

Christmas and the Church

Worship

Luke 2:8 – 20

I. Intro

- A. Finishing up messages on Christmas and church – relationship between the church (people of God) and the birth of the Savior
- B. Previous messages: Preparing the way for Lord's return; Jesus familiar with our suffering as he suffered while on the earth, ultimately being crucified for our sins – Jesus, man of sorrows; insignificant greatness – the Lord making the small great, doing great things for kingdom of God no matter how small or insignificant we may think we are
- C. Today: very obvious as far as how birth of Christ relates to the church, the body of Christ – talk about worship
- D. Main point: To really experience true worship, there must be real, genuine commitment
- E. **Illustration:** Commitment to favorite college football team; commitment shown through purchasing team products (clothing, pictures, logos, memorabilia), attending games – unshaken, unwavering commitment no matter how good or how bad team is; another example – being a Miami Dolphin's fan
- F. **Illustration:** the account of a college man walked into a photography studio with a framed picture of his girlfriend. He wanted the picture duplicated. This involved removing it from the frame. In doing this, the studio owner noticed the inscription on the back of the photograph: "My dearest Tom, I love you with all my heart. I love you more and more each day. I will love you forever and ever. I am yours for all eternity." It was signed "Helen," and it contained a P.S.: "If we ever break up, I want this picture back."
- G. That's illustrative of the amount of commitment most people show when it comes to their experience of worship – corporate or individual
- H. Look at what this passage tells us about genuine, Christ-centered, God-fearing, God-honoring worship experience
- I. **READ Luke 2:8 - 20**

II. Worship is Universal

- A. Right after birth of Christ, notice to whom this good news of Savior's birth came to first: **REFER v. 8, 9**
- B. Last week, looked at what might be thought of as insignificant God can use for greatness, referred to: 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 (NIV)

²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God

chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are,

29 so that no one may boast before him.

C. Paul told believers in Rome: Romans 12:3 (NI)

3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: **Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought**, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

D. Many churches who, whether intentional or unintentional, put limits on who is permitted to participate in their worship experience for whatever reason; because of the “makeup” of their church, or reputation their church has in the community (or at least the reputation they think their church has), or because of traditionally what their church has been, many churches have become “protective” of who they accept in their worship service

E. But understand the news of Christ’s birth didn’t come first to the upstanding of the community, didn’t come first to the governing leaders of the community (the mayor, or city council, or county commission), didn’t come first even to the religious leaders of the community – the angels (multitude of heavenly hosts) proclaimed this good news (v. 10: Greek used is verbal form of the word for Gospel) to shepherds

F. Common for shepherds of Bible to be described as low-class, social outcasts – wasn’t necessarily true, but job of a shepherd was not one of most sought after occupations of Bible times

i. **Wasn’t glamorous, prestigious job**

ii. **Many times involved dirty, filthy responsibilities (imagine whole job involved dealing with animals – sheep were stupid animals)**

iii. **Involved danger**

iv. **Involved long hours**

v. **Because of the nature of the job, shepherds were not the most respected or admired people**

G. But these were people God chose to first tell about the birth of His Son

H. v. 20: Reaction of the shepherds immediately after they saw the Christ-child – they returned back to their fields, flocks, jobs, worshipping (they didn’t go immediately to church or the synagogue)

I. Worship is for All people; the church (body of Christ) isn’t made up of just certain kinds of believers, it’s made up of ALL believers and followers of Christ no matter class, social status, culture, job; it’s not one church for one group and another church for another group

J. **Ephesians 4:4-6 (NIV)**

⁴ There is (**how many?**) one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called--

⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism;

⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over (**who?**) all and through (**who?**) all and in (**who?**) all.

III. **Worship is Selectively, Centrally Focused**

A. **REFER v. 13, 14:** ... *Glory* is attributed to, ascribed to ... *to God*;

Question: Who/what could glory have been given to? To Mary or to Mary and Joseph (they were the parents), to the owner of the stable, to the star that marked the place of Christ's birth, to Bethlehem, to the Jewish nation because Jesus was born a Jew, or directed to a combination of all the above

B. **v. 20:** Shepherds left the place ... *glorifying and praising God* – for what? ... *all the things they had heard and seen*; notice the focus of the worship and then the reason behind the worship

C. In many churches, the worship of the people may be selectively, centrally focused but the focus is misdirected; in many churches the focus among many of the people is *How long is the worship going to last, or when will the preacher hush up, or I'm tired, I'm hungry, Hope we're done in time to beat the Methodists to the restaurants, I hope I'm home in time to watch the game, etc., etc., etc.*

D. The attitude of the shepherds wasn't, *ok we found this baby, satisfied our curiosity, let's get back to work or let's go get something to eat, we're starved*; it was *glorifying and praising God* all the way back to their fields, their place of employment

E. **v. 19:** Notice Mary's response to all this – she *treasured and pondered* (meditated upon) *all these things ... in her heart*

i. Certainly, this event meant something to Mary because this was her baby and all she had experienced and gone through to get to this point

ii. But it was so much more ... what the angel told her when it first appeared to Mary: Luke 1:35 (NIV)

³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

iii. Then later during pregnancy she visits her cousin Elizabeth who is also pregnant with a child who is John the Baptist, Mary breaks out with worship in song: Luke 1:46-49 (NIV)

⁴⁶ ... "My soul *magnifies* the Lord

- 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
 48 for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on
 all generations will call me blessed,
 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name.
- iv. **Mary *treasured and pondered all these things in her heart* because she knew she had been especially chosen by God to fulfill His plan and promise for all mankind**
- F. **People of God we too have been especially chosen by God to also have a part in fulfilling His plan and promise for all mankind by bringing Christ to our community and the world**
- G. **So, our worship, whether corporate or individual, is to be selectively and centrally focused on God and His Son, Jesus Christ because we have been especially chosen by Him as His children and because of great things He has and continues to do for us**
- H. **“To God be the Glory” words: *To God be the glory, great things He hath done; So loved He the world that He gave us His Son ...; Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done; and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son***

IV. **Worship is both Personal and Shared**

- A. **Look again v. 17, 18, see both personal and shared aspects of worship; REFER v. 17, 18**
- B. **REFER to passage in Hebrews 10**
- i. **READ v. 19, 20: To enter into a time of worship is to literally enter into the Most Holy place which is the presence of God which is made possible to the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross for you and me (personal)**
- ii. **READ v. 21, 22: The head, Great Priest, over the church, the house of God is Jesus Christ Himself and worship is about drawing near to Him for cleansing and purifying from all unrighteousness (personal)**
- iii. **READ v. 23: Clinging tightly to the hope we profess in our Lord and Savior (personal and shared)**
- iv. **READ v. 24, 25: Encouraging and motivating each other to love and service in the name of Christ, never neglecting the privilege of gathering together; more important today than ever because “the Day” of Christ’s return is getting closer (shared)**

V. **Close**

- A. **Now come to time for response to experience of worship**

- B. For some response may need to be surrendering heart and life to Christ as Lord and Savior for the first time; God's free gift of salvation is for ALL people who would choose to believe**
- C. For some response may need to be renewal of devotion and commitment to Jesus Christ and new perspective, attitude on worship of Him**
- D. For some response may need to become part of a church that is serious about a selective, centrally focused worship experience, and a personal and shared worship experience of Jesus Christ the Lord**