

Our Christ: His Humility and Glory

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[0:00] To the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2. The Gospel of Luke, chapter 2. It's really great to have you all here with us this morning. I'm thankful to be part of a church that can! and is willing to meet together on Christmas Day.

It can be a bit of an odd thing. And for many churches, it's an impossibility to meet. The setup and the teardown and all that is encompassed. The churches that don't have meeting spaces, it'd be difficult to pare things down the way that we can do on a Christmas morning.

So I'm glad that we're able to and that people are willing to. So thank you all of you for being here today. I hope that our time together will bless your Christmas Day. Thankful for the kids.

I know we have some guests with kiddos with us that don't normally do this. We're glad to have children in the service with us. So let them be loud to a point. It's okay. I'm still mic'd as I normally am.

So if the mic'ing confuses you with such a small crowd, we do have video and sound across the hall. I think it's turned on across the hall anyway. If you are having a catastrophe and you need to escape but still would like to hear the preaching and the music, you're welcome to do that.

[1:11] It's now being turned on for across the hall. So Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas is a thing that we say many, many times in the month leading up to and to today.

I think last night I said it a hundred times and this morning I've said it many, many more. To be merry is to be full of cheer or good feelings.

Merry Christmas is a wish of joy for you for the Christmas season. But for a lot of people, the experience of this holiday is not an experience of joy.

That's largely because we often measure our joy in terms of happiness based on our circumstances. Lots of things that make us happy this time of year.

Sam gets up and makes from scratch. Bless her on Christmas morning. My brain just went blank. Cinnamon rolls. And they're wonderful, right?

[2:08] From scratch. And they're allergy free for my sake and for the sake of the boys. And they're fantastic. And we get to see family that we haven't seen for a while. And of course we get to open presents. So lots of circumstantial things that make us joyful.

And there's lots of circumstantial things that can rob the joy from such a holiday. People experiencing loss or tough family situations or food that doesn't turn out so great.

I was reflecting on the joy that our kids experience this time of year. I have a six-year-old and a four-year-old and now a seven-month-old who has no idea what's going on.

But the six-year-old and the four-year-old have been counting down the days. I've seen children do this. They're so expecting. You may remember being a child and feeling like Christmas would never come.

It's two weeks away. And then considering that the way I feel now about Christmas often is that it can't come late enough. Like just put it off for another couple of weeks because there's so much to do.

[3:10] And we've been running around and getting all the preparations done. And I went to bed at midnight last night. And I was up at 5 a.m. this morning trying to get everything done for today. And I want to put it off.

But I think the opposite should be true. If we're looking to the circumstantial things, that's the normal experience. Kids, it's all about the toys. It's all about the joy and the cookies and all the stuff that's coming in those regards.

But for adults, it's this work that we have to go through to get ready for this day. Some of you have probably experienced adding a service to your Christmas morning. Added some stress to the day.

I know it did for me. But if our joy comes from where it should come from, I think the opposite should be true. I think that the experience that my kids have of the joy of Christmas coming, right? Because as much as we try to pump this is all about Christ, they're still really looking forward to the presents. To the temporal things. But we have an eternal thing that we're rejoicing in together.

[4 : 10] I think if our minds are set right towards this holiday, right? Our joy should be increasing. We should be as adults longing for the day to come. That we can celebrate the birth of Christ.

And so, it's my intention this morning that we would set our minds and find joy in an enduring reality. That God has loved us in Christ.

My hope as we take a look at the first bit of Luke chapter 2 is that we will marvel at the arrival of God incarnate. That our affections for Jesus Christ will be warmed this morning.

And that those affections will flavor the rest of this day. So, our text for today is Luke chapter 2. And I will read verses 1 through 14.

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.

[5 : 12] 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. 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 clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. 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 great 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 clothes and lying in a manger.

[6 : 19] 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.

Beloved, this is God's word to us. It was written for his glory and our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

In the hope of marveling at Jesus' coming and warming our affections this morning, I just want us to make two observations from this text. There's much that can be said about the text.

We're going to try to compress it and keep it short this morning. So just two observations from the text. Number one, the humility of Jesus Christ's coming. And number two, the glory of Jesus Christ's coming.

So firstly, let's look at the humility of Jesus Christ's coming. Jesus had a humble beginning. The first seven verses are about that, right?

[7 : 23] We can note and try to understand the circumstance of Joseph and Mary's travels. This is the first year I ever really stopped to really consider what it would be like to be newly married, very newly married, and have a wife who is pregnant and to pick up and take a journey.

Silas was five months old and we went to Memphis, right, which is a seven-hour drive. Not that big a deal. It took us nine hours and it was miserable.

Absolutely miserable. This was a much more epic journey that they took. And they did it because there was a census going on. But it's important to understand that this census was a census that was put in place in order for there to be a poll tax.

And a poll tax was simply a tax put on the Jewish people by Rome, a denarius per person per year that had to be paid just for the privilege of being a Roman citizen.

And so Caesar Augustus wanted to count up how much would be paid in that year. And the Jews and other people that had been conquered by the Roman Empire saw the poll tax as a particularly offensive tax because it was a way that Rome said to them, We own you, right?

[8 : 43] Come to the town that you were born in and be counted so that we can be sure that you pay to us what is due to us just because you're now part of the Roman Empire.

In fact, not long after this census takes place, there's a revolt, a major uprising in Israel that was, of course, squashed. But it was about this issue. This was the issue that enraged the Jewish population to revolt.

And so it wasn't a pleasant thing they were going to do. It wasn't the normal thing. It wasn't like, well, time to go for the census again to take our regular trip back to Bethlehem. This was something that was being imposed upon them. And in fact, the decree had actually gone out. It feels like from the text that it had gone out that week or that month. And so they said, oh, gosh, we weren't expecting this, but we have to go. But it had actually gone out four years prior. It seems that Joseph and Mary were procrastinators and were holding out. [9 : 43] There may have even been a deadline, and they had to get to Bethlehem to be counted to find themselves in good standing with Rome. So this is the circumstance of their traveling.

It's an oppressive trip. It's a trip they do not want to take back to the town of Bethlehem. Bethlehem itself is a seemingly insignificant town.

A minor on the map. Micah 5.2, which is where the prophet predicts where the Christ will come from, says, But you, O Bethlehem, Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth the one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from old, from ancient days.

So they're taking a journey they don't want to take to a seemingly insignificant town. It is humble in every respect. And it was a journey. It was an arduous journey.

Eighty-five to ninety miles. The text says that they went down to Bethlehem. What does it say up to? I'm getting my head flipped in my mind.

[10 : 50] It is Christmas morning, isn't it? Someone help me. Up to. Okay. That's right. Because I'm looking at the map in my brain because it is south. They went up because they had to actually climb in elevation to that place.

So it would have been an uphill journey to the town of Bethlehem, just south of Jerusalem. And they're in the northern part of the kingdom in Nazareth. So a humble beginning to arrive in such a place.

And when they get there, and we know the story, right? We get there and there is no place for them to stay. The town, this tiny town, is overrun. The inns are packed full. People are staying with family members.

There would have likely been more Roman guards in the town helping take the census out. We get this picture in our mind, at least I do at times, of the quaint, stable environment that they go to, that they get turned away.

And some kind innkeeper says to them, well, I've got this place. This place that's nice and warm. And the animals are there and they're happy. You guys have the nativity set up in your house and it just seems so cute.

[11 : 57] And beautiful in that way. What was more likely is that these inns would have had stables as part of the grounds. And people would have gone upstairs and stayed above.

They would have kept their animals there. Their donkeys would have been dropped off. And this would have been a cold and dreary and smelly, miserable place. It's a humble place.

It's not a place set out on the hill with the beautiful stars in the background. And what a beautiful, quaint place to have a child. This was not that at all.

I am convinced that just because Jesus lived a sinless life that Mary gave birth to him in the way that women give birth, that she was affected by the fall as well.

Luke's record of her giving birth is one sentence and she gave birth. And I'm thankful that he spared us the details of how that came to pass. But I'm sure it was not an easy thing. I'm sure it was a frightening thing for her.

[12 : 53] I'm sure people staying in the inn were not pleased that someone was giving birth to a baby downstairs in the stable. It's humble in all respects.

Jesus also had a humble societal standing. He was not born to a king and a queen. He was born to a man and a woman.

A man who was a carpenter. A woman who married a carpenter. Seemingly insignificant parents. Joseph was a carpenter in the tiny town of Nazareth.

To add to the fact that he was a carpenter. He was a carpenter in the tiny town of Nazareth. And we find this out in the biblical narrative when Jesus was rejected in his hometown in Matthew 13.

They say, isn't this Jesus, the son of the carpenter? They find him insignificant in that way. Now the word that's translated for carpenter can mean a lot of things.

[13:51] It can mean craftsman. He may have been a fine builder of homes. But we know that Joseph was not a wealthy carpenter. If we look later in Luke chapter 2, Jesus is presented in the temple as he was meant to be.

And a sacrifice is made for Mary's purification as was ordered by God in our Old Testament. If you look at verse 24 of chapter 2, it says, And to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord.

A pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. This is a citation from Leviticus 12.8. And if you don't go and look at Leviticus chapter 12, you wouldn't know that the proper sacrifice to be given, the primary way in which purification was made for a woman who had a child, was a lamb.

That was the way they were meant to do it. But God made a provision if you couldn't afford to buy a lamb. And that was that you could give this lesser sacrifice of a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.

So there's some evidence right in our text today that Joseph was a carpenter and not a wealthy carpenter in the little town of Bethlehem. Jesus' societal standing was nothing impressive.

[15:11] Jesus had a humble ministry. He had a humble ministry. In our text today, we get introduced to a group just called the shepherds. Verse 8.

He has humble admirers. Shepherds, shepherd keepers. These were not people of high standing in the society. This was the night shift.

These people drew the short straw. They were out in the field sleeping with the sheep to keep them safe because they were not of high standing. His admirers on the night of his birth were humble.

He ended up with humble followers. Jesus called apostles to himself. They were largely made up of fishermen. We know at least seven of them were fishermen. That's likely that more of them were.

We know one was a tax collector being Matthew. These were people that were not seen as illustrious and valuable in the society. Matthew would have been hated by the Jews as a traitor in the collecting of taxes.

[16:15] And Jesus had a humble goal. Mark chapter 10 verse 45 says, The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Christmas should be the most joyous of Christian holidays except Easter. Easter should be the most joyous of Christian holidays second only to Easter.

Wes has said it well this morning and we've been saying it for the last month. The celebration of Christmas should set our minds to the sacrifice of Christ and his resurrection on Easter.

Sam has challenged me, which is a challenge I think I'll take up, to write a kid's advent that begins after Thanksgiving, works us up to Christmas, and then takes us through Easter.

So we don't stop celebrating Christ. He comes and then we keep pressing on to this great high calling. The very reason that he came. Christmas is aimed at Easter.

[17:24] That's the point of Christmas is Easter. He came and he had a humble goal. A humble ministry, a humble societal standing, a humble beginning.

Isn't it peculiar the way God works in the world? It's an odd economy that he works with. God seems to accomplish everything in his kingdom in an upside down fashion.

I am so thankful for that. I'm thankful that I am insignificant and yet God can use me. Augustine, when he called St. Augustine or Augustine, if you prefer, I don't, but if you prefer, wrote, Man's maker was made man that he, ruler of the stars, might nurse at his mother's breast.

That the bread might hunger, the fountain thirst, the light sleep, the way be tired on its journey. That truth might be accused of false witnesses.

The teacher be beaten with whips. The foundation be suspended on wood. That strength might grow weak. That the healer might be wounded.

[18:38] That life might die. God has a strange way of working. And we should marvel at the way that the Savior of the world came, lived, and died.

In Philippians 2, verses 5-11, Paul exhorts us to humility in this way. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, he was God on earth, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

We call this the hypostatic union, right? Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man. Again, 200%. It's the only time it's okay to say more than 100%. 200%.

Verse 8, And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross, the worst kind of death.

But it doesn't stop there, right? Praise God. Jesus Christ comes as a servant. He's a suffering servant. But it doesn't stop there.

[20 : 04] Verse 9, Therefore, because of this, because of the way that Christ emptied himself, therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, one day, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

to the glory of God the Father. Which brings us to our next observation. So we observe the humility of Jesus Christ coming. Let's observe together, secondly, the glory of Jesus Christ coming.

Glory is one of those churchy words. Not knowing who would be here this morning. I'm not sure if you wrap your mind around what that means, because we use it in a lot of different ways.

We use it in different tenses, different parts of speech. To glory in something means to praise or to honor something. When we're speaking of God, when we're talking about glorifying God, it's not that we add to him more worth.

It's that he is worthy of our praise. So we're doing the thing that is right and proper, because God is worthy of being glorified in that way.

[21 : 26] So when I say the glory of Jesus Christ coming, I mean the praiseworthiness of his coming. The praiseworthiness of his coming.

On the evening of the birth of our Lord, an announcement is made by an angel. Verses 9-12. And then in a broadening sense, the announcement goes out, it gets bigger by angels in verse 13-14. There's a lot of notions about angels, what they are and what they do in the world. And I'm not negating much of that by what I'm about to say, but primarily the way that angels work in the world is they serve as messengers.

They get a message from God, and they come and they deliver that message from God to a particular individual. Familiar with the Christmas story, both Joseph and Mary and God's good mercy to them explains to them exactly what's happening as Jesus is conceived immaculate. It's a virgin birth, immaculently. It's Christmas. I told you what time I went to bed and what time I got up, right? So angels are messengers of God.

[22 : 41] John Piper, I like this in a very Piperian way, say angels were created for Christ's everlasting glory and for our everlasting joy. The angel of the Lord appears to these shepherds, these lowly shepherds in the field.

Verse 9. And the glory of the Lord shines around them. I don't fully comprehend what that means. If you see this illustrated, it's bright light.

I think there's some hint of that in the Scripture, that that's what the glory of God will look like. In Revelation 21-23, John writes of his vision of the new Jerusalem and says this, And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. It's Christ Himself. The glory of God is Christ, and He lights up the new Jerusalem. So the glory of the Lord shining could have just been bright, bright light, but whatever it is, it's a tangible glory, right?

This praiseworthiness now, this noun being used, right? This thing that's meant to call attention to, the greatness of God.

[23 : 54] The shepherds see this physically, the glory of God. And so, have we? How? Have any of you had an angel visit you with bright white light?

I'd love to talk to you about that. How have we seen the glory of God? 2 Corinthians 4-6, Paul says, For God who said, Let light shine out of darkness has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Christ Himself, right? God made manifest on earth. We have not been with Christ, but we have the Word of God that attests to Christ.

We get to open its pages, its inspired pages, and have our hearts illuminated by peering in and seeing Christ and all of His work, the effect of it.

But you can imagine if you saw glory in this way, that rightly so, the shepherds are filled with fear. I think we would have been as well. And the angel says to them, verse 10, Fear not, fear not, because, for behold, because, I bring you good news, great joy, that will be for all peoples.

[25 : 12] Proclamation of the angel was good news. Same word here, Greek word that we use for gospel. Good news. Gospel news. Most commonly used in speaking of battle, people would stay back in a city and an army would go out to battle, and whatever the outcome of the battle was, a runner would be sent back to proclaim to the city what had happened.

We were defeated. Hang on tight. The army's going to come. Or, good news, right? We were victorious. You are safe. This is the way this word was commonly used in this day.

Proclaim good news. It's a victory declaration. And it's good news of great joy.

It's good news of great joy. Beloved, this is why we don't do Santa at our house. The celebration, I would suggest to you, of Santa is a lesser joy.

It's a temporal joy. It's an imaginative joy. We have fun imagining stuff with our kids, right? We do, and we play games, and we goof around.

[26 : 27] That's great. But that's temporal joy. Jesus Christ brings great joy. Jesus Christ brings eternal joy, right? Something that we can hang on to for forever.

That's what we want to give our kids. That's why we don't do it. We feel like we're not robbing the magic of Christmas when we take those things out. We want to maximize the great joy that is Christ.

So all the things we do, the food that we eat, and the gifts that we give, and all of those things need to be pointing us to the great joy that the angels are proclaiming here.

It's a great joy, and praise God, for all the people. All throughout the Scripture, God has said to the nation of Israel, His chosen people, My glory is not just for you.

And He makes these merciful extensions to peoples of the earth. We're preaching through Acts right now, the life of Christ family church, Jalaneke, and we're seeing this global glory go out, right?

[27 : 34] Just from Jerusalem, turning from the Jews and going out to the Gentiles. We're the beneficiaries of that, beloved. Any of you are of Jewish descent, you may be. You may be of that bloodline.

I'm not. Praise God, right? That the good news of great joy is for all the people. What a proclamation. Verse 11 kind of is the crux of all of this.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ, who is the Messiah, the long-awaited Messiah, the Lord.

So right here in the proclamation, of the angels, they're saying this birth is ultimately aimed at salvation for God's people. This is the direction it's going.

Christmas points to Easter. Luke 19.10, For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. The angel then gets really practical.

[28 : 36] This will be a sign for you. Verse 12 is how you're going to find Him. He'll be wrapped up as a baby should be wrapped up, but He'll be lying in a manger. It gives them what they need to go find Him. We find out later that they do in fact go find Him and worship Him.

Before they do, a heavenly host joins the purpose of this angel, this proclamation of good news, of great joy for all the peoples. Suddenly, verse 13, with the angel a multitude.

Multitude is most often used in the Bible to speak of a number too great to count. I have a felt board and I'm felt boarding this morning and I only had five extra angels.

It was a sad multitude. This is not that kind of multitude. It's a massive number of heavenly hosts praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased.

The angels glorify God because of the peace that Christ brings. They're looking forward to the resurrection of Christ. They're joining in this song, this proclamation of good news that a Savior has been born.

[29 : 51] This peace they're speaking of is not good and happy feeling. It's not circumstantial stuff. It's not getting along with your parents when you go home or your estranged kids that come and visit.

It's not a circumstantial peace. It's a peace with God that they're speaking of. Christ seeks to glorify God by saving His people.

Peace among those with whom He is pleased. How do we please God? Faith in Christ. Put on Christ's righteousness. We have our penalty for our sin paid by Christ on the cross.

Christ seeks to glorify God by saving His people. John 18, 37 when Jesus is on trial with Pilate for the first time and Pilate says to Him verse 37, so you are a king?

Jesus answered, you say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth.

[30 : 55] everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. What is the truth that He's talking about? It's the good news of great joy that He's referring to.

It's the message of the kingdom of God that He had gone around and preached up to this point. It's this great high point in redemptive history that He's about to fulfill as He's having this conversation with Pilate.

John 8, 47 so previously in John's Gospel whoever is of God this is Jesus speaking hears the words of God. Here's the truth. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.

So, peace among those with whom He is pleased. Christ seeks to glorify God by saving His people. And the result of this Philippians 2, 9-11 Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

So I hope this morning that a short look at this text has aided you in marveling at the arrival of God incarnate and that your affections for Jesus Christ have been warmed this morning and that those affections will flavor the rest of your day.

[32 : 22] Let's pray together to that end.