

## Luke 2:8-20

### "Considering The Christmas Story"

How often we fail to pause and let the wonder of God's Word resonate in our hearts. It's probably particularly true concerning the Christmas story. We've all heard it so many times that it can become trite & traditional rather than miraculous & meaningful. Yet how the wonder should fill our hearts when we consider the story of Christmas.

Even in our text today we discover that even though things were happening fast & furious for everyone around her Mary "kept all these things & *pondered* them in her heart." She paused to let the wonder in, she contemplated & meditated upon the miraculous nature of everything that was happening around her & w/in her, & I pray that you find yourself in much the same way today. Not taking these things for granted & traditional, but full of wonder, miraculous & meaningful. Everything about the Christmas story should blow our minds.

No sooner than man sinned God revealed His plan to send a Savior. There He was cursing the serpent for deceiving the woman & being the agent through which sin entered the world; and He said, *"... I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."*<sup>1</sup>

An allusion to the virgin birth from the very beginning in that the woman doesn't carry the seed, but rather the egg. So by stating that salvation would come through the Seed of the woman God was informing us of something fantastic, something extraordinary & miraculous. That God would become the Son of Man that mankind might become the sons & daughters of God.

It blows our minds even more to realize that though God divulged the plan of salvation even at the 1st sin, that it was prior to that, even before creation that God had ordained that J.C. would shed His blood for the sin of the world. Isn't that what Peter said? *1 Peter 1:20, "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you..."*

Think about it, the incarnation is really presumed in the very idea of our salvation; because apart from God *becoming* a Man how can He stand in the gap & die for the sin of the world *on behalf* of man? If we could be atoned for through another means, the blood of bulls & goats would've been sufficient, but it takes a Man, to atone for man.

<sup>1</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Ge 3:15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& If by one man's sin (namely Adam) judgment comes to all, than even so by One Man's obedience (namely Christ) forgiveness & everlasting life can come to all.

So God set His plan in motion, before the world was ever created, then He began to reveal that plan to man throughout the scriptures by what we call "progressive revelation" whereby God reveals more & more of His plan & His purpose over time through His prophets.

So He told Abe, "I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."<sup>2</sup> Speaking of the fact that the Redeemer of the world would come through his loins. He gives us pictures & "types" of Christ through men like Joseph & Moses. (Beloved of His Father, yet despised rejected by His own, ultimately saving those who rejected Him, that He would be a great leader mighty & miraculous). He tells David that He will build him a house & that One from his loins will be upon the throne ruling & reigning forever. He gives utterance to the prophet Isaiah, "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."<sup>3</sup>

He speaks through the prophet Micah, "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 Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."<sup>4</sup>

God is giving progressive revelation of the coming Messiah, Who He is, what will happen throughout His life, the things He will do & how He will rule forever.

Then, like the extinguishing of a candle God goes silent. No more does He speak to Israel, 400 yrs go by & times are dark, fear on every side, they're under the iron boot & heavy handed oppression of Rome.

Suddenly like a beam of light piercing the darkness the words of Isaiah are fulfilled, "The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Ge 12:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Is 9:6-7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Mic 5:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

An angel of the Lord appears to a young girl by the name of Mary & says, *"Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"*<sup>6</sup> He gives to her the greatest news this world could ever hope for. He says, *"...you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."*<sup>7</sup>

Mary's all, "That sounds awesome, but I'm not married, so how this can happen?" The angel says, *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."*<sup>8</sup> Hallelujah! "For w/God nothing will be impossible."

Flash forward a # of months & there's Mary, great w/Child. The prophets have said that the Christ Child will be born in Bethlehem but currently she & Joseph (the one to whom she's betrothed) live in Nazareth. How is God going to get Mary to Bethlehem?

Look at Vs 1 of Ch 2 (Vs 1-7)

The greatest Miracle of human history takes place in the quiet simplicity of a busy Bethlehem night & no one knows the difference... **That's the humility of our Lord. He could've been born in an ivory palace in the upper most echelon of society w/more money & prestige than anyone else in history but that wasn't His heart.** He would be a High Priest who would identify w/all of mankind. He said, *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*<sup>9</sup> He wasn't born w/a silver spoon in His mouth, He identified Himself not w/those who have, but w/those who have not.

**Vs 8-14**

We want to take the time to notice the nuances of the Christmas story. I find it interesting that of all the people whom the angels may've appeared to, they didn't choose the scribes, they didn't choose the priests, they didn't choose the Pharisees, they chose shepherds... Again the lowly, those keeping watch over their flock by night.

News of the Lamb of God came 1<sup>st</sup> to the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks.

<sup>5</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Is 9:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>6</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Lk 1:28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>7</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Lk 1:30-33). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>8</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Lk 1:35). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>9</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Mt 11:29). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Some suppose that these sheep were the sheep that the temple would offer for sacrifice. If that be true the picture becomes all the more profound as the angel announces to these shepherds watching over the lambs of sacrifice the good news that the Lamb of God who will be sacrificed for the sin of the world has come...

There he is, the angel of the Lord standing *before* them, the glory of the Lord shone *around* them & the 1<sup>st</sup> thing he says to them is, "Do not be afraid." If you're taking notes the 1<sup>st</sup> thing we see here is that the message of J.C. is a message that *banishes fear*.

400 yrs had gone by & God had been "under the Radar", no word, Israel was in captivity, there was darkness & confusion. The angel says, "Don't be afraid". God is in control.

You may feel like you're "in the dark", confused & uncertain, wondering where God is & why He hasn't spoken to you, perhaps some fear has gripped your heart. Fear for you job, fear for your marriage, fear for your child's future or fear for your eternal well being. God pierces the darkness w/the light of His word to your heart today, "Fear not".

"For behold I bring you good tidings of great joy." "Good tidings" or "Good news" this angel is giving these shepherds the gospel. God gives you good news of great joy today. Listen, not only does the gospel (#1) banish fear, it brings (#2) great joy.

Fear & joy are on the opposite ends of the spectrum, they're polar opposites of one another. God wants to fill your heart w/joy. We're not talking about happiness, happiness is circumstantial, if I think things are going good I'm happy, if I don't think they're going good I'm no longer happy.

However joy is constant because it's based upon not what happens *to* me or *around* me, but the reality of Christ in me. Jesus said, "*As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*"<sup>10</sup> You see true joy is something that can't even be known to the unbeliever, it comes from the Lord. "Good tidings of great joy".

"I bring to you", notice the message, it's for you personally. This good news of great joy has been delivered *w/you* in mind, the gospel message always emphasizes the value of the individual. No matter where you've been or what you've done, you might be religious (like Nicodemus), or oppressed & confused (like the woman at the well).

<sup>10</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 [Jn 15:9-11] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

You might just be lost w/no hope (like the woman w/the issue of blood). You might be wealthy (like Zacchaeus) or poor like the many lepers, blind & lame that our Lord touched. Circumstances are immaterial; what matters is “Are you a sinner?” If so, you need a Savior, this message is for *you*.

But it gets even bigger, it's not only for you *personally*, it's for all of mankind *collectively*. The angel declares that this message will be “to all people”. The gospel message is for *all* people *everywhere* throughout *all* time. It doesn't matter what culture you're in, what generation you belong to, the color of your skin, all have sinned & fall short of the glory of God therefore *all* are in need of a Savior, therefore this message is for *all*. The message of the cross is cross generational, it's cross cultural, it's the cross. Because the gospel doesn't address culture nor the traditions of man, it addresses the depravity of the human heart which applies *to* & places its grip *on* us all.

This message was given 1<sup>st</sup> to a few shepherds in the middle of a field on the outskirts of Bethlehem some 2,000 yrs ago. Yet it stretches out to every tribe, tongue, people and nation and finds application on the other side of the world 2 millenniums later in a little city called Joplin Missouri in a church called Calvary Chapel. There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. The Christmas story is good news given to all men, everywhere.

### Vs 11

We've spoken so far of the fact that the gospel message (beginning w/the incarnation) is a message that banishes fear, it brings great joy, it's for you & me personally & for all of humanity. Vs 11 brings us the heart of all of this angels *information*, how is this a message that banishes fear, brings great joy, applies to me personally & all of humanity? Because it's a message that brings *salvation*.

“There is born to you this day in the city of David a “Savior”. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have all turned, everyone to our own way and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

God becomes a Man and as a Man lives a sinless life, takes upon Himself the sin of the world, sheds His blood, suffers & dies, paying the debt He didn't owe because we owed a debt we couldn't pay, so that whoever would call upon the name of the Lord would be saved by grace through faith in Him, it is the gift of God... for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord...

He is our Savior, our Redeemer, our Deliverer, “Christ”, the Anointed One, Messiah, & “Lord”, above all, overall, yet came to this earth & laid down His life *for all*.

#### Vs 13-14

It’s a message of Salvation, it’s a message of *peace*. This is one of those scenes that we can only imagine & undoubtedly fall radically short of in our minds. How many angels are represented by the word “multitude”? I have no idea but this scene was undoubtedly “out of this world” (pun intended).

Vs 14 brings to us the Latin, “Gloria in excelsis Deo” “Glory in the highest to God”. It’s a message that glorifies God, “Glory to God in the Highest, J.C. is here!” The message of the incarnation of Christ & the subsequent salvation of man is a message that glorifies God. He made a way where there was no way, for w/God nothing will be impossible.

It’s a message that brings peace to man. 1<sup>st</sup> we have peace *w/God* through the blood of the cross of Christ (at salvation), then we have the peace *of God* through the process of *sanctification*. 1<sup>st</sup> comes peace *with* God. As Paul the apostle said, “*For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.*”<sup>11</sup> Then comes the peace *of* God, not a peace of our own, it’s His peace that He gives to us. Again by the words of the apostle Paul, “*And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.*”<sup>12</sup> As we sing, “His law is love & His gospel...is peace”.

#### Vs 15-20

Just 2 things I want to draw out of this particular portion. As we consider the Christmas story what conclusions can we draw? As it pertains to this message that banishes fear, brings great joy, is for you & me personally & all of mankind collectively; it’s the message of salvation for man, it brings peace *with* God & brings glory *to* God. What conclusions can we draw of such a message?

#1 It’s a message that *demands a response*. These guys heard the message then they had a decision they had to make. Believe, & receive it, respond accordingly & act upon it... or say, “Dude, what did you slip in my lamb chops bro? I just saw something crazy!” & They could’ve rejected it, decided to sleep on it, maybe look into it later. But one way or another they were brought to a decision.

<sup>11</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Col 1:19-20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>12</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Col 3:15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



Accept & act upon this message, or reject this message & continue on in life, business as usual... The gospel message *demands a response*. It calls us out & says, "Accept it or reject it" but there's no neutral ground concerning it.

#2 It's a message that *deserves to be shared*. It demands a response & it *deserves to be shared*. These guys met Christ that night & there was no stuffing that message down & stayin silent about it. It wasn't a "silent night" for very long because as soon as these guys came to know the Lord they were sharing & shouting it from the rooftops.

Even so Christ in you & Christ in me should stir us to share the message w/others. So things may be happening fast & furiously around you, but may you pause to let the wonder of the Christmas story resonate in your heart. May you (like Mary) keep these things & ponder them in your heart & may you have a very... merry... Christmas. ☺

#### Prayer Points:

Lord as we consider the Christmas story today help us to pause, to be still & allow the wonder of Your word to have Your way in our hearts. That You would so love us that You would come & dwell w/us that we might spend eternity w/You. Jesus what You have done for us demands a response, & it deserves to be shared. Give us boldness to share w/others the hope we have in You.

**The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. God has loved you w/an everlasting love & if today you're willing to respond to that love in such a way as to open your heart, repent of your sin & turn to J.C.** Than today the greatest gift of all can be yours, the gift of everlasting life. You can be forgiven of all your sin & made right in the sight of God, believe upon the Lord J.C. receive Him as He is, your Savior, Christ, the Lord.