

Sermon Study Guide

12.13.2009 – Unexpected: Change



UNEXPECTED CHANGE

WEEK OF DECEMBER 13, 2009

DISCUSSION: TOGETHER AS A GROUP

1. We have probably all heard about an exciting or significant event and wished aloud that we could have been there when it happened. Can you remember such an occasion? Perhaps you have had that feeling while watching a documentary about an important event on the History Channel. Just for fun, take turns completing this sentence, "I would love to have been there/been a participant when _____!"

SCRIPTURE READING: LUKE 2:8-20

⁸And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ^[a] the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

¹³Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

¹⁵When 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."

¹⁶So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

FOR DISCUSSION

- Luke's record of the birth of Christ is unique from Matthew's (the only other record) in the sheer number of seemingly marginal characters that he mentions while telling the story. Zechariah, Elizabeth, the shepherds, Anna, and Simeon are mentioned nowhere else in the Bible. Scripture is inspired by God (even the genealogical records!), and there must have been a reason why God moved Luke to include these characters.
2. Why do *you* think these characters were included? How does the inclusion of the angel's announcement to the shepherds and their trek to Bethlehem enhance our understanding of the story?
 - To really grasp how unusual this is, it helps to understand the social status of shepherds in the ancient world. Being a shepherd was the most "blue-collar" of blue-collar jobs. You may remember that David (later to be King David) was the youngest of Jesse's sons when God sent Samuel to Jesse's home to anoint the next king of Israel. Being youngest in those days meant being the least significant. What was David doing? Herding sheep! In Joseph's time, it was part of Egyptian culture to despise shepherds. Shepherds were among the least important, least influential people in the ancient world.
 3. So with that in mind, why would the angel take the time to specifically announce the birth of God's Messiah to *shepherds*?
 4. Have someone read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; then re-read Luke 2:15-17.
 - God has a way of disrupting the ordinary, mundane existence of ordinary people to invite them to participate in His story. Some of the ones that we know about include Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, and his brother Andrew. There are countless others we've never heard of, including many in our time. In fact, it could be said that every believer has been called from an otherwise meaningless existence to participate in God's story.
 5. Has there been a time when God has disrupted your life for the purpose of bringing you into His continuing story? How did it happen? How did you feel about this "disruption"?
 - We are called into God's story! What is the story? You can hear it in the message of the angel to the shepherds. Hear the words, "Good news," "great joy," "a Savior has been born to you," "Glory to God...and on earth peace...." We are moving ever closer to the day when all who believe in

God's Messiah, Jesus Christ, will live in eternal, unbreakable peace. That sounds like a cause for great joy!

6. We get to be present, not only witnessing, but actually participating in God's work at God's invitation. We are each given unique roles in His story, but they all center on the announcement of a simple yet life-changing message. Close by taking a few moments to think of the people around you who desperately need this good news—and thank God for the privilege of sharing it with them!