep.  
I, too must sing with joyful tongue  
That sweetest ancient cradlesong:
- 15 Glory to God in highest heav'n,  
Who unto us His Son has giv'n!  
While angels sing with pious mirth  
A glad new year to all the earth.

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