

I Saw...the Bringer of Joy

12.3.17

Luke 2:1–21 (NIV)

1. The story of Jesus' birth is very visual.

A. All throughout the Christmas story, God shows off his Son to those around about him.

1. That's what you do with babies.
2. You show them off so others can admire them.
3. During the Christmas season, we celebrate God giving his son to the world to see!

B. This series is about 4 groups of people and what God showed them in the birth of Jesus.

1. Next week we will see Jesus through the eyes of the Magi who saw the King.
2. Then we will see Jesus from the eyes of Anna and Simeon who saw the Promise.
3. Then Mary and Joseph who saw the Son of God.
4. This week we want to see Jesus through the eyes of the Shepherds.

C. Before we move on, let me talk about why believers should celebrate Christmas.

1. There is a lot of information out there that says that Christmas was placed on a pagan holiday in order to draw more people.
 - a. There is very little historical truth to that.

b. And look around, there are many non-biblical expressions for Christmas such as Santa Claus and Reindeer.

2. But if Christians don't celebrate the birth of Christ, then who will?

a. We can't let Amazon and Walmart be the chief supporters of Christmas.

b. The chief supporter should be the Church as we remind the world that this holy season is not about new cell phones or cheap TVs.

c. This season is about God who gave us the greatest gift: eternal life.

d. Please don't get caught up with all that is wrong about this time of year, instead, become consumed by the celebration of Jesus' birth.

While we are reading this, pay special attention to all of the references to the Shepherds "seeing" something.

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2 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.

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 guest room available for them.

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. ¹² This will be a **sign** to you: You will **find** a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

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."

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."

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.

2. This week we start with an unlikely group of people.

A. The shepherds, according to the rabbi's of their day, were isolated from the world of the Jewish religion.

1. Many of you know that farming is a full-time job.

a. And raising sheep is harder than raising cattle.

b. As I've heard Bob say, "Sheep are born looking for a place to die".

2. Because shepherds lived a nomadic and fulltime life, they couldn't go to synagogue or the temple, they couldn't observe the Sabbath and other important parts of the Jewish experience.

a. This makes the shepherds an unlikely candidate for a visitation from God.

b. One thing I hope you are getting from our sermon series on Mark is how God loves the unlikely.

B. The Christmas story is full of unlikely moments.

1. An unwed mother becomes pregnant with the Son of God.

a. Magi are given the sign of the birth of the Messiah instead of the leaders of the Temple worship.

b. An old widow named Anna holds Jesus in her arms before she dies.

2. In a world obsessed with getting what it deserves, the Church must remind the world that the love of Jesus cannot be earned.

a. Nobody would have chosen the Shepherds for this invitation to see the Messiah.

b. They weren't on any bodies list.

c. But God loved them enough to invite them to come and see the Gift that he had given, Jesus made flesh.

d. The most dangerous thing the church can do today is to write off the people that Jesus loves.

3. Unlike the other people in the Christmas story, the shepherds are not watching for Jesus' coming.

A. It says they are "watching" their sheep.

1. Mary knew Jesus was coming.

2. The Magi or Wise men had a star they were following.

3. Simeon and Anna were anticipating the Savior.

4. But the shepherds were watching their flocks.

5. In other words, they were working.

B. Many of our greatest moments with God happen when we are doing what we are supposed to be doing. Vv 8

1. You may not see parenting as glamorous or spiritual but God can encounter God powerfully in those moments when you are doing what you are supposed to be doing.
2. You may not see how God can speak to you in your workplace, so you believe that God can only speak to you at church.
3. But God moments can and will happen wherever you are, while you are doing what you are supposed to be doing.
4. When you approach your work with a Spirit-led expectation, you don't have to wait till Church to encounter God.

C. The Christmas season is a season of expectation.

- a. We anticipate gifts.
- b. We dread seeing our in-laws.
- c. Christmas becomes a season where, as Christians, we expect to hear Christmas sermons, Christmas songs, and all the things connected to this season.

2. Christians are to be expectant year around, not just at Christmas.

- a. We anticipate the Lord's return.
- b. We pray, with expectation, for healing, deliverance, and the power of God.
- c. We look forward to worshiping and meeting with God and with each other.
- d. Christmas is simply a public display of the hope and joy Christians should have year around!

3. But what about those who aren't expecting anything?

- a. What about those who no longer believe in Jesus?

- b. What about those whose ideas of Christmas are fully wrapped in the advertising of Amazon, Walmart, and Lowes.
- c. What about those who approach the Christmas season without hope, without joy, and without expectation?
- d. These people don't need to hear us debating or arguing about whether we should celebrate Christmas or not.
- e. These people should hear us declaring the message of the Angels, "Do not be afraid, we bring you good news that causes great joy".

4. What the Shepherds saw when they saw Jesus was the "Bringer of Joy".

A. Can you hear the voice of the proud and loving Father?

- 1. Come and see my Joy!
- 2. Hear the voice of God say Come and see him.
 - a. Now He is wrapped in cloths and lying in a borrowed manger.
 - b. But someday he will be wrapped in the clothing of a King and sitting at the right hand of God.
- 3. Come and see the baby, who today was born in weakness.
 - a. But someday he will arise from the dead in power,
 - b. And he will return in victory.
- 4. Come and see this baby, my dear shepherds, who is the bringer of JOY!

B. In each of our 4 sermons, we find that each group of people sees Jesus differently.

- 1. And for whatever reason, God invites these shepherds to see the baby eyes of Joy.
 - a. Maybe they needed some hope.

- b. Maybe they needed to know their life was not in vain.
- c. Maybe they needed to experience a joy that could overcome their pain, their rejection, and their anonymity.

2. Whatever the reason, we find this principle for us today:

a. God calls out to unexpected people and invites them to see unexpected joys.

b. Who would have thought that these shepherds would be given the pleasure of viewing the Messiah with their own eyes?

a. These men were prohibited to go to the temple.

b. These men had no place in the worship of their God.

c. So God calls out to them and brings them joy!

5. Jesus brought joy not because he was a baby but because He is the Lord.

A. Babies bring joy.

- 1. It amazes me how a baby can make adults do crazy things.
- 2. Babies bring joy out of people.
- 3. But those babies grow up.
- 4. And by the time they are in junior high, those same kids aren't bringing the same kind of joy anymore!

B. It wasn't Jesus' present condition that brought the Shepherds joy but the promise of what He was to do.

- 1. The Angels announced that Jesus was the Messiah, the Lord.
- 2. This is where the power of joy lies.

C. Joy can't be found:

- 1. In a new baby,

2. In a new relationship,
3. Or in a new gadget.

D. Joy is found when we make Jesus the Lord of our lives.

1. Why?
2. When Jesus is boss/Lord He makes the decisions.
3. When Jesus is Lord He provides for our needs.
4. When Jesus is Lord He heals our bodies.
5. When Jesus is Lord He makes a way for us to God.
6. We don't earn this, buy this, or have to pay a subscription for it.
7. Instead, we receive this as a gift and as a joy.

6. This morning, maybe you feel like an unlikely candidate for joy.

A. If so, that's ok because the Shepherds were too.

1. Maybe you are running low on joy.
2. Maybe you have run out of hope.
3. Maybe your sense of expectation has been lost and replaced with the spirit of Scrooge or Mr. Grinch.

B. Today, let me declare that JOY is available.

1. God's love for you is greater than any other gift you have ever had.
2. And that gift is not given just once a year but every day, every minute, and every breath.
3. Today, we want to pray with you.
4. Today, we want you to experience Jesus who is the bringer of Joy.
5. And we want YOU to bring joy to those around you.

Luke 2:17–20 (NIV)

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....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.