

Series: ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS...

Text: Luke 2:41-52

Title: "To Be Astonished and Praise!"

Introduction: WELCOME, BMZ! Glad you're with us TODAY for "***ALL I WANT for CHRISTMAS...***" Now, you and I MIGHT KNOW what WE WANT for CHRISTMAS, but ... YOU GUESSED IT ... WE are going to TALK about what JESUS WANTS ***FROM US*** and ***FOR US*** as we CONSIDER CHRISTMAS.

MERRY CHRISTMAS! LUKE 2:1-7 = *At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ² (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. ⁴ And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. ⁵ He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. ⁷ She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.*

Leading up to Christmas, we've talked about WHAT JESUS would WANT FOR CHRISTMAS FROM / FOR US. SIMPLY, Jesus wants US to BE LIKE HIM ... CHRIST-LIKE. We've said He would WANT US to LOVE ONE ANOTHER ... AS HE LOVED US FIRST. It's UNCONDITIONAL. Then, HOW can we LOVE OTHERS in a CHRIST-LIKE WAY this CHRISTMAS SEASON? How can we LOWER OTHER'S STRESS? THINK of OTHERS? REGARDLESS of their RESPONSE, be OBEDIENT to The LORD.

Then, we talked about HAVING FAITH like MARY ... when she AGREED with the ANGEL to DO as SHE was CHOSEN to DO. Again, REGARDLESS of what JOE, Her FAMILY, her TOWN, her CULTURE THOUGHT, she would be OBEDIENT to GOD.

LAST Sunday, we talked about MARY SLOWING DOWN enough to PRAISE GOD for ALL HER BLESSINGS. TO PAY ATTENTION to HOW BLESSED SHE WAS!

I'm the YOUNGEST of FIVE SIBLINGS. I remember being a KID and on Christmas MORNING, my OLDEST BROTHER would WAKE US UP and be EXCITED to SEE what SANTA had brought. He would get us ALL EXCITED as WELL, though it was TOO EARLY in the MORNING.????????????????? And WHEN we would WALK INTO the FAMILY ROOM ... EVEN with ALL the HYPE ... I was ASTONISHED and EXCITED! I HOPE and PRAY OTHERS here have GOOD MEMORIES...

TODAY, as we THINK about GIVING JESUS what HE WANTS for CHRISTMAS, I BELIEVE HE would want us to BE LIKE the SHEPHERDS and the ANGELS on that FIRST CHRISTMAS MORNING ... **To Be Astonished and Praise God**

Listen, at JESUS BIRTH, He MOVED HEAVEN and EARTH ... LUKE 2:8-9a = *⁸ That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. ⁹ Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them.*

We'll come BACK to the SHEPHERDS, but I want to START with the ANGELS. When JESUS was BORN, it caused HEAVEN to MOVE! Heavenly ANGELS came to EARTH ... The MOMENT in HUMAN HISTORY of JESUS' BIRTH ...

#1 = Drew ANGELS from Heaven

Let's THINK about THIS ... What we KNOW of JESUS is He is the ALPHA and OMEGA, the BEGINNING, and the END. He is ETERNAL. He is THE WORD! The WORD was WITH GOD / WAS GOD, and ALL was CREATED THROUGH The WORD!

JESUS' EXISTENCE did NOT BEGIN in BETHLEHEM. JESUS LAYING DOWN of HIS RIGHTS and COMING from His THRONE in HEAVEN and BECOMING a BABY is what HAPPENED in BETHLEHEM.

The ANGELS KNEW JESUS, but they'd ONLY KNOWN HIM as KING of KINGS and LORD of LORDS ... In His RIGHTFUL PLACE. In HEAVEN. HOW they MUST have BEEN ASTONISHED at SEEING The **CREATOR** BORN as a **CREATURE** ... The WORD being BORN as a SPEECHLESS BABY!

Anyone here ever watched the movie, ELF? Does ANYONE else LOVE the SCENE in GIMBELS with the MANAGER ... "*SANTA!! I KNOW HIM!*"

IMAGINE the ANGELS that NIGHT ... "**JESUS!! I KNOW HIM!**" They ALREADY KNEW WHO He WAS! They KNEW HE was the SAVIOR of the WORLD, and this BIRTH was GOOD NEWS ... They UNDERSTOOD WHAT THIS BIRTH MEANT for the WORLD! Back to the Shepherd's FIELD ... LUKE 2:9b-12 = *They were terrified,¹⁰ but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.¹¹ The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!¹² And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."*

I LOVE THIS ... The ANGEL ANNOUNCES JESUS ... Then, "It's UP to YOU to FIND HIM! Your CLUE is: HE was BORN in a STABLE / CAVE with The ANIMALS ... He's CURRENTLY LAYING in a FEED TROUGH. Ready? GO!"

THEN, as if the SHEPHERDS are NOT SCARED ENOUGH ... LUKE 2:13-14 = *¹³ Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,¹⁴ "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."*

First, that is NOT just a HANDFUL of ANGELS ... it was a VAST ARMY of ANGELS PRAISING GOD. THEY UNDERSTOOD what THIS MOMENT in HISTORY MEANT for PERISHABLE HUMANS.

Then, LET'S NOT MISS ... "**PEACE on EARTH...**" NOT PEACE like WORLD Peace. And NOT PEACE for EVERYONE. This PEACE brings PEACE into the HEARTS of CERTAIN PEOPLE. WHICH PEOPLE? "...**To THOSE with WHOM GOD is PLEASED.**" With WHOM is GOD PLEASED? Those who LOVE HIM. And WHO LOVES HIM? According to JESUS, the ONES who OBEY HIS COMMANDS (John 14)! This is ONE CHAPTER AFTER (John 13:34) JESUS GAVE the Disciples a NEW COMMAND ... "**LOVE ONE ANOTHER, as I have LOVED YOU, you MUST LOVE EACH OTHER!**"

FOLLOW the COMMANDS of JESUS (HAS to BE FROM the HEART!) and GOD will BE PLEASED with YOU. And WHEN GOD is PLEASED with you, you will have HIS PEACE IN YOU. God's PEACE is about US ... NOT a GROUP of PEOPLE ... But INDIVIDUALS.

Follow God's WAYS with the RIGHT MOTIVE = PEACE. Let's Continue ... LUKE 2:15 = *¹⁵ When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other,*

“Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” JESUS’ BIRTH ...

#2 = Drew SHEPHERDS to Bethlehem

Listen, WE can LEARN a FEW THINGS from those LOWLY SHEPHERDS working NEAR BETHLEHEM that NIGHT. But FIRST, WHY SHEPHERDS?

SHEPHERDS were OUTCASTS in their SOCIETY. Their JOB made them RITUALLY UNCLEAN, so they could NOT GO to SYNAGOGUE or TEMPLE very often. They could NOT have their SINS FORGIVEN according to THEIR CUSTOMS. **They were US! SINNERS!**

BUT, ACCORDING to THIS NEW SAVIOR ... JESUS MAY as well get STARTED letting PEOPLE KNOW that THINGS will be DIFFERENT NOW. HE will do the FORGIVING and the SAVING ... and **HIS PRIORITY are THOSE who KNOW they can NOT SAVE THEMSELVES.** Like, SHEPHERDS! THIS IS The GOOD NEWS of JESUS!

He calls the poor and lowly by His GRACE ... JESUS IS: GRACE REVEALED!

LUKE 2:16 = ¹⁶ *They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger.* The “FOUND” in that VERSE suggests they had to SEARCH for the BABY. The SHEPHERDS FOUND the BABY, AFTER a SEARCH. They had a CHOICE to SEEK The SAVIOR of the WORLD or NOT. They CHOSE to ...

- COME See

They TOOK TIME out of their SCHEDULES ... PROBABLY had to find SOMEONE ELSE to WATCH the SHEEP for a WHILE. They PUT FORTH some EFFORT! It was like THEY were the ONLY ONES SEARCHING Bethlehem STABLES that NIGHT. They were NOT FOLLOWING the CROWD ... they were SEEKING JESUS!

And with SOME EFFORT on their OWN, they FOUND HIM! LUKE 2:17-18 = ¹⁷ *After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child.* ¹⁸ *All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished...* When we TRULY MEET the PERSON of JESUS (even today), we will START to UNDERSTAND how REAL He IS and HOW MUCH we NEED HIM ... Even though we did NOT RECOGNIZE our NEED for HIM BEFORE! AND we will UNDERSTAND how MUCH OTHERS we CARE about NEED HIM TOO! We CAN’T HELP BUT...

- GO Tell

The SHEPHERDS could NOT WAIT! They **“TOLD EVERYONE”!** Wait! WHO was **“EVERYONE”** for the SHEPHERDS. Well, if they were OUTCASTS in their CULTURE, the ONLY ONES who MIGHT LISTEN to THEM was OTHER OUTCASTS ... SHEPHERDS, TAX COLLECTORS ... SINNERS! We can LEARN SOMETHING from these SHEPHERDS!

They GAINED an UNDERSTANDING of the CHARACTER / NATURE of GOD. God is DIFFERENT from PEOPLE. His THOUGHTS are NOT OUR THOUGHTS. He FLIPS our LOGIC on its HEAD!

Think about JESUS. WHO HE WAS ... a FRIEND of TAX COLLECTORS and SINNERS (Luke 7 / Matt 11) ... OUTCASTS! I HOPE this BRINGS YOU HOPE TONIGHT. We ALL are SINNERS and NEED a SAVIOR. Around JESUS, we SINNERS can FEEL SAFE. He does the BOTH/AND, instead of the EITHER/OR. JESUS BOTH KNOWS EVERY ACTION and SIN ... our GUILT ... AND ... He EMBRACES US with HIS LOVE. BOTH!

NOT EITHER / OR. HIS LOVE SHOWS UP GREATLY by HIS GRACE!

MAYBE it would be WORTH taking time to SEEK HIM. SET ASIDE TIME to FIND OUT WHO HE IS ... Let’s FINISH ... LUKE 2:19-20 = ¹⁹ *but Mary kept all these*

things in her heart and thought about them often. ²⁰ *The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.* ¹

The SHEPHERDS CONTINUED to GLORIFY and PRAISE GOD ... my guess is ... the REST of THEIR LIVES!

YOU KNOW ... The BIRTH of JESUS REMINDS us of GOD'S PRIORITIES ... The POOR. The LEAST. The LOST. Think about MARY and JOSEPH (A Laborer from Nazareth). Think about The SHEPHERDS ... LOWLY. JESUS REMINDS us CONTINUALLY that He CARES DEEPLY about PEOPLE who are POOR and HURTING and LOST. This CHRISTMAS we have OPPORTUNITIES to CARE as WELL.

I LOVE your AMAZING GENEROSITY as we gave out GIFTS from our GIVING TREE to FAMILIES in OUR AREA. I LOVE the GENEROSITY for our ORPHANAGES in SE ASIA. Jesus SAYS that WHEN we DO for the LEAST of THESE (Anyone we are in a position to help), we DO for HIM. ***"Hello Jesus!"*** Here are SOME ... **(Show Video Here)** MATCH GIFT ...

Let's Pray!

Next Steps: *Memorize Luke 2:17-18*
Read Luke 1 and 2
Invite Someone to Worship with You

Hosting (Closing)

HEY, it has been a GREAT DAY here at BMZ... Glad you've been here with us!
In a moment, we are going to RECEIVE the OFFERING so please take this time to finish COMPLETING any information

- Or NEXT STEPS on your CONNECTION CARD (**FULLY FILLED OUT!!**)
- AND when our ushers come around to RECEIVE our OFFERING
- You can drop that card in the offering basket.

IF you are a First-Time Guest with us today

• We are so glad you joined us ... And we have a GIFT for you.
It's this book "**UNSHAKABLE**" and it's at the BACK TABLE / By the DOORS...

- all you need to do is HIT "**SEND**" your COMPLETED Connection Card

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As our ushers GET READY to come forward

- I just want to remind you ... STEWARDSHIP is DISCIPLESHIP ... we RECEIVE an OFFERING EVERY Sunday BECAUSE it's BIBLICAL ... AND it HELPS us GROW in our FAITH!
- STEWARDSHIP VERSE ... MATTHEW LUKE 2:14 = ¹⁴ "**Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.**"
- FIRST of our EARNINGS go back to the ONE who Blessed us in the first place! That's why WE/I do Automated Giving! I get paid ... the TITHE comes OUT FIRST!
- God's plan for BUILDING His Church was through TITHING and GIVING of the FOLLOWERS ... Share the GOOD NEWS! To REFRESH OTHERS!
- As Developing Followers of Jesus Christ, WE need to KNOW what the BIBLE says about GIVING ... NOT just what we THINK it should say.
- **MONEY is a HEART ISSUE.** And GOD wants what is BEST for your HEART! Listen, if GOD LOVES US so much that HE is willing to GIVE UP His OWN SON FOR US, WHY would GOD LEAD us ASTRAY in FINANCES?! USHERS ...
- Tomorrow: **ALL I WANT for CHRISTMAS... Is to MAKE HISTORY!**

"Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy)."

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