

THE EXTRAORDINARY PRESENTATION OF CHRIST

Luke 2:1-20

You may have heard the story before but at Christmas time in 1914 during World War I, something extraordinary happened. While on many battle lines the fighting was strong with grenades and gunfire around the clock, there was a few places where the fighting stopped and one of those places in particular was at the battle of **Flanders Field**. On Christmas Eve, the British noticed that lights began to appear over on the German lines. The British obviously thought that they were planning some sort of special attack but then they heard familiar Christmas tunes like Silent Night filling the air. German soldiers were singing in German and the British began to respond in English. Soldiers from both side began to emerge from their cold and soggy trenches and before long they began to inch their way closer to the other side in the middle of what is called “**No man’s land**” – the place in between the two sides where fallen soldiers were lain. **But for a short time, no man’s land would become a place of peace.** They developed a Christmas truce to cease fire. Many who could speak the opposing the language began to find common ground with those they were fighting with. They buried the fallen soldiers and held funeral services together and for each other. They laughed and ate and drank. It’s been purported that even a few games of football broke out. For the first time in a long time, these men felt human again. And the cause of all this peace? Jesus Christ’s birth! Christ was the reason for the peace that these men experienced that Christmas, in the midst of war, in no man’s land.

Christmas Eve and the celebration of Christ’s birth was enough to bring peace 1900 years later between men at war. But His peace, we know, goes even beyond the physical world between men. The main goal He was after in His first coming was really to ultimately bring **peace between holy God and sinful man**. The Bible says that He Himself is our Peace (Eph. 2:14). He is the Prince of Peace (Is. 7:6). And there will be no end to the increase of His peace (Is. 7:7). Tonight I want to go back to that night when God Himself, the Prince of Peace, entered into our world as a newborn baby. In Luke chapter 2 we find many extraordinary details from when Christ was born. First, notice:

I. THE EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES (VV. 1-7)

The account given says there was a census being taken at the time. Caesar Augustus wanted to number the people again and so everybody was on their way to register in their respective cities. Joseph and Mary, it says, went up to the city of David in Judea from Nazareth. Mary was pregnant at the time and the baby could come any second. So during the time when most ladies want to stay home and go into their nesting mode, Mary’s traveling away from home and while she’s there she gives birth.

And so the first extraordinary circumstance here is the **WHEN** and **WHERE**. The fact that, against the doctor’s orders today, **they were away from home when the baby was born. They were traveling with precious cargo.** That had to be a little unnerving for them but Mary must have been comforted by Gabriel’s words that **the Holy Spirit was overshadowing her and this entire pregnancy** from His conception to His growing and guarding and protecting Him. It’s also special that He was born in Bethlehem because that’s exactly where, whether they realized it or not, **Micah 5:2** said the Messiah was going to be born! “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth from Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.” That’s quite the prophecy to make 700+ years

before Christ was born! God knew exactly where this baby was going to be born. He knew about the census. He knew about all of it and was orchestrating these things to His perfect will. It's all happening in His timing at just the right time.

On top of the **WHEN** and **WHERE** is the **WHO**. This couple was just an **ordinary couple**. An **obedient** couple and **favored** couple, but an **ordinary** couple. Judging by the way they only offered two small pigeons or doves at the temple when they presented Him there to fulfill the Law for a firstborn child, they were probably a **poor** couple (Lk. 2:24). **They couldn't afford a lamb**. On top of that, they were from **Nazareth** of all places. Do you remember what Nathanael asked Philip when Philip told him that **he'd found the Messiah** that Moses and prophets wrote about? He said, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" The place had a bad reputation. This is where our Savior was from and grew up – among the sinful and despised of the world.

And then you think about the **shepherds** of all people. They were the ones whom God sends his angels to to announce the good news! It wasn't to the king Herod or the religious elite. It was to the humble shepherds. **The whole event and beginnings of Christ's earthly life just begs of humility that's just foreign to man. We just sang how many kings? How many kings would do this? His humble beginning was and has been revealing to the world this nature and side of God that many struggle to see.** What kind of God is this? Who would step into His creation? Who would seek us? Become like us? The pagan gods would never do that. This humble beginning sets **the theme for the entire purpose of His first coming where He comes like a Lamb instead of like a Lion at His second coming.** He is a God who associates with the lonely and lowly and dejected and the despised of society. He associates with the humble because He is humble – and this, guys, is **an extraordinary God!** What a God!

II. **THE EXTRAORDINARY SIGN (VV. 8-12)**

Shepherds were out in their fields and keeping watch over the flock while an angel suddenly stood before them and the glory of the Lord began to surround them. They were frightened but as always, the angel replies, "Don't be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. [I always want to say there: That's what Christmas is all about Charlie Brown.] This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

The sign is something no one would've ever dreamed of, even with the prophetic texts of the OT. Many were expecting the Messiah to come with great power and dominance and a rod of iron to rule the nations. They were expecting some powerful sign in the sky but here we have – *a baby wrapped in cloths in a manger?* The sign is a baby in an animal's feeding trough! What an extraordinary place for the Son of the Most-High God to be born. **If you think God is some out of this world, Deistic God who is uncaring and unloving, impersonal and uninvolved or unattached to His creation – just look at the baby lying in a manger!** God became flesh and dwelt among us. He could've chose to be born in a gold palace with a silver spoon but He doesn't. He's starting with a poor family and a manger. He can relate to the most lowly.

III. **THE EXTRAORDINARY PRAISE (VV. 13-20)**

Lastly, we see the extraordinary praise being given to God from men and angels. In verse 13 more than one angel appears, there's a **multitude** – "and now there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God." The shepherds, it says, stood in awe as the angels praised God in this historic moment we read about every year. And as soon the angels were gone they were so

excited they left their sheep to go see if it was true! And what they found was exactly what the angel said. The shepherds told Mary and Joseph and whoever else was there what the angel had said and the angels they had heard speak about this Child. The text says everyone who heard their testimony wondered at the things the shepherds said. Mary pondered these things in her heart. You get the sense that these men and women who were privileged to hear and see these things had a lot of questions. We question whether they knew just how extraordinary all of this really was and someday we may get to hear their story firsthand in heaven. This is the Son of God, the 2nd member of the Trinity being born into the world. **It's one of the most stupendous moments this world has ever seen and it's one that we'll be thankful for forever.**

Why did He do it all? He did it because He loves us. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son. He wanted to show us grace. He wanted to restore man's relationship with God. We were created for a relationship with God – we were created to dance with God, you could say. But that relationship or that dance was ruined by sin. So He left His throne to come into our world and be the remedy for sin that we needed by living in total righteousness, as the Perfect Man fulfilling God's holy demands in the Law, and then dying as our perfect substitute. **Christ is the only mediator, the perfect God-Man who can enter into that "No Man's Land" that was created by sin and make restoration and bring peace**, just like at Flanders Field in 1914. Peace and fellowship with God is available again for those who trust in Christ. Romans 5:1 clearly says it is only going to come through faith in Him and what He eventually did on the cross – dying for our sins, being buried and raised again. That's the ultimate good news for us. "Therefore having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The only way we can ever cross over into no man's land where the peace and dance-like relationship with God in our inner being takes place again, is through faith in Christ.

To finish, "The shepherds," it says, "went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them." And **tonight, we want do the same thing**. We want to glorify and praise God. This is a familiar story to all of us but it should never cease to stir up the giving of glory and praise to Him. Let's do that now.

We're going to have a few guys come around with lighters and light the candles on the end and then if you'd just help light your neighbor's candle that'd be great.