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True Joy
Luke 2:8-20
December 14, 2014, Adrian Moskal

I want to open up by talking about messengers. Especially those we trust to deliver important information. When we buy a house, who do we often trust to take our offer to the homeowner - Real Estate Agent. We trust that they have the experience and knowledge to make sure everything is right and in proper order and will carry our offer to the other party.

If you are being sued or you are the defendant in a court case, I would want a lawyer, and a good lawyer at that, in defending me. It is important to me that he does not miss any details and that he communicates my innocence (my message) well.

And in that case, you want your witnesses to be of the utmost character and standing in the community. Because if they are well respected then they can be trusted with giving a proper account of the events in the case. We have all seen court cases on TV shows where the attorney gets the primary witness on the witness stand and tries to shred their credibility. Why does he do this? Because if you don't think much of the witness, you won't think much to what he/she has witnessed.

I have been a witness in a court case. My wife and I were out to eat at a local restaurant. We had finished and were about to get into our car when we see 2 men stumbling out of the restaurant. The one man is really drunk and veering back and forth and the other was trying to help him. To our surprise the really drunk guy gets into his car and drives off. So, I phone the police and let them know and they pull him over and arrest him.

I go on my merry way. You think, good for you Adrian. Ummm no. I get a call about a year and a half later by the crown prosecutors office. The case is going to trial and they need me to be a witness. I was a little nervous but I am thinking, I witnessed a drunk guy get into his car and drive off and I phoned the police. The problem was that the defense attorney did not ask me about my important message like if he was drunk, if he got into his car and drove. He asked me what color was the car, what was he wearing, and about a whole bunch of details that after a year and a half, I could not remember. My testimony was thrown out. Because my testimony was thrown out, it was deemed that the police could not legally have cause to give a breathalyzer test and it was thrown out. **Credibility of the witness is key in our culture. The facts and the message can take a back seat.**

As we read the passage together in the Luke 2:8-20 ESV, we will look first at who is the messenger, what is the message and what does it mean. Those will be my 3 points for today. As we read this part of scripture think about **who is the messenger** (what are they like including their standing in society), **what is the message** they are entrusted with and finally **what difference does it make?**

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Luke 2:8-20 ESV

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and 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 among those with whom he is pleased!"

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

So, who were the messengers? Shepherds.

Let's look at who the shepherds were in Jesus time, what were their tasks and what was their standing?

The shepherds were ordinary men who would have been uneducated, hardworking, and diligent. They would have been on the lower end of the social caste. The task of the shepherd would have been to care for, protect the flock and to lead them out and back looking for water and grass to eat. They would sleep with their sheep.

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Luke 2:8

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

You can imagine that what their clothes would look like, their scruffy attire maybe, and how about their smell. They were hard working sort that lived on the land with the flock. In their society, they would not have much standing at all.

That's interesting in the fact that God uses the average and ordinary throughout the bible. Jesus was born in Bethlehem and that was also the home of David. When David was young he was a simple shepherd boy not of a prominent family. He became King of Israel and a "man after God's own Heart."

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1 Sam 17:34 ESV

But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father.

(David was a simple shepherd. Youngest in his family and rose to be king and man after God's own heart.)

Acts 13:22 ESV

And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.'

David was average and he submitted and followed God and God did some amazing things through him. Through King David, the Israelites became a powerful nation.

How about the 12 apostles? Were they leaders and visionaries? No, they were fisherman and tax collectors and the like. They were simple men. No theologians amongst them. Jesus chose those 12 to train to start the early church. Simple men with no influence in the community.

What does this mean for us?

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1. God uses the ordinary to do the extraordinary. This is my first of 3 points. His majesty and power is truly exhibited in our weakness. Just as he uses the shepherds to declare the birth of the saviour, the messiah, our Lord - God doesn't use Caesar Augustus to do it. He uses simple shepherds. Who is going to tell your neighbours, coworkers, friends, and family about Jesus, if not you? He planted you there. Will you follow Christ and submit and be used to do extraordinary things by God?

Ephesians 3:20 (ESV)

20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

God wants to show his power through us - more than we can ask or think. Amazing. **He wants to use the ordinary to do the extraordinary.**

Now what is the Message that the shepherds received.

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Luke 2:9-11 ESV

⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

An angel from God appeared to them. Now here is the important part.

10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you **good news of great joy that will be for all the people. - what is the good news you say?**

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

Do you remember the passage we read about David?

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Acts 13:22-23 ESV

²² And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.' ²³ Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus, as he promised.

Through this simple shepherd boy, God did amazing things but nothing compared to what he is going to do through Jesus who was a descendant of David.

The message is Jesus has been born. He is the saviour, the Christ (Messiah), the Lord. How will they know when they see him?

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Luke 2:12-14 ESV

¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

Then then not one angel but a multitude singing and praising God for this gift.

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 among those with whom he is pleased!"

Why are they singing God's praises and how is this baby the Saviour, what does it mean to be the Christ and Lord?

The angel calls Jesus saviour, this baby would be their saviour from the predicament they find themselves in. Israel was troubled and in need of a hero to deliver them from their enemy. Jesus is also called the Christ or Messiah. This is important because Bethlehem was the birthplace of King David who united Israel and who led them into their military glory years and now it is the birthplace of the Messiah who would unite the world. Lord refers to God himself. The king of kings.

The Message or the Good News is Jesus. He came, God came, and was born to this simple family. He will unite the world through his upcoming sacrificial, perfect life. He will go on to be die on the cross to pay the penalty of the sins of the world. Not just Israel. And he will conquer sin and death and he will do this as a free gift and to accept it they just have to ask and follow him as their Lord, their God, their Messiah.

How about us today. Does this message find us in a different place than the shepherds? They were a simple people who had lonely dedicated jobs that was messy and stinky. I hate to break it to you but we are in the same boat. We have more money and possessions and comforts but we are probably more lonely, are lives are just as messy, and we are simple people just trying to make our way. And Jesus came for us. He came to reconcile us to God because we could not do it on our own. He took our place, payed for our sins on the cross and when he rose again - he conquered sin and death. He offers us this for free.

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My first point from this passage was: **1. God uses the ordinary to do the extraordinary.**

My second point is 2. Jesus is the message and our solution. The good news is Christ was born- our messiah, our saviour, and our lord. The good news it is God who became man, who led a sinless life, took the sins of the world on to himself and died on the cross and 3 days later rose again so that we may have eternal life.

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John 3:16 ESV

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

It isn't about going to Sunday school, or church attendance, or any of the other things we put on our faith. It is coming to see and having a relationship with the Risen saviour, Messiah, and Lord.

This is why he was born. This is why we celebrate Christmas. And this is why Jesus is the message.

Tim Keller has been quoted saying: "Christ will do everything for you or nothing. He's either all of your righteousness or none."

He is only your Lord if you accept his gift and follow him. He wants to have a relationship with us.

In my opening story, I was a witness that was discredited and therefore the message or charge had no merit. But in Christ's economy, the message is the only thing that matters. The good news (the message of Jesus Christ) is everything and he uses imperfect people to deliver that message every minute of every day. It is all about Christ.

So the shepherds were given this proclamation, this good news, or message from the angels. What effect did it have on them? To find get to my last point, Let's go back to the end of our text:

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Luke 2:15-20

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Verse 15: The angels leave and the shepherds leave their post to go see in Bethlehem what this is all about.

Verse 16: These simple everyday people will be the first (outside of Jesus immediate family) to see him. **They went with haste.** They went quickly. God was introducing them to his son, the messiah. They were wasting no time.

They found him, just as the angels had said.

And what did they do: verse 17: ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.

Therefore, They met Christ and had to share the message. They absolutely had to share the message. And those who heard it:

verse 18: wondered about what the shepherds told them. It got them thinking. It is impactful.

verse 20

²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The shepherds went back to their pasture but were glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. **They did this because the message brings joy.**

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Luke 2:10 ESV

¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

The shepherds standing has not changed. Their circumstances have not changed and yet they are proclaiming this good news with great joy. They are the same guys with the same lonely, tough job and yet they are praising the Lord with all of their hearts because the Gospel bring joy to all who receive it. Because Jesus changes everything.

My first point was: **1. God uses the ordinary to do the extraordinary. Just as he uses simple shepherds with the gospel message and Christ's birth, he can use you and me.**

My second point was: **2. Jesus is the message. The good news is Christ - our messiah, our saviour, and our lord - He was born and is the solution to our problem.**

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3. My third point is: the gospel brings joy, despite our circumstances.

You see the gospel is the good news. How do we contain our excitement about this free gift, of this relationship we have with Jesus? Who can stop us from sharing it.

Christmas is a time of year that the TV tells us is the best time of year. The happiest time of year. For many people it isn't. It can be the loneliest time of the year. They may have lost a loved one this year and this is the first Christmas not with them. It may be that they are estranged from family or friends. It can be tough for so many reasons. And Jesus knows every reason. When we are at our hardest point, when we are in the darkest corner - Jesus will meet us there. He understands, he has been there before. And he came and was born, in that simple manger, to that simple family, to bring this message. This message of great joy because despite our circumstances, Jesus will walk through them with us. He came for the broken. He came for each one of us because we are all broken. Our job or call is to receive his offer.

Now I can stand up here and I haven't faced as much as some of you. So it is hard to say Joy in all circumstances. My wife had an Auntie Joyce. She wasn't a real auntie but a family friend. Joyce had heart problems but her main issue was a severe case of Tinnitus. Tinnitus is a ringing in the ears. Joyce's condition was extremely painful. It caused much pain and lack of sleep. But Joyce was one of these ladies who exhibited Joy. You just had to meet her. Her eyes lit up. She would lay awake in severe pain, and she would pray for many people, including my mother in law and my wife. It was a blessing and an encouragement to them until her passing. Her joy came from the realization that her predicament was not the end. She would eventually go to heaven where there would be no pain but until then, she would live her life for Christ and with much Joy.

How about you?

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Phil 4:2-4 ESV

² I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³ Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

You see Euodia and Syntyche had a disagreement and the apostle Paul is saying "get over it". Paul knew them and laboured with them for Christ. He knew they were going to heaven and he is saying it is a command. Rejoice, you have much to be thankful for in Jesus, Rejoice.

If you do not know Jesus personally, you can this morning. You can recognize that Jesus is God. He was born of a virgin in a manger in Bethlehem all those years ago. That he grew up and led a sinless life. And his reason for coming was to pay the price for our sin. He did that on the cross but it did not stop there. Our God, Messiah, Saviour, and Lord, rose again and conquered sin and death. He is alive and wants to have a relationship with you. You don't have to be all cleaned up - Jesus came for the broken.

If you have done that and have that relationship, then we get to have joy despite our circumstances. Because we know the depth of how much God loves us. As we go about our lives, we get to have this joy even in the tough times because of our faith in Christ. We know that He died so we can have life and life eternal. But even when it is hard - the Gospel - Jesus brings Joy despite our circumstances. What an amazing Christmas present.

