

Discussion Notes

The Joy Jesus brings (Luke 2:1-20)

December 11, 2016

Ryan Bedwell

The angels told the shepherds that Jesus' arrival was "good news of great joy for all people". Why is this such good news? To whom and how far does it reach? This series explores these questions through the lens of Jesus' birth in Luke's Gospel.

Setting of Luke 2:1-20

- The census was imposed by Rome upon the conquered Palestine. This is nothing like modern censuses, Joseph and Mary were forced to travel to hometown to register.
- Joseph can't have been happy, forced to take his pregnant wife a long distance.
- Bethlehem—an ordinary, run-of-the-mill small town. But, it had an extraordinary past as the city of David's origin and anointing.
- Some Romans knew of prophecy about coming Messiah, so only thing that made Bethlehem stand out was heightened guard presence to prepare for the challenge of a coming King. Merry Christmas!
- Jesus' birth was into a manger used for feeding animals, most likely as part of a Palestinian home. At that time animals were brought inside to a lower room to keep them safe and help heat the home. The manger seen could have also been in a cave set apart for animal keeping.
- The shepherds—the lowest in society. Unclean to Jews because of their profession, avoided by Romans for being Jewish, separated from their families for their work, and often accused of being thieves.
- Many believe the sheep that the shepherds were keeping were for the sacrifices.
- Altogether, the scene was very ordinary.

The Joy

- What is joy? It is beyond happiness, more sustaining than pleasure, and certainly overrides circumstance.
- Deepest Joy imaginable is relationship with God through Jesus.
- Jesus changes everything.
- His coming was anticipated all throughout the Old Testament (Zech. 2.10; Isaiah 7.14; Isaiah 9.12).
- Jesus brings chaos to order: Compare the census and Jesus' coming—one is the act of a domineering authority asserting its power. The other is an act of God to deliver His true people.
- Jesus brings fear to praise: the first thing the angels say to the shepherds is "Don't be afraid", soon after the response of the shepherds is praise.
- Jesus turns oppression to peace: the angels are called the "armies of heaven", their declaration was peace on earth—a far cry from the armies of Persia, Babylon, and Rome that Israel had experienced.

- Jesus shows us who and what we belong to: Rome demands obedience, Jesus demonstrates his peace, hope, joy, love, and forgiveness of sin. He gives us Himself as an option and offers us a choice.
- Jesus' coming is surrounded by things and people transformation by the Spirit of God: Zechariah prophesies, Elizabeth has a child, Joseph relieved to find his family would be taken care of, Mary declares praises, shepherds shown that God loves them, and the manger became a throne.

How do we experience this Joy?

- We learn that we are not defined by the status that the world puts on us (see Luke 7.36-50)
 - If you feel broken, low, ignored or excluded, Jesus takes the things you say are worthless and he redeems them.
 - He makes tarnished and broken things new!
- We rest in his peace:
 - The angel's proclamation was to those with whom God is "well-pleased".
 - Who is God pleased with? Galatians 4.6-7 declares that you are God's own child.
 - God is pleased with you! Through Jesus Christ you can have peace with God.
- The Holy Spirit awakens Big Joy deep within us:
 - Hear the armies of heaven proclaiming peace and joy to you!
 - Christmas is about Jesus and his Holy Spirit. That starts with experiencing Joy through the Holy Spirit.

Discussion Questions

- Describe a time when a seemingly ordinary setting became an extraordinary part of your story.
- What titles do you feel like the world puts on you? Who would Jesus say you are?
- What is the biggest obstacle to joy in your life?
- How does noticing the small, ordinary details of this story help you meet Jesus in the ordinary circumstances of your life?