

God in a Manger

Luke 2:1-20

I've preached on this passage at least dozen times during my ministry. The telling of the Christmas story can become so familiar that we miss the significance of how amazing this incident is. I want to challenge you to see this story again like your are hearing it for the first time.

I. **The MOVING of the Spirit** (vs. 1-6).

➡ *And it came to pass...* One of my favorite phrases in all of Scriptures. Whatever you may be facing presently will pass.

A. The **PROPHECY** of God.

1. Mary and Joseph were both made aware that Mary's pregnancy was miraculous and would bring the Messiah into the world. However, they lived in Nazareth and it was prophesied the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2).
2. Beth=House; Lehem=Bread—House of Bread. It was appropriate that the One who is "*the Bread of life*" (John 6:35) would be born at "the house of bread."

B. The **PROVIDENCE** of of God—

1. The **ORCHESTRATION** of events. God arranged a set of circumstances that would bring Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem to fulfill Scripture. The Spirit of God moved on the heart of Caesar to issue the taxation decree. Little did Caesar Augustus know that he was being used as the instrument for bringing about the birth of Christ at the right time and in the right place. Augustus Caesar was ruling, but God was in charge.
 - God can use evil men and their devices to accomplish His purpose. He did so to chasten Israel (Babylon). He did so to crucify Jesus (Rome). He did so here.
2. The **OBEDIENCE** of Joseph and Mary (v. 4). Joseph and Mary were law-abiding citizens. Scripture exhorts us to obey the

laws of the land. It is a mark of righteousness to obey the laws even if they cause inconvenience.

The story of Christ's birth reminds us that God is the One who allows the things that happen in our lives and arranges the circumstances to bring His will to pass.

C. The **PROTECTION** of God. Several considerations:

1. **Health** of Mary—Joseph would have never just taken Mary in her condition on a 90 mile trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem, unless he had to. This journey would be very difficult for a women who was "*great with CHILD.*"
2. **Hardness** of the trip. Rough roads riding on camel or donkey. Bethlehem's elevation was about 1500 feet higher than Nazareth which meant the journey would be mostly uphill, making the trip much harder.
3. **Hazards** along the way. The risks were either that she could miscarry or that she would go into labor early and the baby would be born somewhere else besides Bethlehem and break the prophecy of Christ's birth. But God was in all.

ILLUS: Philip Yancey in his book, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, contrasts the humility that characterized Jesus' visit to planet earth with the prominence associated with world rulers today:

When Queen Elizabeth visited the United States, her four thousand pounds of luggage included two outfits for every occasion; a mourning outfit in case someone died; 40 pints of plasma, and white kid-leather toilet seat covers. She brought her own hair-dresser, two valets, and a host of other attendants. Her royal visit of only a few days cost several million dollars.

In meek contrast, Jesus Christ, Creator of the universe and the King of Kings, is relegated to nothing better than a dirty barn. Mary had no doctor or midwife to help her. There was no soft crib to lay the newborn king—Only a feeding trough made of stone. She had no warm blanket to wrap the baby Jesus in, only swaddling clothes. [Strips of cloth like those used to wrap a corpse in (grave clothes). This was fitting because Jesus was born to die.

- There's no room for Jesus Christ in the holiday that's supposed to be celebrating His birth. They have room for Santa Claus, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, Frosty the Snowman, the Little Drummer Boy; but no room for Jesus Christ.
- Can it be said of you:

Room for pleasure, room for business,
But for Christ the Crucified,
Not a place that He can enter,
In the heart for which He died?

III. The MESSAGE from the skies (vs. 8-16).

A. The **PROCLAMATION** of good news / Gospel (vs. 8-12).

1. **GOOD message.** "*I bring you good tidings.*" No news was so good as the news that Christ has come to earth to be the Savior of men's souls. It is the best message ever given to mankind.

God sent a Savior because that is what we need most. What man needs is not just a message or a religion—He needs a

Savior. If a man is drowning, he needs more than a voice that attracts his attention, or gives him lessons on swimming: He needs a savior.

2. **GLAD message.** *“I bring you good tidings of great joy.”* Jesus Christ is the greatest source of joy for mankind.

- Christ brings joy into the lives of all who receive Him as their Savior. Joy to the World, the Lord is come!

3. **GLOBAL message.** *“Which shall be to all people [not just Jews].”*

- *“God so loved the world”* (John 3:16). His love is global and so the Gospel message is global. *“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Acts 2:21). It is good for all who call upon Christ to be saved.

B. The **PRAISE** of God’s glory (vs. 13-14).

1. There is not much praise for God in the world today. He get blamed more than praised. But angels certainly are not hesitant to praise Him. The birth of Christ, God being manifest in the flesh, to save fallen man, was astounding to them!
2. The whole purpose of salvation is the *“glory of God”* (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). God saves us that He might be glorified.

IV. The MAKING KNOWN of the shepherds (vs. 15-20).

- How did the shepherds respond to this good news?

A. The **SEEKING** of the shepherds (v. 15). When God shows you something, it should lead to action.

B. The **SPEED** of the shepherds (v. 16). Why delay seeking Christ? Now is the time!

C. The **SHARING** of the shepherds (vs. 17-20). Like any good news, it is to be shared. They didn’t keep quiet about it!

1. **What** they shared — They spoke of JESUS.

- They did not preach Mary (Catholicism) or Joseph (cults) or the manger (social gospel). They proclaimed Christ. If

we do not proclaim Christ, we do not have a message worth proclaiming.

2. **Where** they shared. They spoke abroad— far and wide.

SUMMATION: What the Shepherds learn on that first Christmas morning?

1. They learned they were important to God.
2. They learned God sent them a Savior for their sins.
3. They learned God has good news for all who will receive it.
4. They learned good news is not something you can keep to yourself, but you share it with others.