

Luke 2 Devotional

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Verses 1-5

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. (Luk 2:1-5)

The providence of God is an amazing thing to consider. So often we take it for granted, but when things happen that are just "too coincidental" to ignore we are struck with the mighty workings of His providential power in our lives.

Here we have an example of how God's providence worked towards fulfilling the OT prophecies about Christ being born in Bethlehem. There are many prophecies that unbelievers think Christ forced to happen...but some, like these before His birth, are not possible to explain from a humanistic perspective.

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. (Mic 5:2)

What wonderful evidence we have of Jesus being the Christ promised in the OT! What a blessed condition we're in to have a faith that is not divorced from reason, but rather one that is strengthened by reason.

Too many today set reason and faith at odds with each other. But this is not the Christian faith. We are told that growth in knowledge and faith give us maturity in Christ...

until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, (Eph 4:13)

Praise God that you have been called to a faith that is a reasonable faith. A faith that we can defend with evidence and not merely with emotionalism. When asked for the reason of our hope, let's give it with reason. Tell them that the tomb of Christ is empty! Tell them of the many OT prophecies that were fulfilled in Christ! Tell them of the eyewitnesses to His miraculous life, death, and resurrection!

...in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, (1Pe 3:15)

Verses 6-7

And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luk 2:6-7)

This is the scene that probably most think of when they think of the birth of Jesus. Mary and Joseph are in a stable with a wooden manger for a crib in which the baby Jesus would lay. Around them are shepherds who were told of the birth of the Savior by angels. This scene often gives us a warm fuzzy feeling, but we rarely look beyond the picturesque beauty. The stable would have been dirty and foul smelling because of all the animals. Jesus was actually laid in a feeding trough. It was cold with no beds – very uncomfortable. Not the kind of place any of us would have liked to have been born in let alone to give birth in.

But that is not the major thing that seems out of place with this scene. The thing that seems wrong is that baby Jesus should not be in the stable in the first place. After all - He is God, the great King, the one who rules over all. It seems strange that He would even come into our sinful world at all. But that's what He did - because of His great love for us. But since He came shouldn't He have at least have been born in a palace or something? Something seems very wrong about God being born in a stable. He could have arranged things differently - after all He just has to say a word and the world comes into being. With a word he could have made different arrangements. Luke tells us why Jesus was born in a stable - "...because there was no room for them in the inn." Cf Luke 2:7

Why Did God Allow This? Let's look at the journey to Bethlehem. They came because there was to be a census. Mary and Joseph came to an inn. Because so many had come for the census there was no room left. The inn itself probably wasn't very nice as Bethlehem was a small town. It must have been hard for Mary and Joseph.

Have you ever gone on a trip and not been able to find a vacancy at a hotel? It's frustrating! Imagine after a long trip only finding a stable to stay at. God could have changed that, but He chose not to do so. God in Jesus was coming to His people. God desires fellowship with us. And yet we seem to reject that fellowship. We see it over and over again in the OT. We see it in the people of Israel who had been in bondage to Egypt. God came to them thru Moses and thru miracles to rescue them. He led them thru the desert in a cloud during the day and a fire at night. He had them build an ark to remind them that He is with them. But they rejected Him. They would rather be free from God than be free in God. At every turn it seems that they kept rejecting God's leadership in their lives. They had no room for God in their lives.

In all of this God had a plan to send His Son, to come in the flesh so that He would die for their sins and take their place on the cross. But even after Jesus took the punishment for our sins, people still reject Him today. And God knew that Jesus would be rejected, *Isa. 53:3 - "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not."*

The fact that there was no room for Christ's birth at the inn was a sign that there was no room for Him in this world. He was rejected at His birth, He was rejected at His death, and He is rejected today. Yet silently, as a lamb, He gave His life and he looked out and said "Father, forgive them"
After all of that, is there any room for Jesus?

There doesn't seem to be much room for Christ in the world we live in. The world tries to take Christ out of Christmas. The world says that there are too many other things to do at Christmas. Many say there is no room for God in this modern, fast-moving, self-sufficient, self-seeking world. They say that they no longer need His law, His love, or His sacrifice for us.

We all need to ask ourselves if we have room for Jesus in our lives. The bottom line is that when we reject Christ's Lordship in our lives it's because we refuse to relinquish the throne – we want to be God.

But God keeps coming back to us even though we reject Him, but we need to be warned that there is a limit as to how many times we can reject Him. We never know when we will breathe our last - then it will be too late. There is a time when God says "enough."

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. (Joh 3:36)

The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. (Joh 12:48 ESV)

And so Christ comes to us. We are the innkeeper of our hearts. Let us get off our throne and open the door of our heart to let Him come in.

Verses 8-12

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." (Luk 2:8-12)

Two things jump out in this passage. 1) The lowliness of the witnesses that the angel gives the message of the Christ being born to...2) The lowliness of the birth of our Savior.

Shepherds were considered untrustworthy and inadequate. So much so that they were not permitted to give testimony in the courts of law. Yet they are the ones that the angel proclaims the greatest message of all times to....God has taken on the nature of man to become the Savior of men!

Sometimes folks think that if they're not in the official ministry of the church that they can't serve Christ fully. But consider that no matter what position God has placed you in, if you're sold out to Christ you can be of full use to Him. The homeless man who tells people the Gospel is more a worker for the Kingdom than a minister who twists the Gospel to suit his own purposes.

If God can use these untrustworthy shepherds for the greatest news on earth, He can use anyone. You see, it's not our position that's important...it's God's position that's important. It's His power that enables any good to come from our service to Him.

Also consider the humility with which Christ came into world. He left Heaven with all its beauty; He left the riches and glory of Heaven to be born, taking on humanity. Not only did He give up the praises of the Heavenly host and the glory of it to take on humanity, He came forth where the animals were kept...in the lowest of circumstances.

Consider that Christ didn't only take on humanity...which would be humble enough...but He took on the form of a servant. Christ served His own, and He did so to the point of dying the terrible death on the cross. So terrible, not because of the physical pain, but because the cup of His Father's wrath was poured on Him for our sakes.

Knowing that Christ, who deserves so much honor and adoration, humbled Himself in such a way...how ought we to walk in this world? Do we who deserve the chastisement of God because of our sins, walk in humility or pride? Christ deserves everything, and yet gripped hold of nothing so that He could save us. We deserve nothing, and yet all too often take a tight grip of worldly treasures that will profit nothing in the end.

Let us strive to walk as Christ walked, in humility, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Understanding that nothing good dwells in us except for Christ through His Spirit. And let's loosen our grip on the world that we might grip Him more tightly.

Verses 13-14

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Php 2:3-8)
And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (Luk 2:13-14)

As the angel tells the shepherds of the birth of Christ, a great multitude of other angels suddenly appear and praise God. Notice the two things that they say in their praise – 1) Glory to God; 2) peace among men.

Consider that with Jesus coming into the world and taking on human flesh, He is coming as the Savior. He's not coming in judgment, but rather to reconcile the elect...

If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. (Joh 12:47)

The Gospel begins its full realization with the birth of Jesus to the virgin Mary. And it is this same Gospel that brings both glory to God and peace to men. The purpose of all creation is to bring glory to God; and it's in Christ that He is most glorified.

Consider that in God's providence mankind fell into sin in the Garden. Why would God plan for man to sin? Again, we must look to the purpose of creation for our answer. God is glorified more when more of His attributes are revealed. Without the fall of mankind we would never have known the following characteristics of God...

- Mercy towards the Hell-deserving elect - *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isa 53:6)*
- Justice against the Hell-deserving reprobate - *Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Rom 1:32)*
- The extent of His love towards us in taking on the nature of man to live and die for us...only to be raised again - *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. (Joh 15:13)*

Rather than seeking to pry into the hidden counsel of God regarding why some are saved and others are not...let's rejoice that He saves any of us at all! We must trust in His wisdom and that what He has planned will come to pass to the end that He would be brought much glory. And as He is brought glory we can love His plan because we seek His glory as well.

Verses 15-20

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. (Luk 2:15-20)

After the angels visit the shepherds they are compelled to act upon what the angel told them. Heavenly visitations always lead to Gospel-driven action.

Two examples come to mind: Moses and Gideon...

And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." (Exo 3:2-3)

Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating

out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. ...And the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?" (Jdg 6:11-14)

After Moses saw the angel of the LORD he was moved to deliver God's people from the oppression of Egypt. With Gideon we see a similar visitation...which eventually led him to deliver God's people from the hand of their oppressors. All this was a shadow of what Christ would do for His people in delivering them from the oppression of sin, death, and the Devil.

When our minds are focused on the things of God we are compelled to serve in the things of God. Consider how this rule of focus works in different areas of life...

Those who set their minds on drugs are compelled to serve the appetite that it creates. Those who set their minds on sexual immorality are compelled to serve the lust that it creates. Those who set their minds on themselves are compelled to serve their own selfish interests before the interests of God and others.

This is a true statement – "What we set our minds on is what we serve."

Is your mind set on heavenly or earthly things? Is it set on matters of the flesh or matters of the spirit? If you have a heavenly mindset that compels you to serve Christ and His kingdom, then you are doing well. If you have an earthly mindset that compels you to serve a different master, then realize the position that you're in, repent, and turn to Christ.

May God direct our hearts heavenward even in the midst of the daily busyness that we are faced with.

Verses 21-24

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." (Luk 2:21-24)

One of the purposes of Christ coming into this world was to perfectly fulfill the Law. Something that we are required to do, and yet something that we don't have the power to do. As Adam represented all of his posterity before God, and therefore all of his children are corrupted by his...so Christ represents all of the elect before God, and therefore all who are His are holy by His holiness.

In this passage we see Christ fulfilling the law of purification...not that He needed to be cleansed. Rather He is representing us, who need purification, and therefore submits to this aspect of the law for our sakes.

Christ Himself tells us that He came to fulfill the Law, not to abolish it...

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. (Mat 5:17)

You see, our righteousness does not come from keeping the Law. Rather, it comes from trusting in Christ and that fact that He kept the Law for us...

[I am found in Christ], not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith-- (Php 3:9)

How do you look at God's Law? Do you look at it as a way of earning God's favor or love? If so, you are replacing the righteousness of Christ with your own righteousness; clothing yourself in a filthy garment rather than with Christ...

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. (Isa 64:6)

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Gal 3:27)

May we use the Law of God properly, not as a way of making God a debtor to us, but rather as the means by which we show God our love for Him...

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. (Joh 14:15)

Verses 25-33

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. (Luk 2:25-33)

Because Simeon was a righteous and devout man he was waiting for the consolation of Israel. He knew, as the OT believers knew, that there was going to be a fulfillment of the OT shadows in the Messiah who was to come. The Messiah who was prophesied in the OT...as early as the fall in the Garden. They didn't know about Christ as intimately as we now do, but they understood that there was a Christ who would come to save His people. And as they exercised this faith in Christ they were saved, just as we are saved by faith in Christ.

After Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden, God killed an animal to cover their new-found nakedness. So from this early point we see God telling us that as sinners, we must be covered by the shedding of blood. All of the bloody rituals in the OT have their fulfillment in the blood of Christ. This is one of the reasons that circumcision, a bloody sacrament, was replaced with baptism.

In Simeon we see a great example of what a believer's focus should be on. He was devoted to God, and as such he placed his focus on the redemption of God's people.

There are two ways that we can apply this to our lives - 1) Our focus on the redemption of God's people through the preaching of the Gospel; 2) Our focus on the consummation of God's redemption in glory.

If we are focused on the redemption of God's people, then we will take great care in reaching the lost for Christ. God's given us the privilege of being part of His plan to bring the elect into His family, and yet all too often we treat this privilege as a burden. May it never be that we see such a blessing as a curse!

If we are focused on God's redemption, then we will have a mindset that is heavenward. Our hope rests in the consummation of all things in Christ. We're not satisfied with setting our focus on earthly things that perish with time. Rather, we are only satisfied with having our minds rest on those things which are eternal in glory. It's so easy to get distracted with worldly pursuits. Whether it's work, entertainment, education, or anything else that has its root and goal in this world, we must look past all of this and look unto our great reigning King.

Christ rules even now from His throne in Heaven and we are God's children in His kingdom. How small-minded we are when we set our hopes on temporal earthly things while Christ our King sits on His everlasting throne in glory!

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col 3:1-3)

Verses 34-35

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." (Luk 2:34-35)

Firstly we notice that Simeon spoke to Mary and not Joseph. It is a most important doctrine that though Mary is the mother of Jesus, God is His father. And though Joseph is charged with helping to raise Him, he is in no natural sense the father of Jesus.

Christ will, in fact, be the fall and rise of many, in that both salvation and damnation have their focal point in Him. Those we put their faith in Christ have salvation...those who reject Him are condemned to damnation.

And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken." (Isa 8:14-15)

As Christ is appointed for the fall and rise of many, so we are a tool to such an end as we diffuse the fragrance of Christ in this world...

For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? (2Co 2:15-16)

How strong of a fragrance of Christ are we?

Are we so afraid of being the stench of death among the reprobate that we have lost the sweet smell of life to those who are being saved?

There is no middle ground. We are either sold out to Christ or compromised to the world.

Thomas Brooks – *"A Christian's whole life should be nothing but a visible representation of Christ."*

Verses 36-39

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the

redemption of Jerusalem. And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. (Luk 2:36-39)

What strikes me in this passage is that even at the age of 84, Anna the prophetess is serving the Lord with such veracity. Our culture tends to consider the elderly as a group that has done their work and are now just waiting to die. But the Scriptures give us a very different picture of the elderly. They are to be a vibrant part of the Church, serving Christ all the more with the wisdom that they've gained from their many years on earth. They are to serve Him with a singleness of heart that comes, as with Anna, when they are no longer encumbered with the cares of a spouse and children.

Consider that Moses was 80 years old when he went to Egypt for the deliverance of the people of God. Aaron was 83 years old when he spoke to Pharaoh with Moses. Caleb was 85 years old when he drove out the Anakim from his land because he was still strong to fight the Lord's battle. Abraham was 100 years old when he had Isaac, the son of promise. Anna was 84 years old, serving God in the Temple, and being a testimony to Christ after His birth to Mary.

No matter what our age, no matter what our physical limitations, let us strive to serve God by His power and bring much glory to Him all the days of our lives!

Rather than making excuses for not serving the Lord with a singleness of heart, we are encouraged to...*not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. (2Co 4:16)*

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