**The Light Has Come - Christmas is Here!**

**Ever notice we can become so familiar with something we miss the obvious? We do it all the time – when we read, drive. Blind spot that fills in mental assumptions - but it also causes us to miss things.**

**Selective viewing - Passing the ball - missed the gorilla suit.**

**We do the same with Christmas. We’ve heard it and have assumptions. There is often an increase in depression as expectations are not met.**

**How many time I hear – “It does not feel like Christmas.”**

**Luke 1 - Gabriel appears to Mary and Says you will have miraculous pregnancy – but don’t worry it’s all good, God has a plan – he’s the messiah. (Two teens – about to get married – working towards a normal life in a small town…)**

**Mary visited by Gabriel – Luke 1 (miraculously pregnant)**

**Joseph visited in a dream by an angel – Matt 2 (raise him)**

**(Christmas road trip) Luke 2:1 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. (Puts a pin in history)**

**Things We Don’t Want To Miss**

**1. These were incredibly dark days for Israel – but God was working.**

**Harsh Roman oppression. The bad guys were winning.**

**God where are you?! 400 yrs since God sent a prophet.**

**To understand - pilgrims landed on Plymouth rock in 1620. Has God left us – they’re looking for a warrior King.**

**The Jewish people were under Roman rule and control.**

**Count was for taxes, wanted their money. Just a thought - God used unjust taxes and govt mandates to fulfill his purpose.**

**4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, (pin in the geography) because he belonged to the house and line of David. (pin in biblical prophecy – “city of bread”) 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.**

**Oh yea, I’ve heard that…They did not take a bus. 2 day walk from Nazareth to Bethlehem - 100 miles. Walk from Dallas to Waco - while pregnant… easy. And they don’t have a choice.**

**Roads crowded and full of travelers due to the census.**

**Most likely traveling w/ other family – walking together. As his entire family headed back to the “City of Bread” by legal order.**

**2. These were incredibly dark days for Joseph & Mary- but was working**

**Go to Bethlehem! Not married yet, pregnant, long hard trip and poor. We can’t afford this - don’t have time – Not now… Drop everything…**

**Marriage problems, health problems, money problems, travel, crowds, soldiers, and in the final days or a pregnancy. This was a tough time for them to say the least.**

**Okay so - Donkey ride to Bethlehem… then right when they get there she goes into labor and they hurried to find a hotel, but there’s no room in the inn, so they’re stuck in a barn or cave) where 3 kings came that night - while a little drummer boy played his drum for him in the corner…**

**The Bible does not mention – a donkey, a barn or cave, kings, or a drummer boy. Most likely traveled in caravan by cart to the “city of bread.”**

**(one crazy night) 6 While they were there, the time came (time passed) for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. (pin in his humanity) She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room (inn) available for them. (pin in humility - humble king)**

**But it was a stable, barn, or cave… right? See pic**

**No room in the “kataluma” inn” (Acts 2) “upper room” lit. “guest room.” Joe & Mary were likely staying with family. With house full - elders get priority rooms upstairs. Why the animal trough? It was common for animals stay in the lower level of most homes.**

**At the heart of this Luke is saying – there was no room for them. No place for them. They stayed and gave birth with eh animals.**

**Placed in a manger / feeding trough. Luke brings it up a lot.**

**After the Exodus Passover was established (Ex 12) every Jewish home had indoor troughs - to feed the lambs in their house during Passover. That Jesus might have been placed in the very Passover lamb trough is of enormous significance - a miracle.**

**I was there for both my girl’s birth – the Lamaze video did not prepare me. Like all births Jesus entered the world thru pain, agony, blood, and love. God on earth was a blood smeared, crying, hungry little baby… before we could theologically analyze it.**

**And then a bunch of local union workers start knocking on the Door - Luke 2:8 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. (First evangelist was an angel. The city of David fulfills prophecy!)**

**Terrified! Glory of God appeared… we tend to miss the weight of what they saw in our nice cards. Powerful moment!**

**3. This was an incredibly significant day - for the Shepherds**

**These ninja veterinarians – were often seen as unimportant – Low level Levitical job – Hired by priests - were no ordinary shepherds.**

**Caring for the lambs for temple sacrifice. The lambs were to be spotless - under a year old. Shepherds in the Bible.**

* **The announcement of the Law – Moses a shepherd.**
* **The announcement of the temple – David – a shepherd.**
* **The announcement of Jesus – to shepherds.**
* **Jesus – the great shepherd. God caring for mankind!**
* **Even today Pastors – means shepherd.**

**Jesus was not created that day… Jesus is God with us, “Emmanuel” – the Alpha and Omega, the creator of oxygen breathed air that day.**

**The infinite became an infant – Our big God became a baby. Messiah – the promised anointed one – all the OT promises.**

**This was an announcement of a future career change for them.**

**(This is what to look for) 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” (Baby burrito in a food trough - in baby lambs’ clothes) 13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, (one turned to thousands upon thousands! Releasing the glory of heaven!!)** **14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”**

**The first Christmas party! Millions shows up!**

**The entire OT was leading up to this moment.**

**Then they were gone – the moment of decision. Go back to work or go find this Jesus. How could they go back after that?**

**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.” (Let’s go!!) 16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. (then one lowly shepherd pulled out his drums and began to play… JK)**

**Again, and again – the manger – a nasty animal food trough for a Passover lamb – for the birth of the lamb of God. The great bread of life, born in the lowly “city of bread”.**

**The contrast of his heavenly glory – to a place where the savior now lies – would have been extreme and powerful.**

**The God of Glory with the riches of heaven – born in the flesh and born into poverty – so we might be rich in spirit in Him.**

**17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, (they told the family about the angles) 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.**

**Luke does not mention angels at the manger or a star. Only a noisy stressful house full and a new baby – and excited shepherds.**

**Matt records a star that could have been their for 2 years after.**

**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. (God had only revealed that Jesus was the savior Immanuel – but had no idea what was to come.)**

**God did not tell them – they had a walk 2 days – or she would give birth next to animals and have no room or bed - or that later they would run away escape to Egypt – or his early death.**

**They did not know what was going to happen. Though planned for eternity past – they were only given a glimpse.**

**21 On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived. (Jumps 8)**

**Things We Don’t Want To Forget**

**1. In times of chaos, Jesus is our only hope.**

**In our not so silent nights, Jesus says, “I am here!”**

**Jesus came in the dark of night, in the darkest of times…**

**The nativity makes for a peaceful figurine - But it wasn’t that pretty or silent. The Silent Night we sing about was probably pretty stressful.**

**Maybe you see the holiday’s the same way they did: money / traveling / accommodations / full house / crying babies…**

**But in the middle of chaos and uncertainty – Jesus is present.**

**What is on your mind at night?**

**We worry about so much - some are legitimate & serious:**

**Health, finances, marriage, family, are my kids going to be all right? Am I going to have a job next year? What’s the doctor going to say?**

**Christmas reminds us that patience is something we will never stop learning. His plan and his timetable are so diff than ours. We listen, we follow, and we wait.**

**A crisis of faith is when what we expected is not happening.**

**Usually, God did not do what you thought he should do. But we forget – God is charge – and always on time for his glory.**

**Phil 4: 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.**

**Do you ever wonder why God chose to arrive this way? Perhaps, so we could know in our not so silent nights… God is with us.**

**2. In times of trials, Jesus is our mega joy!**

**Lu 2:10 But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy (Gk – “megas” joy)that will be for all the people.’”**

**One of the things missing in Christmas and in the world today, JOY!**

**We sing - “Joy to the world the Lord the lord has come” “O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant” “repeat the sounding joy” “Tis the season to be jolly” - But for many, Christmas isn’t so holly jolly**

**Life can be a downer… that’s why Christmas is so important – When Jesus shows up on the scene – Joy follows.**

* + **This Christmas it is time to get your mega joy back.**
  + **What are you afraid of? “Don’t be afraid” Jesus is here!**

**Think about this - in that birth pain Joy came, but not without pain**

**If Christmas (or life) is about people & things - no wonder so many are losing joy when life doesn’t happen just right.**

**Families are not perfect, loved one’s pass, sometimes you lose your job, run out of gas, sickness… Joy is not ordered on Amazon or in a store. You can’t get it on sale. Happiness is a result of what happens – but joy – remains with Jesus.**

**3. In times of uncertainty, Jesus is our only peace!**

**Peace! The world needed it then - and needs now. Shalom – peace.**

**Is 9 - prince of peace has arrived**

**Luke 2:14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” (NIV) Luke 2:14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” (ESV)**

**So different. Literally - This peace is to those who please God.**

**But this is not about works - this about faith.**

**Heb 11:6 – impossible to please God without faith.**

**He gives peace to those who he favors with faith. This peace comes by faith in Jesus. Phil 4 – a peace that surpasses understanding.**

**The world doesn’t have any answers: Google: “Peace of Mind” Results: Home security system – funeral services – hypnosis perfume – health care - positive meditation – Boston Song.**

**God has a gift for you this Christmas… John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.**

**4. In the midst of sin, Jesus is our only Savior.**

**Luke 2:11Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. / Matthew 1:21 …you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”**

**Christmas reminds us - we need a savior! You need a savior.**

**If you need a savior, then you are in need of saving - We are in a mess.**

**Christmas reminds us of a problem (our sin) – and a provision.**

**Good news – the savior has arrived!**

**Bad news – that is because you need a savior!**

**God doesn’t need us! God is not lonely. Jesus needs nothing. Why did he come? Because we needed Him! We need a savior from self & sins.**

**Christ did not come 2,000 years ago so that we could give each other presents, decorate our houses, have parties and sit on Santa’s lap - He was born to save us from our sins.**

**To choose that cradle without the cross – is to miss Christmas.**

**We need Christmas – we needed a savior – God came to the rescue.**

**Those SHEPHERDS - were more than just field workers. The proximity to the temple tell us they were shepherds who tended temple lambs raised for sacrifices. They were all too familiar w/ the great cost of sin**

**These simple shepherds who looked after temple lambs for God were the first to see the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. They understood the need of this good news!**

**The invitation to come to Jesus requires a response.**

**And as those shepherds made a choice after hearing the good news. They said - let’s go find Jesus – What will you do?**

**Could they have said – no I’m cool, I don’t feel like going?**

**But they said – “let’s go!”**

**I bring you good news today – you can find Jesus here…**

**You might know the story and seen great things, but you still need to respond to the news of the angles!**

**Jesus came in the dark of night, in the darkest of times - but always right on time. 5000 years of prophecy – culminating on that day.**

**I think of how we wrap and put gifts under a tree – only to wait for Christmas. The gift was ready – but at just the right time they are opened. Jesus revealed himself and died for our sins – and will return – at just the right time.**

**Jesus. This is your gift today. \*\* Like any gift that is given – it must be received and opened – that is faith.**

**John 1:12 – Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.**