

Christmas Eve 2023 (Merry Christmas!)

Andy Deane · 12/24/2023 · Luke 2:1-20

The CHRISTMAS STORY reminds us: there is purpose in the inconvenience.

Luke 2:1-7, 1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

- Inconvenience is common & always unwelcome surprise. So we get angry because all our plans feel ruined.
- How can we react to inconvenience? We can believe that: God is not surprised, has allowed it, & will work in it!
- Biblical truth can calm us: God is good & still in control, and even an inconvenience can be providence!
- God used an inconvenient census fulfilled God's promise in: Micah 5:2, "*But you, Bethlehem, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.*"
- We can trust that God uses inconvenience, along with unexpected people, to accomplish His plans in our life.
- What's amazing is that God entered into our inconvenience: He didn't bypass the problems & pain for a palace!
- The Nativity teaches us that God is humble, but don't let his humble birth confuse you...He is a great gift!

The CHRISTMAS STORY reminds us: there is good news for normal people.

Luke 2:8-14, 8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

- If there's good news for the lowly, there's good news for all! God announces to normal folks: *shepherds* (8)
- A normal reaction to an angel is fear, not "it's good news" because we sense rebellion should be punished.
 - Yet the angel says, "*Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy...*" (10)
 - What can cause joy in a normal common sinner like me?
- The good news is that God knows our sin & still loves us!
 - Don't get me wrong, sin is a big deal to God & to us! He doesn't overlook our sin, He saves us from our sin: *a Savior has been born to you...the Messiah* (11)
 - The amazing thing about Christmas is who God sent to save us. It wasn't the angel, it was God Himself!
 - Forgiveness is available to everyone on one condition: "*peace to those on whom his favor rests*" (14)
 - What does it mean if someone's "favor rests" on you? That's kind of the big question isn't it. Be good? Earn it?
 - How does his favor rest on us? We: repent, believe, & follow Jesus.

The CHRISTMAS STORY reminds us: that a gift is actually meant to be enjoyed.

Luke 2:15-20, 15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." 16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

- Those shepherds had to believe enough to act on the truth: *“Let’s go...and see this thing”* (15)
- God promises to be found by those who seek Him: *they hurried off and found Mary...Joseph...the baby* (16). The Scriptures say, *You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.*
- What changes when we receive God’s gift? In some ways:
 - Not much changes: *The shepherds returned* (20) - They still had their normal lives and job.
 - Everything changes: *Glorifying and praising God* (20) - Yet nothing would be normal ever again.
- The baby in the manger is the end of the Christmas story, but not the end of God’s rescue story. That bigger story continues with Jesus living a perfect life, dying on a cross for us, and walking out of a grave.

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