

Why Jesus Came – Give

Jesus came to teach us to give.

One of the great things about Christmas is giving.

At the end of our celebration we watched the movie, Little Women.

In her book, Little Women, Louisa May Alcott wrote,

“Christmas won’t be Christmas without any presents.”

In our celebration of Christmas giving is an important part.

I like the idea of a day in which we buy something special for someone else. Someone said this last week;

“It’s Tuesday ... two days before all the men go shopping!”

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

1. The Decree

Caesar Augustus gave a decree -- “an imperial edict”

Luke 2

- 1 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.
- 2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.
- 3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city.
- 4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,
- 5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child.

Return to your ancestral home – lineage of David who was from Bethlehem – 85 to 90 miles away – mountainous journey.

Mary was pregnant and very close to giving birth when they made the journey to Bethlehem.

God was using a pagan king to fulfill a prophecy:

MICAH 5:2-5

2. The Birth

Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

- 6 While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.
- 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

It was very unusual to turn away a mother who was about to give birth.

It was normal to have a midwife, to have help, to be surrounded by family and waiting friends nearby. Mary did everything herself.

G. Campbell Morgan writes,

“Think of the pathos of it. ‘SHE BROUGHT FORTH’; ‘SHE WRAPPED HIM IN SWADDLING CLOTHES.’ It was very beautiful, but oh, the pity of it, the tragedy of it, the loneliness of it; that in that hour of all hours, when womanhood should be surrounded by the tenderest care, she was alone. The method of the writer is very distinct. She with her own hands wrapped the Baby round with those swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger. There was no one to do it for her. Again I say, the pity of it, and yet the glory of it to the heart of Mary.”

Jesus humbled Himself, or emptied himself of His glory when He became a man. In utter humility Jesus was born as an infant of a poor woman, who was rejected from a bed-and-breakfast, and was birthed in an animal shelter, ‘LAID IN A MANGER.’

3. The Appearance

While Mary was giving birth the scene changed to a hillside of darkness and stars, of sheep and shepherds.

At nighttime shepherds were alert to animals and dangers to their flocks. But they weren’t expecting the appearance of a glorious angel.

- 8 In the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

- 9 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.

The angel was frightening, but even more, the glory, like a liquid light, flooded with waves that knocked the shepherds off their feet. At the dedication of Solomon's Temple when the glory of God appeared no one could stand; all fell to their faces. To simple shepherds the appearance of the angel and the glory of God were 'terribly frightening.'

4. The Announcement

To the humblest of people came a glorious announcement:

- 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people;
 11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
 12 "This *will be* a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Imagine the thrill of hearing the angelic message that the long-awaited Messiah had arrived – born in Bethlehem.

5. The Praise

The shepherds had barely gotten past the appearance of the first angel and the bright light of glory that was with him when they were overwhelmed with the appearance of the multitude of the heavenly host and their great praises.

- 13 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,
 14 "Glory to God in the highest,
 And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

In their excitement the shepherds left to search for the newborn Savior.

After a long wait the baby finally arrives...

6. The Confirmation

- 15 When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds *began* saying to one another, “Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.”
- 16 So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.
- 17 When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.
- 18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.

Other than a few shepherds Jesus birth was known to only a few.

His arrival wasn't with honor or notoriety or pomp, but with humility and obscurity until He accomplished salvation.

7. The Continuation

After Christmas what is left? After party clutter, wrapping paper, empty mess, memories, that feeling that it's all over until next year...

- 19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.
- 20 The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

Paul writes,

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”

(2 Cor. 8:9).

C. S. Lewis wrote, “In the Christian story God descends to re-ascend. He comes down, down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity ... But He goes down to come up again and bring the ruined world up with Him...”¹

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (Touchstone, 1996) p. 148.

Contained in the Christmas announcement is a gift that continues to give because Christ who came to save the world will one day return to rule the world.

- 6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
- 7 There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Isaiah 9:6-7