

ALL AGE - The Boy in the Shed

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning.

There's some people out there. Excellent. I wonder what you think of when you hear that someone important is arriving.

You might think of the way that they're dressed. Maybe they're coming in the latest Armani suit. Maybe there's a crown on their head or a robe on their back. Maybe it's something about the way they arrive.

Air Force One, great example for the US President. Maybe it's a chariot or a horse and cart. Maybe it's the vintage car coming for the wedding.

I know for me, I've read, I think, far too many spy novels. So I always think of all the important people surrounded by their personal security guards and people speaking into their wrists and into their ears with their earpieces.

[1 : 11] I mean, if we look even at the ancient world, we see Caesar coming in all his finery on a chariot with his praetorian guard, keeping him safe.

But when we look at the arrival of Jesus, we see a really different story. So as we turn to the Bible reading of Luke 2 that Paul just read for us, let's pray and ask God to help us to understand it better.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you that you speak to us, that you communicate with us through your word.

Pray that by your Holy Spirit you would speak to us clearly now to help these words to be explained well and for us to be changed and to live lives of faith in your Son.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, if you'd like to turn to that passage, it's page 832 in the Black Bibles in the pews.

[2 : 19] It looks something like this. We're going to go through verses 1 to 20 today and we'll see what we find out about the arrival of Jesus.

And when we look at it, it's a pretty average start to an extraordinary man's life, to Jesus' life.

We see a government census and Joseph going along just doing his civic duty. He's an ancestor of David, so he goes to the town where David was born in Bethlehem.

And he's brought along Mary at a stage of advanced pregnancy, which seems a little odd, actually, when you think about it.

Bringing a very pregnant young lady along on a long journey, I've often wondered, why did he do that?

[3 : 31] It's not certain that he necessarily had to bring Mary along to be registered. He could have kind of signed up to the census place and put 2.9 in my family at this stage.

And usually it's just the guys that had to rock up. But why would he risk taking that journey with Mary in that state? And it's not clear from the text.

We don't get a clear answer. But I think the best idea that I've heard is just that back at home with Mary's family and their community, that there was probably a lot of talk about this miraculous conception and a bit of gossip going on about that.

So if Mary wasn't going to receive the kind of support that she needed when she was going into labor, then she might as well go along with Joseph.

And even though it's going to be a lonely time, it's better to be with him than with nobody else. It's just kind of a sad situation. We keep moving along.

[4 : 45] There's no room for them in the inn. It's funny, isn't it? You turn up to a town, Mary obviously pregnant, and no one can find a place for them in which to stay.

They obviously haven't gotten a lot of money. They couldn't buy their way into any place. The place is chockers. So Mary's first labor and the birth of her firstborn child was in a barn full of animals, without the warmth or camaraderie, without the community of women around her that would have been usual in that day.

And we know that there weren't any other women there because Mary was the one herself who wrapped her child. Imagine if Fiona on Friday was the one who had had to take care of the child immediately after the birth of the young girl, whose name we don't have yet.

After that long labor, the pain and the exhaustion, if she was the one who had to care for it rather than the nurses and the midwives and the people around her. It's a picture not of the happy, cosy nativity scene that we often see, but one of actually loneliness and poverty and helplessness and cold.

We go from this section to verse 8. We kind of cut scenes. We pan over to the picture of a motley crew of shepherds out in the field.

[6 : 29] I come from South Gippsland and it's dairy country, but there's a fair bit of sheep around there too. And sheep are not the most noble of creatures, nor the cleanest.

So I imagine they would have been a pretty rough lot. Shepherds out in the field, living and looking after their flock.

As well, shepherds these days were kind of the used car salesmen of Palestine, first century Palestine. They lived on the outskirts of society. They had to stay with their flocks so they couldn't get into the temple for the, you know, to be richly pure all the time.

They couldn't observe their religious responsibilities. And there was a bit of a tendency among shepherds to, you know, take a bit of whatever was lying around wherever they had their flocks.

So if a bit of a, what's thine is mine policy. So if there were things out in the field that you wanted to keep safe, you didn't leave them out there while the shepherds were around.

[7 : 41] And because of all this, in law courts, if a shepherd got up to speak, his word wasn't actually accepted.

If your only witness to something was a shepherd, then you were in a bit of trouble because their word couldn't be trusted. But I guess the really surprising thing then is that in this story that God sends his messengers to the shepherds whose word wasn't trusted in courts.

It's very unusual. So when the shepherds see the angel, they're really frightened. Can you see that? Down in, well, frightened.

They're terrified. In verse 9. And I think we're supposed to be as well. Look at this ordinary, dark, you know, agricultural scene.

And into it bursts an angel shining with the glory of God. It's a terrifying contrast. No wonder they were afraid. I think I certainly would have been.

[8 : 55] And the message that the angel brings is just as amazing as the angel being there at all. The angel says, it's happened. The Lord is here. God's promise of a saviour over and over in the Old Testament has been fulfilled.

And these shepherds, whose word wasn't trusted in court, are the first recorded witnesses to God's faithfulness to his promises. And they aren't just told that it's happened.

They're given a sign to confirm it and they go in search of the baby. But just before they go, as if the one angel wasn't enough, you get an army, a host, literally an army, of angels shining with the glory of God and praising God.

It's just awesome. The glory of God has just come en masse. And the message that they bring is one of peace.

It's funny, isn't it? An army of angels coming with the message of peace. Usually when we think about the peace, you know, peace on earth, goodwill to all men, it kind of goes around a lot at Christmas.

[10 : 22] But it's important to remember that when we talk about biblical peace, at its core, that idea has a peace with God, that relational peace with God.

I think that's really important. We tend to think of it in terms of peace is bad things not happening. But the peace that this is getting at here is a peace between us and God.

And that's the sort of peace that this Saviour has come to bring in. So from that great celebration in the sky, we go in verse 15, when the angels had left them and gone to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.

So in this final section, 15 to 20, we see the two pieces of this puzzle kind of snapping together. We see that the boy in the shed and the glorious message go together.

The boy in the shed is the Lord. He is the anointed one that God has sent. We see that the shepherds got it.

[11 : 45] They bowed down and worshipped him. Their immediate response when they saw Jesus was to worship. And they knew who God was. They were Israelites.

They may not have been able to keep up with all the religious observances in the temple, but they knew who God was, the one living God, and they worshipped Jesus. I think that's really important.

They recognised that Jesus was God. And they went out and glorified God for that. It's funny, isn't it, how God shows us time and again through His Word that what we foolishly think is strong is actually weak.

And what we foolishly think is wise can be profoundly stupid. God chooses what appears to us to be weak in our fallen eyes so as to show His great power and wisdom to those He reveals Himself to.

The glory of Christmas then and now is not in everything being easy or clean or safe because it wasn't.

[13 : 09] It's through God stepping into this disappointing and painful and dirty world in order to save us. It's God who makes Christmas glorious.

So when we see the young no doubt scared virgin woman pregnant for the first time by God's grace we see Him as the God of all creation the Lord of all.

When we see a lonely journey and labour in a shed filled with everyday animals by God's grace we see God sovereign over the events of history even of politics.

When we see a bunch of ordinary shepherds just ordinary blokes out in the field with their animals who couldn't be trusted in a law court we see God through His grace concerned for the lowest of the low and we see that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

And at the end of this Christ's life we see the beginning at Christmas but at the end when we see an ugly death on a Roman cross abandoned and betrayed by those closest to Him a seam of of tragedy from all human points of view.

[14 : 44] By God's grace we see the love and the justice and the power and the wisdom of God expressed in Christ crucified for all of us.

You see I think at best we all come to Jesus like the shepherds are shocked and overjoyed that the great message about Jesus as the source of our peace with God should come to us unworthy as we are.

If you're here today and you're a believer in this gospel are you still humbled and thankful because of Christ? I challenge you as I challenge myself actually reading through this to trust and worship God when everything seems too hard or even just too ordinary just too normal and thank Him for meeting your deepest needs in Jesus.

or maybe you're here today and you don't know God you don't believe in this gospel remember the shepherds you know they were brave enough to go in search of this proof of the gift that God had given in the baby Jesus they weren't particularly religious men but they were guys who recognized God's voice when they heard it and went out and checked it out.

If that's you come and chat with me or Paul John O Wayne or even a Christian friend who's come along with you today we'd love to help you to uncover the truth about Jesus so you can know Him and come to worship Him.

[16 : 40] Today let's take time to come to Jesus and confess our need for Him unworthy as we are and let's thank Him for His gracious love expressed to us from the manger and all the way through to the cross and His glorious resurrection.

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