

**The Story of Christmas
Through the Eyes of Luke
Luke 2:1-20**

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Text Introduction: This month we are considering the Christmas story as told by the authors of the four Gospels. We have looked at Matthew's and Mark's account; today we consider Luke's account. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all give us a little bit different version. This is not contradictory, understand, but complementary. Luke gives us the most detail about the events that surround the birth of Jesus.

Text: In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered. ² This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³ So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town.

⁴ And Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, ⁵ to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ Then she gave birth to her firstborn Son, and she wrapped Him snugly in cloth and laid Him in a feeding trough—because there was no room for them at the lodging place.

⁸ In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: ¹¹ Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David. ¹² This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a feeding trough."

¹³ Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace on earth to people He favors!

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

¹⁶ They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the feeding trough. ¹⁷ After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard, just as they had been told.

Introduction: Years ago (1966 to be exact) *Reader's Digest* ran a story about a young boy named Wallace Purling who so wanted to be in the school's annual Christmas Pageant. The teacher knew that he wanted to be in the play, but really couldn't find a part for him. She finally decided that since he was bigger than the rest of the boys that he would look kind of like an imposing force as the innkeeper. According to the story, he was so excited about his part that he had to be stopped several times from running onto the stage before his part came up. We often see that kind of excitement in children when it comes to Christmas. Lest you think it is all about the presents, I wish that you could have heard as I did, our school children singing Christmas carols last Thursday in their Christmas chapel service. They especially liked singing, "Go Tell it on the Mountain." I wish that we could recapture something of that same wonder about Christmas.

Indeed there is a lot to wonder about when it comes to Christmas. Martin Luther got it right when he said, "The mystery of the humanity of Christ, that He sank Himself into our flesh is beyond all human understanding." Here's the plea of Luke's account of the Christmas story:

Don't lose the wonder of Christmas!

Let's begin in verse 19 and 20, then work our way back to the beginning of this passage. Mary treasured up (or pondered) all of these things and meditated upon them. Before her, the shepherds treasured these things. There was wonder. Before them, Elizabeth had wondered at her own baby "leaping inside of her" at the mere presence of Mary. Luke said about that greeting, "The Holy Spirit filled her prompting her to say, 'How could this be that the mother of my LORD should come to me.'" Before Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary had already begun their amazement, their wonder, at the words from the angels announcing Jesus' arrival. Luke's account helps us to not lose the wonder of Christmas. Several things related to Jesus' coming should stir up in us wonder.

Don't lose the wonder of the Past Event

- Jesus' birth was a prophesied event. All of the Old Testament prophets in one way or the other prophesied of the Messiah. Micah, as recorded in Micah 5:2, prophesied that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem. But Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, in the region of Galilee. No problem. All the house of David had to go to Bethlehem.
- Jesus' birth was a planned event. God is in every detail. There are no eternal coincidences.
- Jesus' birth was a purposed event. Most of all, the birth had purpose. Jesus was born to be our Savior.

There is a Christmas carol titled, "I Wonder as I Wander." Listen to these beautiful words.

1. I wonder as I wander out under the sky,
How Jesus the Savior did come for to die.
For poor on'ry people like you and like I...
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

2. When Mary birthed Jesus 'twas in a cow's stall,
With wise men and farmers and shepherds and all.

But high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,
And the promise of ages it then did recall.

3. If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing,
A star in the sky, or a bird on the wing,
Or all of God's angels in heav'n for to sing,
He surely could have it, 'cause he was the King.

John Jacob Niles is credited with being the composer of this carol. Niles admitted that the carol was not his original thought. He heard part of it sung in Murphy, North Carolina, in 1933 by a young teenage girl, Annie Morgan. The Morgan family led revival meetings all throughout the Appalachian Mountains. In Murphy, NC, they were basically being expelled by the police for being a public nuisance. Poor, they were basically living in the town square, hanging their wash on the confederate monuments in town. They begged to hold one last meeting in order to have gas money to leave town. It was in that meeting that Niles heard Annie sing. He paid her 25 cents eight times in a row so that he could get some of the words and enough of the melody to compose this hymn. Truly, this young girl, poor as she was, “wondered as she wandered.” Don’t lose the wonder of the past event.

Don’t lose the wonder of the Present Possibilities

- Joy—Christmas is an announcement of joy. But why? Because of the second possibility.
- Salvation—Salvation is the cause for joy.
- Peace—Salvation brings the peace—peace with God and peace with others.

Don’t lose the wonder of the Potential for the Future

If God can come as He did, accomplishing what He did, what else can He do?

Back in Luke 1 when the angel is first visiting Mary, Mary asked the angel, “How can this be, since I have not been intimate with a man?” The angel’s answer is filled with hope for us. “For nothing will be impossible with God.” Perhaps, for you, that is the exclamation point of this Christmas season. “Nothing will be impossible with God.”

So What?

- Meditate
- Worship
- Obey

Oh, and what about little Wallace Purling, the eight year old playing the part of the innkeeper. Folks in his town did not soon forget that year’s Christmas pageant. Little Wally remembered his first line. In his gruffest voice possible he barked out, “What do you want?” When Joseph and Mary asked for a room, Wally remembered his line, “Seek elsewhere! This inn is filled.” When the couple insisted that

something be done, Wally forgot his next line. Eventually, the teacher/prompter whispered, "No! Be gone!" Mechanically, Wally repeated, and the couple, as scripted, turned to walk away. But then, Wally, went off script. In the emotion of the drama being played out on stage, little Wally, sensitive to the need as he was, said, "Wait! Don't go! Come back! You can have my room!"

Don't lose the wonder! Perhaps, someone needs to say today, "Jesus, my heart is open to you. Don't go!"