



14 DAY DEVOTIONAL FROM

LUKE 2

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.
Luke 2:11

Day One

Read Luke 2:1-20

Let's be honest. We have all had a Christmas or two that have slipped by with us not giving it the attention that it deserved. I'm not talking about the family gatherings, the fun of blessing others with gifts, or attending Christmas parties and church services. I'm referring to what we as Christians regard as the "reason for the season". Of course, that reason is Jesus Christ.

Getting caught up in the non-essentials is something that we do not readily admit because it can be rather embarrassing to confess aloud. It isn't something that we intend to do but when things become so hectic and rushed we find ourselves looking at Christmas in the rearview mirror.

My hope is that in the days leading up to Christmas we can take some time to do as Mary, the mother of Jesus did, and ponder the birth of Jesus and all that surrounded His entry into this world in heart. It is through reflection that we truly connect with the meaning of Christmas. The fact is that we were lost souls and far from God, and that reality concerned Him so much, He sent us His Son so that we could be redeemed.

Perhaps as you consider the fact that God pursued a restored relationship with us, you will consider the relationships in your lives. Maybe there are people who you need to reconnect with. Maybe there is some tension that needs to be resolved. God may even be desiring for you to reach out to someone inside or outside of your sphere of influence. Isn't that what God did for us by sending Jesus? He reached out to us and sent us the greatest influence the world has even seen. And we are eternally grateful.

Takeaway:

As you prepare to read this devotional guide over the next few days, ask God to reveal Himself to you and make this Christmas one where you are reminded of the incredible majesty of the season.

Day Two

Read Luke 2:1-3

¹In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town.

I am so thankful that the Good News of God does not occur in a vacuum. Luke communicates this very clearly by giving detail of the cultural and historical landscape at the time of Christ's arrival. The message of the life of Jesus, and God's relationship with mankind through Him was lived out in real time, in a real place with real people, making the validity of the message very real for us.

At that time, Caesar Augustus sent out an order to all people in the countries that were under Roman rule. The order said that all people must write their name in a book (register). This was the first registration. This was actually an act of ego. The ruler wanted to establish the greatness of his territory and then tax everyone under his charge.

The heart of the world then and today remain very much the same. Take care of yourself, build on what you have even at the expense of others and, if possible, promote yourself. That is what this ruler was doing and it inconvenienced many people. All of those living in another territory or region had to make the trip back to their hometown. For many this would have been very costly and time consuming. Some people had to travel many miles in less than ideal circumstances and probably wondered how they were going fulfill this obligation. People would have been frustrated, angry and exhausted.

We often find ourselves in similar situations. People do things to us that we find unfair. We can be used so someone else can gain. We can find life frustrating and exhausting. But in this God still has a plan.

In the case of Caesar Augustus, God used one man's fleshly desire to fulfill a prophecy. Prophecies of old stated that the coming Messiah would be born in the town of Bethlehem. Mary, who was carrying the Christ-child, was obligated to travel to Bethlehem because her future husband was from that town. Amazing how God works isn't it? He works behind the scenes and in the invisible to establish His purposes.

I don't know about you, but I am sure glad that Caesar Augustus established this decree because something pretty amazing came out of it.

Takeaway

Pray for our government. As believers it is often difficult to be supportive of them or agree with their decisions. Ask God to work behind the scenes and ask Him to establish His purposes on earth at this time.

Think of someone who is going through a season where life has been unfair. Pray that they would persevere and that God would reveal Himself to them.

Day Three

Read Luke 2:4

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David...

This one verse is a very big deal. While it is not the most quoted verse in the Christmas story it may carry the most historical significance. This verse brings with it the long awaited fulfillment of a biblical prophecy.

For centuries the Jewish people had been told that a Messiah was coming. This Messiah was going to establish a new covenant between God and man. The ancient Hebrew texts stated that this Messiah would come from the family of David. The ancient manuscripts also prophesied that the coming Saviour would be born in the town of Bethlehem.

In these verses we read that Joseph was on his way to Bethlehem for the purpose of census. God had orchestrated the events of that time so that each person had to return to the town of his ancestry. King David was an ancestor of Joseph and now Joseph along with his fiancé were on their way to the place of King David's birth. Everything was playing out just as prophecies of old said they would. It was actually happening! Every detail was becoming complete, even the proclamation of the prophet Isaiah found in *Isaiah 7:14* where we read that the Lord would be born of a virgin.

This one verse can be such an encouragement to us. When God says that He will do something or that something will happen – it will happen. God keeps His promises. God has a plan and He sees it through. As we read this text two thousand years later we have the opportunity to see how this plan came together. In *Jeremiah 29:11* we read that God has a plan for us as well and it comes with a promise. As we remain faithful to Him He will ensure that His plan and purpose for our lives will come to fruition.

Takeaway

Where have you seen God be faithful to you and as you have been faithful to Him?

Is there an ongoing situation in your life where you need to apply this promise of God's faithfulness?

Day Four

Read Luke 2:5

...to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

There is not one human being before or after the birth of Christ who can truly identify with the plight in which Mary found herself: To be a virgin and have saved herself for marriage and then be told by the Holy Spirit that God Himself had impregnated her. Seriously, what was she supposed to do with that information?

This was a scandal of epic proportions. For a woman to become pregnant while betrothed opened her up to not only public ridicule and but potentially public stoning. It would have been a disgrace to her family and the man to whom she was planning to marry.

And then there is Joseph. Poor Joseph. This affected him greatly as well. He had an obligation to bring a charge against her according to Jewish law. He knew the child that Mary was carrying was not his and that her claim to being pregnant was "God did it". Joseph had a most difficult decision to make. Report that scandal or believe that this was in fact an act of God.

Joseph demonstrated great character by showing Mary gentleness and compassion. He protected Mary and kept the matter quiet. Thankfully, an angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph and told him that this was all part of God's plan and that everything would work out. Indeed it did. Both you and I can be thankful for Joseph's obedience.

Takeaway

Ask the Lord to show you a time where it would have been easier to follow your own logic and instead you remained obedient to what you believed He was telling you and it worked out.

Is there something going on in your life right now where you know that God is asking you to trust Him and it doesn't really make sense? Ask Him for strength and courage to trust that He knows best and that it will all work out.

Day Five

Read Luke 2:6-7

⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Not the kind of entrance that a King usually makes is it? Born in a stable or cave that housed animals and then placed in a manger. When we think of royalty we think of wealth and luxury and a lifestyle beyond that of a normal person. But not our King. He was ushered into this world in the most humble of circumstances.

Scripture gives no indication that the birthing process for His mother Mary differed from that of any other woman. I am sure that it carried all of the pain, discomfort and messiness of any other birth. The King who at should have been treated like a prince was treated like a pauper.

It is evident that God intended to show the world that His Son was going to be a king for all people. While most kings are raised to be somewhat distant and aloof, God was communicating to the world that this King was not only going to be approachable, but one who would be comfortable with people from all walks of life.

In fact, the reason that Jesus was born in a shelter for animals is because there was no room for His family in Bethlehem at that time. All of the rooms in town were filled by people of a higher status.

His mother treated her son like any other mother. She held Him and adored Him. She wrapped Him in cloths so He would be comfortable and warm and laid Him down. I am sure that He cried and I am sure that he needed to be changed. He would need feeding and he would have cried when hungry.

There was never anything pretentious about Jesus. Not then, not ever.

This modest and often unassuming life of Jesus gave credence to Him not just being the Son of God but also the Son of Man.

Takeaway

Our Saviour was born in circumstances much less ideal than that of any of our children. Don't you find that amazing?

Reflect on how you have experienced Jesus meeting you on "your level". Have you thanked Him for being such a "real" King?

Day Six

Read Luke 2:8-10

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

So picture this. You are at work and out of nowhere an angel appears before you! What would you do? How would you react? Probably the same way that the shepherds reacted.

The shepherds were just ordinary folk like many of us, quietly going about their daily routines. The shepherds had families to feed and taxes to pay. They had employers to please and plans for the following day. Just like you and me. And then...the angel. Life would be forever different.

The shepherds had now witnessed the supernatural. In fact, scripture states that the glory of God shone around them. Scripture also said that they were afraid or filled with great fear. The actual translation in Greek is the word *terrified*. The shepherds were physically and emotionally terrified. The angel actual had to tell them to relax (that's my wording).

When you really give it thought, it had to happen this way. I mean really, if the entrance of the Saviour was done in a common manner, say a Facebook posting or newspaper add, even a bulletin on the headline news it wouldn't have had the same impact. This was a really big deal. The Lord needed to get the shepherds' attention.

I think that is a challenge for us. A question that we can ask ourselves. How special and grandiose is the birth of Jesus to us? As stated at the beginning of this devotional series, it is easy for the true meaning of the season to get lost on us. Sometimes we just need some friendly reminders.

The arrival of Jesus was done in a most magnificent way to common people. Only God could do such a thing. He ushered royalty into the most common of situations and to the most unlikely of people. What a perfect picture of God and His love for us.

Takeaway:

On a scale of 1-10 what is the awe factor of the birth of Christ in your life?

Take a few minutes and spend some time with God. Ask Him to restore the awe factor of Christ leaving His place in heaven and coming to earth for you.

Day Seven

Read Luke 2:11-14

¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

I don't claim to be a musical person but I have heard portions Handel's Messiah in concert and it was quite amazing. The sound of the orchestra, combined with the passionate vocals were amazing to hear. It actually makes me wonder how a whole multitude of angels praising God would have sounded to the shepherds.

As beautiful as Handel's Messiah is, no symphony could compare to the sound of the heavenly messengers proclaiming the birth of the Saviour. The passion with which they must have sung would have sent tingles up and down the spines of the fearful shepherds.

These angelic beings knew exactly who they were proclaiming because they had already met Jesus. They knew Him as the darling of heaven before He came to earth to save mankind. The angels saw Jesus in all of His glory and they knew what His arrival meant for mankind.

Today's text tells us that what started as a message from one angel became an incredibly large choir. Scripture uses the word multitude which is most accurately translated *legion*. In scripture a legion is said to be a thousand. So at least one thousand angels were singing the praises of the newborn King. Joy to the world indeed.

This Christmas may our hearts be filled with joy. The same joy that filled the heavenly hearts of the angels sent by God.

Christmas is a wonderful and joyous time of year. Perhaps you do not feel particularly joyful at this time. Maybe there are some things in your life that are sapping your zest for life. I encourage you to remember that Jesus came to heal your broken heart. He came to set us free and to provide a way through any kind of wilderness. Jesus came to offer you a kind of peace that only He can give. I pray that each of us would experience the peace of Christ this Christmas.

Takeaway

Is there anything in your life at this time that is hindering your joy in the Lord?

Take a couple of deep breaths and calm your body. Ask God to give you His peace. Allow yourself to experience His presence coming over you and receive His peace.

Ask God to send His peace with you and fill you with His joy as you go about your life.

Day Eight

Read Luke 2:15-18

15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

Upon hearing of the birth of Christ, the shepherds immediately left for Bethlehem. I don't know who was left to watch the sheep or where they would have corralled them but they were overly eager to witness what had just been reported to them. After seeing the Christ-child their excitement could still not be contained. As verse 18 indicates they told whoever would listen about the birth of Jesus.

This reminds me of a story found in Genesis 18. Abraham was resting in his tent and in the distance three figures appeared. Abraham quickly came to the realization that they were messengers from God. Upon this realization he ran toward them and greeted them. He washed their feet and offered them a place of rest. He told one of his herdsman to kill and prepare his most choice calf, and he had his wife Sarah bake the finest bread.

Abraham and the shepherds have something in common. They gave God what He deserved; their very best. God desires the same from us. God gave us His very best in sending His Son to save us and we must give Him the same. We should give the Lord the best of our time, the best of our energy and the best of our resources. God doesn't want us to give Him our all because we owe Him but because we love Him. Just as Abraham and the shepherds believed, we too believe that He is worthy of our everything. The question is are we giving it to Him?

Takeaway

Quiet yourself and ask God to show you where you haven't been giving Him your best. Remember that He is not showing you this because He is mad at you but because He wants a closer relationship with you.

Ask the Lord to give you the strength and the courage to follow through on the areas in your life where you struggle to give Him your best.

Day Nine

Read Luke 2:19

¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

The definition of ponder is *to think about* or *to meditate upon*. Another definition that I prefer is *to cast over and over in one's mind or heart*. Luke, the author of this book, is known to be a man who pursued historical accuracy with great vigor. Luke often gave his account of events from a different perspective than the other gospel writers. That's what makes his intentional inclusion of Mary casting the events surrounding the birth of Christ over and over in her heart so intriguing.

So many valuable lessons can be taken from Luke's inclusion of this one verse. Mary was clearly determined not to let all that she had experienced escape her. And did she ever experience a lot! Over the course of nine months she found herself to be the vessel chosen by God to bring the Messiah into the world. She carried the child in secrecy while her husband did his utmost to protect her from public scrutiny. She journeyed from Galilee to Bethlehem while carrying the child, and when she arrived there was no place for her to give birth to the future King.

She gave birth in a shelter for animals and placed her newborn son in an animal feeding trough. Then she had a group of shepherds visit, invaded her space because they were so desperate to see the baby King that the angel had told them about.

Through all of this Mary knew the importance of reflection. In today's world she probably would have kept a journal, written a book, or blogged about it all. However, she went about her pondering. It was obviously noted by those around her because Luke did not write from an eye witness account. He had someone pass this important piece of information on to him.

I think that God inspired Luke to include this. I believe that God wanted those who studied the text decades and centuries later to know the importance of reflecting upon Christ's role in our lives. I believe that God is using Mary as a model for you and me to follow. To not let life pass us by without reflecting and to spend time in self-examination. To count our blessings and remember God's faithfulness.

Takeaway

Take fifteen minutes at some point today, right now if possible and reflect on God's presence in your life.

As you reflect, ask God to remind you of the times that He has been faithful and shown you His favour.

Day Ten

Read Luke 2:20

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Want to know what God expects of us as Christians? Read verse twenty again. The shepherds have shown us how it is done. They received a message from God that the Saviour had entered the world. They believed what God had told them to be true and they went to see for themselves. They pursued Christ. When they found Him they bore witness to the truth. The shepherds had a genuine encounter with Christ.

After experiencing Christ did the shepherds just go back to their daily routines and hide it in their hearts? No, they didn't. They couldn't. What they had witnessed was so special that they could not keep it inside. They had to talk about it. Their lives had been changed. They went from being common shepherds to shepherds with a purpose. They knew they had a new found responsibility. That new purpose was to bring glory to God, to give Him the praise that is due Him and to tell others about Him.

That is Christianity in its simplest form. That is what you and I are to be about. Glorifying Him with our lives, praising Him for who He is and making Him known to others. Does that mean that we put the rest of our lives on hold? Of course not! Today's verse states that "the shepherds returned". They went back to their flocks. They continued their livelihood. They saw a bigger picture and were filled with a greater purpose.

The shepherds are you and me. Going about our business. Doing the best that we can to work and support our loved ones. Trying to be good citizens and people of integrity and teaching our offspring to be the same. With Christ as the centre of it all. So live your life. Enjoy your life. But live it as a true believer. Act like a follower of Jesus Christ. That is what the word Christian really means ... follower of Christ. Do your best to bring glory to Him with your life. Be obedient to God's Word and be honourable with your life.

Praise God for who He is and for all He has done in you and through you. Praise Him in your personal life and praise Him with other believers. Tell others about Him. Share with those who don't believe the wonderful gift that God has given you. It was never meant to be kept to ourselves. Don't get nervous about sharing the gift. Just ask God for opportunities and when the time comes be ready and faithful and let Him do the rest.

So let's live as the shepherds lived. Let's live like Christians!

Takeaway

Not only is Christmas upon us but the end of another year as well. Do you have any regrets from this year? Have you had some spiritual setbacks or disappointments? Bring those things before God and share your heart with Him.

Ask God to give you His wisdom in the coming year, and also the courage to apply the wisdom He gives you.

Remember above all things that God loves you. He loves you so much that He sent His Son for you.