

“Trust and Obey” (Luke 2:1-20)

Trust and Obey the mission God gives you.

Intro: Luke 2 is the announcement of “Good News” for All People!

Remember the good news you’ve received: landing a job, expecting your first baby, buying your first house, finally becoming a grandparent -- you can’t wait to share “good news.”

Luke 2 is the announcement of “Good News” for All People!

Prayer

2 At that time the Roman emperor, Caesar 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.

*Rome Rules <https://www.nazarethvillage.com/about/research-and-archaeology/first-century-travel/>

- Caesar Augustus took pride ushering in the **Pax Romana**
 - 200-year period of **peace and prosperity**
- Caesar’s empire of peace extended into Europe, Asia Minor which includes Judea, as well as northern Africa
- Roman Rd system 63,000 miles of roads connecting centers of government from Spain to Iran
- Letters could be delivered in 24 hours across a distance of 500 mi with a horse relay system
- Judea felt the impact of Rome’s Rule
- The Jewish people were monotheistic worshipping the one true God
- Other cultures quickly obeyed Caesar’s command to worship him as a god
- Each Governor made sure that people obeyed the Roman laws and paid their taxes
- Roman appointed governors made sure Roman law and taxation was enforced

- Rome recognized the “push back” from the Jewish faith and negotiated with the religious teachers of the law: the Pharisees and Sadducees
- Jews were allowed to follow their own customs and practice their own religion if they paid their taxes
- Collection of taxes supported the Roman empire and the Roman Army
 - There was continual tension between the Religious Leaders and the Roman appointed Governor.
 - With Roman domination, soldiers present in the cities, on the roads, there was a culture of intimidation and fear

Judea longs for “**Good News,**” the coming of the Messiah.

- The Jewish people pray daily for the Messiah to come and end Rome’s tyrannical rule.
- This would fulfill the OT prophecies they have read since they were young.
- **Micah 5:2** “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans^[b] of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

Tucked away in the northern Galilean hills is the small village of Nazareth.

- In this little hamlet there’s Good News:
 - Joseph is engaged to Mary.
- Looking forward to his wedding day
- Joseph by trade is a carpenter (Matt 13:55)
- Honest, hard working
- Matt 1:18 Joseph is a righteous man
 - V 2 Soon Joseph hears the mandate from the Roman Emperor: Caesar Augustus: a census to be taken of his kingdom.
 - Joseph is a descendant of King David -- David who killed Goliath, David father of Solomon. Yes, he will go to Bethlehem to be counted.
 - Mary returns from a 4-month stay with her relative Elizabeth.
 - Joseph can’t wait to see Mary, his bride to be -- but when Joseph meets Mary something is different -- “I’m pregnant and God is the Father.” (countenance of Mary, glowing, serious, joyful, expectant, how long does Joseph stand there processing this announcement.)
 - This would be good news if delivered a year later
 - Joseph’s immediate future becomes shrouded in doubt and uncertainty.

“**Good News**” suddenly becomes veiled in uncertainty.

- The Good News of an impending wedding is covered with shroud of doubt
 - Joseph wants to do the RIGHT thing.
 - He’s a righteous man of the house of David.

- Joseph decides to quietly divorce Mary to avoid publicly shaming her
 - Immediately after his decision **Matt 1:20 God gives Joseph a dream:**
 - **“Joseph, son of David, Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the Child for the child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will have a son and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save people from their sins.”** NAS She’s telling the truth!
 - My Immediate reaction? No way!
 - Mary has an Angel of the Lord appear to her; Joseph has a dream.
 - Joseph has to make a decision
 - A: go on and divorce Mary, make his own path, he can take another wife
 - B: leave Mary behind in Nazareth-- ostracized and ridiculed
 - C: forget about Caesar’s census based on a new tax plan
- No easy way out of this dilemma
- Joseph could have been overcome with fear.
- **How many times have you not taken a risk, or gone for something because you were discouraged or panicked?**
- How quickly do you interpret “fear” as a yield sign, slow down. Caution. Because I’m afraid -- this can’t be from God.
- **Struggle to trust God, and move through the Wall of fear.** That’s exactly what God is asking us to do -- place our confidence in Him and in His plan, His mission, and walk through our Wall of fear with Him.

***Trusting God is a struggle when you face the unknown.**

Story: Moving to Modesto: Job, Church Plant, Sale of House, align

- The week after we move, banks greatly increase stipulations for mortgage
- Middle schooler stops eating for 3 days – bullying at school
- High schooler must adapt to a very small charter school their Sr. year
- Attend a fund raiser . . .
- There’s no church plant
- 3 months

The knowledge that God’s way is best does not exceed my struggle.

- **God waits for you to step forward with Him into the unknown.**
- I have to take a step forward with God to discover that what he offers in each moment is exactly what I need.

Blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence (Jer 7:17).

***Trust God and obey**

- Recognize Joseph’s humility: he obeys God

- Takes Mary as his wife, although he will likely be scorned by family and friends in Nazareth.
- He agrees to parent a son that is not his.
- ***Obedience isn't convenient, it's blessed.**
 - Blessed are all those who fear the LORD, who walk in obedience to Him (Psalm 128:1-2).
- Joseph's trust in God stems from HUMILITY.
 - He can receive God's message and trust the dream because of humility
 - Honoring God cuts through the pride
 - Joseph's faith is in honoring God
- 90 miles to Bethlehem, difficult terrain, traveling probably by foot, we can't assume Mary was riding a donkey (number of stops, flatbread munchies, pregnant women get hungry and tired)
- Rough terrain into the hill country of Bethlehem Ascent and descent
- **Mary is holding onto the "good news"** from angel Gabriel
- **Joseph has the dream from God** to hold to -- this baby is conceived of the Holy Spirit
- Perhaps they are reciting Psalm 128 Blessed are all those who fear the LORD, who walk in obedience to Him as walk through the northern hills of Bethlehem to enter the city.

6 And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born.

- Bethlehem is crowded because of the census. People have come from all over the region, because the City of David is town of their ancestors.
- Inn after inn is FULL -- NO ROOM -- NO ROOM
- First child: Mary is in labor, Joseph has to be feeling a bit anxious. They don't have a comfortable room. Husband anxiety. Where's the midwife, where's the bed?

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.

- "Good news" in a manger

***Obey God and trust Him for provision.**

Lk 12:31 Seek first His kingdom and these things will be provided to you. 32 Do not be afraid, little flock, because your heavenly Father has chosen to give you the kingdom . . . everything you need (for His mission). NAS

- In our mind we may think: there's no guarantee God's plan will work -- we want a Plan "B" to fall back on.
- Our guarantee and insurance manifest in God's promises. One being: "The Word of God will never fail." Lk 1:37. God has the BEST PLAN!

- God is growing Joseph's faith through his struggle
 - God is showing Joseph, a bigger narrative: Joseph's story is bigger than living a quiet life with Mary raising a family together in Nazareth.
 - God keeps them safe in the trip to Bethlehem: road bandits and wild animals; God provides a room, a space for Mary to have her baby
 - Joseph is the earthly father of a King, a King that reigns over God's Kingdom.
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- Tiny baby Jesus: God incarnate wrapped in flesh. Flesh that bruises, flesh that can be scraped, and bleed.
 - The Messiah bound in strips of torn cloth, not expensive purple denoting royalty, but strips of leftover material from a humble family.
 - The "Good News" is confusing; Jesus is wrapped in humility.
 - Jesus the Messiah is a helpless baby who needs someone to feed him, to cloth him, to comfort him when he cries out in pain.
 - This is God teaching us humility -- not to think less of ourselves but to think of ourselves "less."
 - Can you imagine humbling yourself to be born again as a baby, completely dependent upon someone for Everything?
 - That is humility: You need someone to feed you, cloth you, comfort you, hold you, sing over you, pick you up when you fall.
 - Someone to always be there with you -- that's Good News -- our Jesus, our Messiah, God's Son, born of a virgin.

While Mary and Joseph are in the wonderment of becoming parents God is making a grand announcement to lowly shepherds.

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. 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."

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."**

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."

Lowly shepherds receive the Royal Invite: not from Caesar's kingdom but the invitation to come and see the newborn King.

God ushers in His Kingdom through HIS SON – an Eternal Kingdom.

One who will . . . forgive the sins of the people, reconcile the lost back to God in an eternal relationship.

- The enormity of Caesar's kingdom cannot compare with the magnificent orchestration of angel armies that is given to the shepherds.
- Even the shepherds are aware of the prophecies of the coming Messiah
- and longing for the arrival the Messiah to deliver them from the fear and intimidation of Rome

***Trust and obey the mission God gives you.**

- Amongst the Shepheds, there's no discussion, no doubt, no one asks, who will watch the sheep?
- They immediately go to find the baby Messiah in a manger

16 They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. 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, 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.

God gave the Shepherds a MISSION: Trust and obey

God gave Mary a MISSION: Trust and obey

God gave Joseph a MISSION: Trust and obey

The MISSION is bigger than Mary, bigger than Joseph, more than what the Shepherds could grasp.

Their mission was to TRUST and OBEY God – To build His KINGDOM, one that never ends!

- While Caesar Augustus issues a census to count the people of his kingdom
 - GOD ENTERS THE WORLD TO SAVE PEOPLE
- While the Emperor of Rome declares himself a god
 - JESUS MESSIAH COMES AS GOD INCARNATE WRAPPED IN THE HUMBLE FLESH OF A BABY
- While Caesar initiates peace and prosperity through the Pax Romana
 - JESUS MESSIAH WILL BRING PEACE BY HEALING THE SICK AND GIVING DIGNITY AND CARE TO THE MARGINALIZED
- While Augustus Caesar increases the Roman kingdom through conquest
 - Jesus the MESSIAH brings God's kingdom to earth by defeating sin and overcoming death.

GOD HUMBLD HIMSELF COMING TO EARTH WRAPPED IN HUMAN FLESH BECAUSE HE LOVES YOU. AND HE INVITES YOU TO TRUST HIM, TOBEY HIM.

*You may or may not have a dream or vision, but you have God's Word and the Holy Spirit.

(Luke 1:37 The **Word of the LORD** never fails. Luke 11: ¹³So **if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.**"

Trust and obey the mission God has given you.

Revelation 1:8 ⁸"I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end,"^[e] says the Lord God. "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come—the Almighty One."

Jesus Messiah, is coming back. Until then He has given you a mission.

What is your "next step" in trusting and obeying Jesus?

Prayer