

12/24/23 Christ Fellowship

## How Would Jesus Celebrate Christmas? Part 2

Luke 2:1-20

Well, I'm afraid I did it again. I forgot to go to the Neiman Marcus Christmas catalog in time to get you anything for Christmas again this year. That makes 56 years straight now that I have forgotten. There's always next year, right? You can only hope. But in case you need some last-minute ideas about what to get that person who has everything, the Neimans catalog is the place to go.

Here's a little sample. I found this that looked good. The milk chocolate potato crisp duo which is basically two Pringles cans filled with chocolate bars in the shape of Pringles chips. Only \$50. A faux-fur throw blanket for just \$350. It's not real fur and it's not real big but it is limited edition, so...A ribbed wool beanie with a faux fur pom on top. That's another \$340. For. A. Beanie! A four-pack of men's holiday socks are only \$75. Although I'm pretty sure Walmart has the same ones for \$12.

The catalog is filled with wonderfully expensive gifts that one might give to the person in your life that has good taste but no idea how money works. And if those small gifts just won't cleanse the palate of that money loving loved one in your life, Neimans has the ultimate gift, a 2024 Cadillac Carmen Celestiq, a beautiful electric car you can customize how you like it. It comes with all wheel drive and a glass roof priced to sell at just less than a million dollars and Neimans promises it will take your driving to the next level. They say you can customize it how you like. I wonder what the salesman would say when I told him my color of choice would be camo?

We are continuing with one more message in my series about how Jesus would celebrate Christmas and I wonder which of those gifts He would like. Talk about giving to the man who has everything! Jesus, who is God, owns it all. He created it all. He was there from the beginning and He will always be. So, if Jesus was with us in the flesh today, how do you think He would celebrate Christmas? Let's turn to probably the most famous Christmas passage in all the Bible and let's see what He got the first Christmas.

The original Christmas story is found in **Luke chapter 2** and I think it ought to be mandatory reading before Christmas gifts are opened in every house, especially if you have kids or grandkids. It is literally the reason for the season. So, let's read it right now but with the thought in mind of how Jesus would celebrate it this year with us.

Let's read **Luke 2:1-20** but this time I'm going to read it from a different translation. It's the very easy to understand version called "The Message." It's a direct translation from the Greek but easy to understand. Here we go.

*About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant. 6-7 While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel. 8-12 There were shepherds camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and **God's glory** blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger." 13-14 At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises: Glory to God in the heavenly heights, Peace to all men and women on earth who please him. 15-18 As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherds talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. **They told everyone** they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherds were impressed. 19-20 Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherds returned and let loose, glorifying and **praising God** for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told!*

Okay, somebody tell me, after hearing this story again, how you think Jesus would celebrate Christmas with us here this year. Do you think He would want Christmas presents like He got the first time - gold, frankincense and myrrh? Or do you think He would want a ribbed wool beanie from Neimans or do you think He would want something else? It's totally hypothetical. We don't know so there are no wrong answers...I guess.

I believe there are three things from this story that Jesus would want for us to give this year. And the first thing I see in this passage is glory. Look now at your version and see **verse 9** where it says the glory of the Lord shone around them. I like how The Message says it blazed around them! God's glory blazed. You probably get asked questions from people

about why God does some things. Why does God allow suffering? Why did God allow Jesus to die? Why did God create mosquitos? Why does God forgive me when I ask? Those are all good questions and they all have the same ultimate answer. It's the same answer for every "Why does God..." or "Why did God..." or "Why would God..." question. The answer is for His glory.

We all kind of understand glory. We all kind of know what it means and could give a good definition and our definition might include the words perfection and splendor and greatness. And those are definitely included in the word glory when we are speaking of Jesus. But in this instance and several others in scripture, the word used is "doxa" and it always is used of God and it includes those other words but always refers specifically to God's grace and power. Grace and power.

Think about it. In **John chapter 2**, when Jesus performed His first miracle by turning water into wine, it was because of His grace and power. He had the power to do it but was it absolutely necessary? Were people going to die if He didn't perform that miracle? No. He did it because He showed grace to the people at the wedding. Grace is not getting what you deserve and the wedding party didn't necessarily deserve for Jesus to make all that great wine. But He did it. And He did it for His glory.

Or what about when Jesus called Lazarus back from death in **John 11**? He had the power to do it, no problem. But did Lazarus deserve it? Better question is, did his family deserve to see him again? No. But Jesus showed them grace and He did it for His glory. In **Romans 3:23** it says that we all fall short of God's glory. We don't have His power or His grace. If we did, we wouldn't sin like we do which makes us fall short.

I've said many times that it makes all the difference that God is all-powerful and He loves us because if He was just all-powerful but didn't love us, He would have gotten rid of us a long time ago. And if He loved us but didn't have power, that would be nice but what can He actually do for us? But God has all power and He loves us so what in the world are we going to worry about? And He shows His love, His grace and power to us and we see His glory.

So, what does Jesus want from us this Christmas? He wants glory. He deserves glory. We need to show Him that we see it and we recognize that it is His grace and power that makes a sunrise. We don't deserve for God to start every day with reds and yellows and pinks and all different shades of blue but He does it and we take it for granted most days because it happens every day. But God does it for His glory.

Or what about a baby? A sunrise isn't that big of a deal for you so what about a baby? What about your own body? A body that heals itself and grows and gets bigger with a brain that continues to learn. Your body is amazing. Yes, I know it's falling apart but even that makes us long for home in Heaven and God puts that in us for His glory.

God's glory – His grace and power – blazed all around those angels as they sang. And look at **verse 20** again. *The shepherds returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen.* And that is interesting because we sometimes use those two words almost interchangeably. Glory and praise – they're similar but there is definitely a difference when we are worshiping God and that leads us right into the next thing I believe Jesus wants from us this Christmas. He wants glory but He also wants that praise.

C.S. Lewis once said, *"I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed."* It's the reason we shout and yell at a football game. It's part of the enjoyment. We praise what we enjoy.

I heard the supposedly true story of a young evangelist who was called to preach a revival at a Presbyterian church in Omaha, Nebraska. The first night of the revival, the young man passed out helium-filled balloons and excitedly told all the people that when the joy of the Lord came over them to just let the balloons go and let them float to the ceiling as an offering of praise. And at the end of the service everybody still had their balloons in their hands.

Does that sound like what the shepherds were doing? Were they sitting quietly after hearing the angels? No! They were joyful in their praise. They "let loose" and praised God like those Presbyterians should have let loose of their balloons. In **verse 13**, the angels were praising God. In **verse 20** the shepherds were praising God. We saw last week that the Magi in **Matthew 2** were overjoyed when they worshiped God.

The Psalms are full of praise. You can turn to almost any of them and read, *"Praise the Lord!" Psalm 135* says to *"Praise the name of the Lord...for that is pleasant."* And that is really what the word means. The word being used here in **Luke 2** is an expression of delight and joy from knowing who God is. Knowing who God is. That blows my mind that all-knowing, all-powerful, all-seeing, infinite God would not just allow us but encourage us to know Him better.

So, He came from all the glory and praise in Heaven and became a flesh and blood man and through His life, death and resurrection, provided a way for us to know Him better and forever. Look, I know some of you don't care for the holiday season for any number of reasons but thinking about who God is and what He has done through that little baby in the manger is a reason to smile and laugh and have joy.

This world has no lasting joy and when they see it, they will probably, first, make fun of you because you are different. But then when they see that you don't lose that joy or that peace that a relationship with God brings; when they see that you don't just glorify God on Sundays and you don't just praise His name at church but it is a lifestyle that you lead...they will want to know more. And that is the third thing that God wants from you this Christmas.

He wants you to tell Him you see His glory, His power and grace and you praise His name because you have joy in knowing Him. But lastly, He wants you to tell others. Look at **verses 17-18** in our passage again this morning. *They* (the shepherds) **told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child.** They told everyone they met.

I used to go to church with a precious lady who loved to tell everybody she met about Jesus. I saw her one Sunday morning and she told me she had gotten the opportunity to lead a man to the Lord that past week and she was just beaming. I asked her where she met him and she said that she actually didn't meet him. She just talked to him on the phone. She said he worked for the internet company she used and was helping her with some computer problem she had. Evidently, they worked through several issues and the man said she needed to reboot her computer and while she did that he would just hold on the line. So, while neither of them were doing anything and just waiting for the computer to boot back up, she asked him about his relationship with the Lord and one thing lead to another and he accepted Jesus to be his Lord and Savior right there on the phone.

A slow computer may just be a minor inconvenience but it perfectly illustrates why **sometimes** God allows bad things to happen to us. What if the reason why your car is running rough is so you can talk to your mechanic about Jesus? What if one of the reasons you are sick is so you can talk to your doctor or nurse? I'm not saying that is always why bad things happen at all but maybe sometimes it is. Bad things are going to happen for any number of reasons. Why not use that opportunity to make God look good while you go through it with the hopes of being able to tell somebody the Good News about Jesus?

When you live a lifestyle of giving God glory and praising Him all the time, at some point somebody is going to say, *"You're different. A little bit weird, but different in a good way*

*and I want what you have.*” What are you going to tell them? We have talked before about the need to live a life that lives out the Gospel and how vital that is to being able to witness to somebody. But at some point you have to say the words. We have talked many times about the importance of having your personal testimony ready to go but once you convince them that Jesus has changed your life and He can change their life too, what are you going to say?

The shepherds didn't know everything. They just told what they knew and it says that everybody that heard it was amazed or impressed. You don't have to know everything either but you need to be able to tell the Good News. You need to be able to work it into a conversation that Jesus, who was born as a human baby, grew up to live a perfectly sinless life. Then, because God the Father said that sin requires death, Jesus died on the cross for our sins. And all you have to do is believe it. But that belief will change your life. It will change it when you believe and for the rest of your life.

If you have never submitted your whole life to God before and asked Him to forgive you of all your sins and to come into your life, why don't you do that right now? Then you too can truly give Him glory for His power and grace. You too can praise Him joyfully for allowing you to know Him. And then you too can tell others about how they can have what you have. Do it right now as the music plays.