

122418 *Oh Crazy night...we pick up the scene...*

LK 2:4 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 room for them in the inn.

- **What? How messy is that...traveling while eight plus months pregnant over 60 miles of rough terrain ...probably on a donkey... Pulling or carrying their luggage**
- **No phoning ahead for a hotel...the town very crowded....Mary extremely uncomfortable and exhausted about to give birth...and carrying God...**
- **...Joseph tired and Frustrated...**
- **These are the two were highly favored!!!....and a caring God...where is the help here?**
- **and the best accommodations they can find are in a stable most likely a cave...for the animals...**
- **Picture this ...They have just settle in ...Joseph spreading blankets on the straw...Mary trying to find a comfortable position ...**
- **And oh great her water breaks....she goes into labor...for how long God only know...**
- **Joseph now is the mid-husband...in a Completely Unsterile environment...**
- **The whole delivery process....no pressure delivering the son of God...**
- **The baby is probably lying in the manger is because Mary was cleaning up herself with Joseph after having just gone through labor and delivery...He was the mid-wife**
- **Nothing supernatural here!!! more likely disappointing**
- **And in keeping with this methodology The God of all creation first announces his birth to a group of men, who live on the outskirts of society. They live in the margins, working stiffs doing a necessary but far less than a prestigious job,...**
- **The night shift people in a day shift world.... shepherds Tending flocks, on the hillsides around Bethlehem. **While the people of Jerusalem slept.****
- **Yet this night would unfold into the most extraordinary evening of their lives.**

Luke 2: ⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

- **the shepherds were Low wage workers in low status jobs... people who did the shearing and slaughtering lived lives invisible to most,** treated most often as second class citizens, and excluded from even their religious services.
- **Make no mistake the people were glad to wear clothing woven from the wool of shepherds sheep and to eat the meat of slaughtered lambs, and to offer the best for the flock for Religious purposes...**
- A little more Shepherds...Near Eastern shepherding is one of the most demanding and least appreciated and rewarded tasks in that first- century culture. They lived most of the year outside, away from the townspeople.
- Flocks were kept outdoors from April to November, and, sometimes during the winter in suitable locations.
- **Sheep are defenseless and therefore easily frightened...and not particularly bright animals.** And will always impulsively react before they think. Sheep are also vulnerable to a wide variety of diseases, ticks, insects and parasitic afflictions.
- **Consequently, sheep require constant attention and care. Shepherding is a “hands on” calling. You can’t shepherd from a distance.**
- **Leading sheep to grasses that are good to eat – many are not.** Some grasses are poisonous while others will produce nausea and stomach gas in the sheep.
- and there were always bully sheep who would run rough shod over younger sheep to get to the best grass first.
- Insuring that sheep are always on high ground, not in valley floors, when spring rains come. Rains can quickly cause flash floods that drown sheep.
- Knowing how to dig and store winter rains in cisterns so sheep will have water to drink during the long, dry, hot summer season.
- Nightly protected encampments were necessary so that the sheep would lie down to sleep, feeling safe and secure – and dealing with the prone to wander difficult sheep...
- **"Keeping watch" os to do guard duty."** protecting the sheep from lions, bears, wolves, and thieves scaring off these predators with a sling or when necessary, fighting them with the rod.
- **So Picture the night scene...some Shepherds gathered around the campfire trying to stay warm... another guarding the sheep pen....just another night in a ceaseless procession of nights.living in the fields...**

this particular night these men simply were doing their job like they did every day. completely unaware was up to on the other side of the hills. **They were about to get front row seats to the Hallelujah chorus along with backstage passes to seek the King. One minute the shepherds are talking quietly in the blackness of the Spring sky. The next moment the hillside is ablaze in light with an angel standing in front of them...**

Luke 2:9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

- **The Glory of the Lord shone around them...The Glory of the Lord was physical as in burning bright light and emotional... the overwhelming feeling of the presence of God...**
- **When the shepherds saw this intense bright light and felt the presence of the divine... and someone standing there who was not there a second ago... they were terrified...**

¹⁰ *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.*

- **the overwhelming of the physical and emotional presence of God... is also humbly compassionate and approachable... The angel utters the words that Jews had longed for centuries to hear -- " Christ the Lord is born...and for all people///plural!!"**
- **The angel makws the grand announcement to servants and not the Served...because he is the good news for all people! and them personally:**
 - **He was for them! for the angel said you! and he is close only six miles away!**
 - **Messiah the Lord the word "Messiah" (anointed).. Lord." "Lord" master...**

and we can locate him...

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."*

- **we can identify him...he will look like any new Born...but he will be in a barn like setting... A manager would indicate the location in some kind of stable -- a Second Century legend indicates that this was in a cave. Makes Sense!**
- **A King being born would naturally be expected to be wrapped in the finest purple garments in the finest nursery money could provide for a beautiful crib, many attendants and servants...**

But wait there's more...Then we go from one angel ...to a great

company...thousands... ^{Luke 2:13} *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."*

- His favor good news was for all people...not sure how long the angels sang and praised...but when they were done...lets go...the light was lit in them...

LK 2:15 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."

- Whenever God speaks to us there is a what now to do with it... they had a choice..Go back to warming themselves by the fire...or look for the King
- **There is a spiritual truth here...the angels could have given them the address...but there is a role for anyone to play in God's drama...**
- *the light of knowledge God had given them they moved on it.. there is always enough light to take the next step... ..*

LK 2:16 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.

- The shepherds running through the town looking in every back yard looking for the right stable . ..after they found it.. they told Mary and Joseph what happened....
- Mary treasured and pondered this info in her heart...
- **The word "treasured" has the idea of counting things up, almost like making a list so that you will not forget anything.** It's what you do at the end of a very busy day and you want to make sure you don't forget anything that has happened. No doubt she thought about what Gabriel said to and Elizabeth...the Baby John the Baptist leaping in his mother's womb.... and how Joseph responded when she told him she was pregnant, and then the amazing dream Joseph had. She recalled the long, arduous journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and all the events of the birth itself, and now the surprise visit of the shepherds.
- **The word "pondered" goes deeper than "treasured."** It means to take those events then to go beneath the surface to try to understand what it all means and why it happened the way it did. She certainly had plenty to think about. No doubt she continued to wonder why God had chosen her, and I'm sure she pondered what was ahead for her newborn son.

- Pondering is hard work, which is why many of us never get around to it. And yet this is the perfect time of the year to do it. What better time than the end of December to ponder what God has allowed and what he has been teaching you? To look back over the last 12 months and consider the ways and works of God in your life and in the world around you?
- **Meanwhile** while she is worn out from child birth...looks like a hot mess and her babe in a manger!
- **When the shepherds leave ...they tell everyone they see what they saw...they cant help themselves! they had Glory of the Lord and received the light of the knowledge of God became one of us! Immanuel is with us!**
- They did not possess great theological knowledge, nor had position in society...and lived to a great extent unfulfilling lives...but a light was lit in them tonight!

later she would ponder what Jesus said he himself would possess...

JN 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world(plural). Whoever (singular) follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

- **Jesus claimed himself to be light... and his followers will carry the light of life in them**

MT 5:14 "You (singular) are the light of the world. A city us (plural) on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Jesus goes on to explain some things about this lamp that is lit ...**1) ...the lamp is lit by someone else...** for the shepherds the angels lit the lamp...**2) we are the lamp 3)the light in the lamp is Jesus... 4) the lamp is not lit to be hid... but to be visible to others**

The shepherds went back to shepherding...just like Mary nothing changed circumstantially...but her heart received treasure! ...the shepherds returned to shepherding nothing changed circumstantially...yet everything inside them changed... they have a new light! ...

Christmas is the dawning of the light of men! Immanuel ..God with us

I am not you and you are not me...but we have the same light in us...which will shine through my life as well as yours...

This is the great joy to the world the light has come... His grace extends to all...his truth his glory shines through us...

- Everyone take out their lights...if you have the light of Jesus turn on your light...

we will sing silent night...just as the shepherds ...were that silent night...then when we sing the people at the out most edges...the margins of the church turn and touch the light of the person next to you...then when they do turn on your light ...then turn to the person next to you and do the same...until all our lights are lit!

end with.....after song

These little lights will be turned off...but the light on you need to go on shining

Phil 2:15.....Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life.

end