

**November 29, 2009**

**“Christmas Presence...Worship Fully”**

**Luke 2:8-20 (NLT)**

- 8** That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. **9** Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, **10** but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. **11** The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! **12** And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."
- 13** Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,
- 14** "Glory to God in highest heaven,  
and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."
- 15** When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."
- 16** They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. **17** After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. **18** All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, **19** but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. **20** The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

Well it's the 1st Sunday of Advent. Christmas is less than a month away (sorry, if that might be freaking out some people right now). Everyone loves Christmas...mostly everyone. Even people who are not religious love Christmas; even people who don't know or believe what we believe about Christmas, still celebrate at Christmas time.

Christmas is a time of celebration; and should be a time of celebration. Why do we celebrate Christmas? Well, of course we all know this is the time we celebrate the birth of Jesus. That's what we do when it is Someone's birthday...you celebrate. And before the party, there's lots of preparing to make the party a great celebration. But why celebrate the birth of a child in a manger 2,000 years ago? Christmas is a party! That's what we will be preparing for during the next four weeks. We should prepare and we should prepare to celebrate; but this child in a manger Jesus, is not an ordinary child. He is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior. We must do more than prepare and we must do more than celebrate; the difference between those who believe and those who do not believe but still celebrate Christmas is that we must not just celebrate, we must worship and we must worship fully. Sometimes we're so busy preparing, getting ready, buying presents, and planning, and then spending time celebrating, that we don't have time to think of its real meaning to us, which would cause us to Worship fully. We lose the joy of what the moment is all about.

In Matt. 2: 9-11 (NLT) we read about the wise men ...And the star they had seen in the east (that) guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! (and then v11 says) They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.

In the opening Scripture reading (Luke 2) we read what the angels told us about this day we now call Christmas.

The Savior they had been promised, The Savior they had waited for and been preparing for had come that night. Advent means “coming.” We are preparing for the coming of the Savior, as we once again celebrate His birth, and at the same time remember that He is coming again. Our preparation is not just for the holiday on December 25th, the shopping, wrapping, cooking etc. It must also be the preparing of our hearts for the second coming of Christ.

And Notice what else the angel said:

- “I bring you good news...”
- This news will bring you “great joy”
- And this news is for all the people, not just some of them.

His coming is good news, that brings joy...Christmas is a celebration.

But notice some other things in our text:

Luke 2:9 the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them.

Luke 2:13b-14a praising God and saying, "Glory to God in highest heaven..."

Luke 2:20 The shepherds (after they had seen the baby Jesus in the manger) went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

Praising and giving God glory describes worship.

The good news that we celebrate at Christmas is what was announced by the angels. Think about it: God did not just visit us; He was born as we are. God became a man—a man named Jesus.

Consider these observations about the good news of God becoming flesh and blood—just like you and me:

The glory of the incarnation is that it presents to our adoring gaze not a humanized God or a deified man, but a true Godman—one who is all that God is and at the same time all that man is: one on whose almighty arm we can rest and to whose human sympathy we can appeal.

- Benjamin B. Warfield

Filling the world, he lies in a manger!

- Augustine

The mystery of the humanity of Christ, that he sunk himself into our flesh, is beyond all human understanding.

- Martin Luther

Jesus Christ is God in the form of man; as completely God as if he were not man; as completely man as if he were not God.

- A. J. F. Behrends

Remember, Christ was not a deified man, neither was he a humanized God. He was perfectly God and at the same time perfectly man.

- C. H. Spurgeon

To the human mind, there is something almost illogical in the assertion that God became a man. It is like speaking about a square circle. Yet this is what Christmas says—and we take refuge from our bewilderment, not in explanation but in adoration.

- Ralph P. Martin

Christmas should cause adoration, worship, the giving of honor, glory, and praise to God. You can refuse to worship, but that does not diminish the glory of God.

Worship is a meeting between God and His people when the worshiper is brought into personal contact with the one who gives meaning and purpose to life; from this encounter the worshiper receives strength and courage to live with hope in a fallen world. — *Robert Webber*

Matthew 1:23 (NIV)

23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."

God became a man. But what difference does this make to you and me today? Even if we believe it, that was 2,000 years ago. Yes, but He is also "with us" today.

Let me suggest that what the angels are communicating is that for the first time since God created Adam and Eve, He is making a special connection with mankind. He is making a physical and spiritual connection by coming into space and time, so we have a person to relate to. Instead of a prophet or an angel or some miraculous event, He came Himself. This is a first for God. From His perspective, this is a wonderful, spectacular event. In fact, it is such a joyous event for God that in Luke we read:

Luke 2:13-14 (NIV)

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Did you catch that? A "vast host of other" angels appeared. The words used to describe the number of angels involved in this announcement indicate that there were thousands upon thousands. In fact, there were so many angels that those who witnessed it simply couldn't count them all. For all we know, there may have been millions of angels. When I read this, I see a God who is excited

beyond our wildest imagination about coming to be with us in this way. But He was not happy for Himself; He was happy for us. It's because God was connecting with you and me in a way that no one could have imagined.

My friends, I'm here today to encourage you that God's presence is so real and so powerful that you never again need think that you are alone or that God doesn't care about you. Christmas is about God's love for you.

This year may it not be so much about presents wrapped and placed under a tree that we give to others. But may it be about God's Presence w/us that we give to others

So let us worship fully Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...

To Worship Fully is to worship abundantly and completely. To worship fully is to worship with all our mind, heart and will

### **Worship with your mind:**

The angel appeared to tell the shepherds about the birth of Christ, reminding them of the promises of God's Word. Mary (v19) kept these things in her heart and she thought about them, she treasured these things and pondered or meditated on them. During Advent we need to hear again the story of the Birth of Christ; we need to think about the promises of God's Word, we will worship as we meditate on these things. Worshiping with our mind is part of worshiping fully.

### **Worship with your heart or with your emotions:**

(v13-14) Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

Do you think the angels said that without passion? It says they were praising God (w/emotion) and saying, "GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST HEAVEN, AND PEACE ON EARTH..."

(v20 after they had seen the Christ Child) The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.

We don't want emotionalism which is often a misrepresentation of worship, but we do want passionate emotion when we worship.

We should worship God not only with our mind, but with our emotions.

### **Worship with your will.**

(v17-18) After seeing him (Jesus), the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished...

They didn't keep the news to themselves, they shared it as God would want them to. And do you think their lives changed that night? How could they not? God want you to not only worship Him with your mind and with your emotions, but with your will. He wants your life to be given over 100% to Him. He wants you, your life. He wants you to be a faithful servant to Him by serving others. Let's start changing things this Advent by making it about worship, and spending less, and giving more, and loving all.

The story of Christ's birth is a story of promise, hope, and revolutionary love. So what happened? What was once a season to celebrate the Savior has become a season of stress, shopping lists, traffic jams, and crowded stores and buying gifts out of obligation, and receiving them for the same reason. And when it's all over we realize we spent too much, we still have to go to the stores, only now to return presents, and we feel empty, like we missed the whole purpose of the season. Is that really what we want out of Christmas?

Christmas starts with Jesus and ends with Jesus. It's a season for worship. Love has come, peace reigns, the King is worshiped. It's the party of the year, His birth *is* to be celebrated. As we once again hear the story let us enter the season with an overwhelming passion to worship Jesus to the fullest.

For Christmas this year, give Presence, that's P-R-E-S-E-N-C-E... Worship fully.