

12-25-16 – A King is Born!

Luke 2:1-24

About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel. Lk. 2:1-7

Rabbi Marc Gelman's article yesterday – Miracle or Luck ?

Of course, God would not let anything interfere with his Plan, but just think about it.

We have seen over the last few weeks how God has intruded into human lives with his announcement of a supernatural event that was about to take place.

He first appeared to Zechariah while he was about his normal business of attending to the temple matters. He was the assigned priest at the time. God broke through to him and changed his life forever. While he couldn't believe what God was saying to him then, he eventually understood his calling and the calling of his wife Elizabeth, who gave birth to John the Baptist, for forerunner of Jesus.

Next, God appeared by an angel to Mary, who was going about her ordinary life until he appeared. She was frightened at first, but then her life would never be the same. When she understood what God wanted of her, she obeyed and gave herself fully to His will. "May it be to me exactly as you said!" That's trust – that's obedience – that's faith.

When Joseph found out what was going on, he freaked out. Here was a man dedicated to God in his religion, and following the letter of the law. Suddenly he was faced with a fiancé who was pregnant by someone other than him. The penalty for this crime was death in this day. What should he do? How could he deal with this terrible situation? He loved Mary; he was to marry her. Maybe he could dump her quietly somehow, but he certainly couldn't marry her. She was spoiled goods. Then – an angel appeared to him in a dream and told him to take her as his wife no matter what. The baby in her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. She was to bear God's child. His ordinary carpenter's life would never be the same again.

Then, finally the time for her to give birth came. They were in a distant town because of a census order by the ruler of Rome. How unfortunate for them to have to travel to Bethlehem to register because they were of the line of David. How fortunate for us that they had to register in Bethlehem because they were of the line of David. It is documented in history. Jesus was born in Bethlehem because he was of the line of David just as prophesied.

There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger." Lk 2:8-12 The Message

Ah – the Shepherds – the low-life's of their time – ordinary people doing their ordinary jobs. Why are they even in the story? An angel appeared to them and reassured them not to fear. Good News of Great Joy was given to them. They were to take this good news to everyone they met. They went and followed up on what the angels said. They found the baby lying in a manger just as the angels said. This was the sign. This was the Baby. This was what God wanted them to learn and see. This was the Messiah – Jesus – Master, Savior, Redeemer, God with us. There could have been a multitude of babies born that night or in that time frame, so how would they know which was the Messiah. God told them by angelic intrusion... You will find the baby lying in a manger – That's the One – This is the sign for you to recognize.

God was about to enter our world as a human baby and live among us for a while. He would be called Immanuel (God with us), and eventually take away our sin. His name in Greek is Jesus (God Saves). This is the name the angel instructed Mary and Joseph to name their child. They obeyed and that made all the difference.

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherders were impressed. Lk. 2:15-18 - The Message

What has God instructed you to do? Have you obeyed? What do we need to make us obey the call of God? It isn't easy – for sure, but it is possible. We will be blessed if we obey His call.

We know from the Scriptures that Herod was very upset when the wise men from the East finally arrived on the scene. They asked Herod where they might find the new born King of the Jews. This was an insult of the highest degree to Herod. He was the King of the Jews. How dare they insinuate there was another that would take over his throne? This is why he ordered a decree that all male babies under two years old be murdered. He asked them the time they started to come to see this great event.

No matter what the circumstances seem to be and how they come about, God is still in control. He has everything in His care. We are good. We can rely on His direction and guidance, even if we can't sense it at the time – That's what faith is all about.

When I was sick with cancer and finally returned to work and our Bible study – we went to lunch to celebrate. The leader said to all: Now he has real faith – he faced this disease and didn't lose sight of God. I never thought of that in those terms, but I guess he was right. God is always in control no matter what, if we belong to Him. Have you surrendered your life to God?

That's what he demands of us. He demanded it of Zechariah, who finally yielded, but paid a price for doubting. He demanded it of Mary, who willingly gave herself to His will. He demanded it of Joseph, who was a hard sell, but eventually came around. He demanded it of the Shepherds who were scared but yielded anyway. They put feet to their call and went to see what God had revealed to them. It's OK to check out what God says to see if it is so.... He knows our weaknesses and still wants to lead us in His ways.

God also provides confirmations along the way that we can be encouraged by. . .

When the eighth day arrived, the day of circumcision, the child was named Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived.

Then when the days stipulated by Moses for purification were complete, they took him up to Jerusalem to offer him to God as commanded in God's Law: "Every male who opens the womb shall be a holy offering to God," and also to sacrifice the "pair of doves or two young pigeons" prescribed in God's Law. Lk. 2:21-24 NLT

His parents did all the prescribed religious rituals to ensure He would be acceptable in the faith. They didn't realize at the time that He is our faith.

Simeon proclaimed that He was the Child – the Messiah. This was the child he was waiting for. He recognized immediately that this was the one – the one that had been promised - the one that would release him a peaceful death. He was waiting for that.

Jesus was born in fulfillment to many scriptures. We celebrate His birth every year, but do we appreciate Who He really is? He is the fulfillment of prophecy. He is the One all have been waiting for. He is the One named Jesus (God Saves). He is Immanuel – God with Us.

The shepherds proclaimed this Good News to everyone they met, what will you do with this good news that Jesus is your savior and Lord? Will you tell those you know that He is real and has made an impact on your life?

Jesus is the reason for the season – let someone know that this Christmas!