

Introduction

I have lived a blessed life indeed! Even though there have been some isolated events that have taken place in my life that have been difficult, all in all, I haven't had it bad compared to a lot of folks. I KNOW I'M BLESSED!!!

This Christmas will be my 59th Christmas. I have some great memories of many of those past Christmases. (e.g. Family reunions)

Now those made Christmas extra special, but our focus has always been on the LORD this time of year! (e.g. Happy Birthday Jesus cake; reading of the Christmas story; the focus on the spiritual aspect and not the worldly aspect)

So, it is easy for me to stand and tell folks what Christmas means to me. All of the peripheral things are great! But, Christmas is about celebrating the birth of my LORD and Savior Jesus Christ into this world!

But we know that Christmas means different things to different people. If we were to stop some folks who are out and about during this time of year and ask them what Christmas means to them we know we'd get all kinds of answers! Most of them that totally leave out the real meaning of Christmas!

To merchants it is the busiest time of the year. Stores stay open longer. They hire extra people to accommodate all the shoppers. They hope it translates into profit enough to see them through the lean times ahead.

For some employees it means a Christmas bonus, a little more money in their pockets to pay for Christmas or to do the things they want to do.

For many it is a time of fun and parties. For children it is a time of impatience, with time seeming to pass so slowly, as they anticipate opening gifts on Christmas morning.

And we could go on with other things that are associated with Christmas that in and of themselves may not be bad as long as Christ is not overlooked!

Christ getting left out of Christmas reminds me of a story I once read.

Some folks who decided to throw a party to honor a very special friend. They sent out invitations, decorated the hall, and had the food catered. All the people came together at the designated time, but to their surprise, the guest of honor was not there.

Finally, they made the embarrassing discovery that no one had ever invited the guest of honor.

Do you think that ever happens at Christmas? We go through all the decorating, buying of presents, preparation of elaborate meals, but somehow the One who it is really all about is forgotten and left out!

One family tried to overcome that by putting an extra place at their Christmas table for Jesus, and calling Christmas, "*His birthday party.*" When one of their daughters was asked if she got everything she wanted for Christmas, she answered by saying, "No, but then it's not my birthday."

It isn't our birthday, is it? It's the Lord's birthday and it's a time to remember His birth and what it is supposed to mean to us. So let's read our text here in Luke 2:8-14.

The fact that God made the first announcement after Christ's birth to shepherds helps us to understand the real meaning of Christmas. "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,*"

Shepherds were at the opposite end of the social strata from King Herod and all the other influential people of the day.

They lived in the fields with their animals.

They weren't respected.

They had no power or prestige.

Yet, God's angel came to them and said, "*For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.*" Unto these shepherds a Savior was born.

In that one simple announcement God made known some very important truths.

I. GOD KNOWS US, AND WE ARE IMPORTANT TO HIM!

No matter who we are or how insignificant we may think we are, God knows us, and we are important to Him!

A. All Throughout Scripture We See God Honoring And Using People And Things That The World Often Overlooks Or Ignores. (1 Corinthians 1:26-28)

1. God used a young Jewish boy who was sold into slavery by his brothers and carted off to Egypt.

When God wanted to deliver a very special message to mighty Pharaoh, it was this slave, Joseph, who was brought out of the dungeon to interpret the message.

God has used and can use the lowly and despised to do great things for Him!

2. Jesus used a young boy who only had a little lunch to give.

There were 5000 men, plus women and children, who stayed late on a hillside one day, listening to Jesus. The people got hungry and the only food available was from this one little boy who came prepared. He had brought 5 little loaves and 2 small fishes with him.

But it was enough, because Jesus took that small lunch from this seemingly insignificant boy and fed the multitude.

God honors and uses people and things that the World often overlooks or ignores!

B. When God decided to select a mother for His Son, He didn't go to the fashion salons and beauty parlors.

He didn't go to those with the furs and diamonds and gold. He went to an insignificant village called Nazareth.

There He knew of a peasant girl. She did not dress in designer clothes. She did not have a sophisticated education. But she was pure. And God selected her to be the mother of His only begotten Son.

So when Christ came, He was not born in the finest hospital in Jerusalem, surrounded by gynecologists, nurses and assistants. But rather, He was born in a stable setting. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.

The world may look down its nose and say, "*That's foolishness.*" But Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 1:25, that "*the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*"

C. When God made His announcement, it was delivered to shepherds.

It is like what Jesus said in the Sermon on the mount, "*If God cares about sparrows and lilies, then how much more does He care about you.*"

Listen, if God cares about these lowly shepherds, surely we can see that He cares for us!

There are a lot of people in the world that need to hear that truth, isn't there? I'm not anybody special and I can assure you that I needed to hear it!

Husbands and wives who have been abandoned by their spouses need to hear it! Children who have been abused or rejected by their parents need to hear it! As do children who have lost a parent to death!

Lost souls on skid row who try to drink or drug away their fears need to hear it! People who are lonely need to hear it!

UNTO YOU!
LUKE 2:8-14

Anyone who has known the feeling of rejection, or of being left out or who has suffered loss needs to hear it!

Those to who the circumstances of Christmas brings feelings of hopelessness and depression need to hear the Good News that was brought to these lowly shepherds! Unto you a Savior is born!

GOD KNOWS US AND WE ARE IMPORTANT TO HIM!

II. OUR LIFE MATTERS, BECAUSE GOD LOVES US!

This passage teaches us is that our life matters to God!

- A. Can't you imagine that those shepherds must have sat around the campfire many times and wondered if life was really worthwhile or not.

Surely there were times when they thought, *"What difference does it make if we watch the sheep or not?"*

Maybe we wonder, too, *"What difference does it make if I get up every morning or not? It seems as if my life is an endless cycle of things that really don't mean anything. I just wonder if life is worth living at all?"*

When God came and made His announcement to shepherds, He was also saying to us, *"Your life is worthwhile. It is My gift to you. Therefore live every golden moment of it, because your life does matter to Me!"*

- B. You see, every life matters!
We should know that!

It's impossible to live, even for a few moments on this earth, and not influence somebody in one way or another. We are always influencing someone, either for good or for bad.

UNTO YOU!
LUKE 2:8-14

Some of you football fans may remember Bubba Smith? He retired from professional football quite a few years ago. Then, after he retired from playing football, Bubba Smith started making beer commercials.

In a magazine article about him, Bubba Smith said that he had never, ever drunk beer. Drinking any kind of alcoholic beverage just wasn't a part of his life. But he advertised it and felt good about his job. It was an easy job. It was an enjoyable job, and it paid a good salary.

Until one day when he went back to Michigan State, his alma mater, as the Grand Marshal of the Homecoming Parade. As he rode along the parade route, the crowd shouted the slogan of the beer commercial he was in.

What he heard from the crowd that day made him suddenly realize that he and the beer commercials that he made had had a tremendous impact on the students at Michigan State. And the message that they had gotten was that "It is all right to drink light beer."

Later, Bubba was in Ft. Lauderdale during Spring Break. He saw drunken college kids up and down the beaches, shouting the slogan of the beer he had helped advertise

*And when it came time to renew his contract, he refused to sign because he said that he didn't want his life to count for something like that. He said that there was a still, small voice in his mind that kept saying, "Stop, Bubba. Stop."
You see, everybody's life counts for something.*

Some years ago, a cartoon appeared in newspapers across the land. It pictured two farmers in Kentucky, standing in a field as snow fell softly. One turned to the other & asked, "Anything exciting happen today?"

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"Nah, nothing exciting," said the other farmer. "Oh, there was a baby born over at Tom Lincoln's home, but nothing exciting ever happens around here."

But that baby born in the home of Tom Lincoln one day became the President of the United States. He changed the course of history and liberated the slaves. One life can make a difference!

I wonder if there were people in Bethlehem on that night so long ago, asking, *"Anything exciting happen today?"*

Maybe they were told, *"No, nothing much. Oh, I hear some woman gave birth to a baby in a stable, but nothing exciting ever happens around here."*

Yeah, nothing except that a baby was born, a baby that changed the world.

No matter who we are, our life counts, our life matters.
Lives of shepherds and lives of kings, all are important to God.
GOD KNOWS US AND WE ARE IMPORTANT TO HIM!
OUR LIFE MATTERS, BECAUSE GOD LOVES US!

III. OUR FAITH MATTERS, TOO!

These Shepherds were men of faith. They probably had more faith than some of the scribes and Pharisees who went to the synagogue every day.

They believed in a Messiah. All of God's chosen people believed in a Messiah. When things got especially hard, during times of poverty, enslavement, and exile, the Israelites would think about the Messiah and God's promise that one day the Messiah would come.

They would pray over and over again for the coming of Messiah.

UNTO YOU!
LUKE 2:8-14

They prayed for hundreds of years, and they must have wondered, *"Is our faith worth anything? Does God hear our prayers? Does God keep His promises? Will the Messiah ever come?"*

There may have been some Jews who quit praying, some who quit having faith.

But when the announcement came to these shepherds, God was saying, *"Your faith matters, and it is not in vain. I am a God who hears and who keeps His promises. Now the Messiah has come, and I have kept My promise."*

How about us? Sometimes we become weary. There may be times when we wonder if it is worthwhile going to Church. There are times when we wonder if it is worth sacrificing for God.

There are times when preachers wonder whether what they are doing is worth it. They think maybe they ought to do something else. And some of them do. Sometimes, when I feel weary, I pray, *"Lord, why don't You come today? Why don't You come and take us all home, out of our misery and pain and hardship?"*

I've heard some of you say almost the same thing. We wonder if our prayers are heard. We wonder why He is waiting so long. We wonder if it is worth it all.

But one day He will come. He will come for all who have placed their faith in His finished work on the Cross for their sin!

He will come for His people. He'll dry our tears and take away our pain. There will be no more death, no more good-byes. Then we'll say, *"It was worth it. It was worth it all!"*

Are you going to be a part of that great day when He comes back? You can be! Why don't you come and we'll show you how!