

God's Simple Gift Luke 2:1-20

1 And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3 So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. 4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. 6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 "And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" 15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. 17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. 18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

When we consider the tremendous implications of this passage we are caught off guard by the simplicity of how Luke puts the story all together. There are number of things we should note from this observation.

- I. God can use simple people.
 - A. Mary
 1. She was just an ordinary girl from an ordinary place and family.
 - a. Like David, her ancestor, who was just about the most unlikely choice for King, except that God looks on the heart.
 2. Two words are used to describe Mary
 - a. Highly favored $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\tau\omicron\omega$
 - (1) The word comes from the same word we get grace from.

- (2) Grace is never a matter of works or what one deserves.
 - (3) Mary was God's special pick but not because of anything she had done or would do.
 - (4) It is important to understand that we are also highly favored by God for the grace that we have received in Jesus Christ.
 - (5) Did Mary get a special place in God's plan? Yes. But it was due to God's grace.
 - (6) If God had to wait for one worthy to bear the Son of God into this world, there would have never been a Savior born.
- b. Blessed *ευλογεω eulogeo yoo-log-eh'-o* is the other word used to describe Mary by the angel.
- (1) It is the word from which we get the word eulogize, to speak well of.
 - (2) The angel was simply saying that Mary would be well spoken of in future generations, and so she should be.
 - (3) She remained true to her commitment, "Let be to me according to your word."
 - (4) She deserved praise for the place that the Lord gave her and for her faithfulness to that.
 - (5) But God has called each of us to a calling that if followed would cause us to be well spoken of, if we would be but faithful.

B. Joseph

- 1. Joseph was but a simple carpenter.
- 2. He was a somewhat unwilling participant in this process until he receives the message from the angel.
- 3. As some of the modern song writers have pointed out, he had an awesome responsibility, to raise the Son of God.
- 4. It is interesting for me to note that each time after the birth of Jesus, when God communicated with the family it was through Joseph and not Mary.
- 5. I point that out to show that God held Joseph responsible for the welfare of the child.
 - a. Matt. 2:13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt

- b. Matt. 2:19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt
 - c. Matt. 2: 22 And being warned by God in a dream, he (Joseph) turned aside into the region of Galilee.
6. The distinguishing mark on Joseph's life is that in the four times we find God giving instructions to him, he obeyed without question or reservation.
 7. But each of us are also capable of this if we will but listen for God's call and we will act in response to His command.

C. Shepherds

1. Shepherds were the last people that you would invite to such an occasion as the birth of a Savior.
 - a. They were the lowest class of people in the society.
 - b. They were considered to be unworthy and could not testify in court either for or against anyone.
2. They were not important people of the day and would be considered the least reliable witnesses.
 - a. To the shepherds, the first notice of Christ's birth was given; not to the princes and chief priests, and learned men at Jerusalem, but to weak, mean, and illiterate men; whom God is pleased to choose and call, and reveal his secrets to; when he hides them from the wise and prudent, to their confusion, and the glory of his grace: and this was a presage of what the kingdom of Christ would be, and by, and to whom, the Gospel would be preached. *John Gill*
3. So why does God pick them to reveal this wonderful birth of the Savior?
 - a. To show His humility.
 - b. To show the simpleness of His advent.
 - c. To give Himself witness but one that would be deniable by those who want to not believe.
 - d. Among the occupations, shepherding had a lowly place. They were outcasts, not allowed in the city and not trusted by the general public, for often they were thieves. Luke gave this story about the shepherds for a reason. Jesus would come, not to the proud and powerful, but to the outcasts, the humble, those considered "last" on the social lists. To these men God brought the first news of his Son's arrival. *LAB Commentary*

II. God can operate in the simple things of life.

- A. The birth of a child
 - 1. They say that almost 10 children are born into the world every second.
 - 2. Even in that day, child birth was considered one of the normal phases of life.
 - B. The edict of a king.
 - 1. A king decides to enroll the world for a tax and moves Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem.
 - 2. Not only that but it was just at the right time. Earlier or later and Jesus would have been born somewhere else.
 - 3. We know that the only thing more sure than taxes is death.
 - C. The inconvenience of a full inn.
 - 1. This past week many travelers were stranded at airports, sometimes for days.
 - 2. We have all faced unexpected inconveniences.
 - 3. But no place for them when the child was to be born.
 - 4. Why hadn't God just informed them, "Don't bother going to the inn, for My Son will be born in a stable."
 - D. The dishonor of being born in a stable.
 - 1. Not really something to write home about.
 - 2. Do you suppose Mary sent a letter to her mother to tell of what a wonderful experience it was to have her firstborn and lay Him in a manger.
 - 3. But it was God's simple plan for a simple birth.
 - 4. It is like who you tell about that.
 - 5. I heard just the other day of another unuseable birth in the back of a taxi not able to get to the hospital in time. But even that is a step up from a barn, wouldn't you say.
 - 6. There is a reason why women go to the hospital and don't you think that the hospital room, all clean and well lit is the opposite of a horse barn.
- III. God has the ability to make the most complex issues simple.
- A. The incarnation.
 - 1. God made flesh and Luke explains it as if he is telling us how to make a cake.
 - 2. That God would become man was not a big deal for the pagans, but was the highest blasphemy.
 - 3. But Luke makes it out to just be a matter of fact.
 - B. The birth of a Savior.
 - 1. I love that song, How Should a King Come.
 - 2. The author there displays the discrepancy between what we might expect

and how it really was.

- C. The defeat of sin and death.
 - 1. He shall save His people from their sins.
 - 2. The two greatest foes of mankind done begin to melt away with the birth of this babe in that stable that night.
- D. The reverse of the curse on all mankind.
 - 1. Thousands of years before, Satan had brought ruin to God's beautiful creation and brought the curse on the world.
 - 2. Gal. 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Such a simple birth. Such a simple story. It requires only a simple faith. Jesus come to this earth because He loves you. He was born in that stable, laid in the manger because He loves you. He born the cross to Calvary, all because He loves you. And one day He will return, because He loves you and wants you with Him.

Are you ready for Him to return? Can you accept His grace and His love.