

## Sermon Notes, December 17, 2017

### Jesus—Light and Life to All He Brings, Luke 2-1-7

Luke, chapter two, gets you right into the heart of what Christmas is about. Christmas is about light in the darkness. The world is a very dark place. Christmas is God's plan to do something about sin and evil and suffering and death and deal with it for good. Christmas is about dealing with the darkness. This week, in these first seven verses of the chapter, we're going to learn about *the fact of Christmas* (verses 1–3) and *the pattern of Christmas* (verses 4–7).

#### 1. The fact of Christmas

What Luke is actually doing is telling us, "This really happened." In fact, if you go back to the very beginning of Luke 1, he's writing to readers, and he says, "This is an eyewitness account. What I'm giving you is an eyewitness account." So, in the beginning of chapter 1 and the beginning of chapter 2 of Luke, he's saying, "The most important thing for you to know is that the baby born in a manger, Jesus Christ, Son of God becoming human being and being born in a manger ... it really happened."

Now, despite all the advances in technology and science, our world seems to be growing darker. It has many people on edge. Anxious & afraid. Why are we afraid? I'll tell you why we're afraid. Because the ultimate source of the darkness of this world is in *here*. It's in us. It's in our hearts. And because it's from *here*, better technology does not change the heart. We are so radically self-centered and self-absorbed we don't know how self-centered we are. We won't even admit how self-centered we are. Yet, it's the darkness of the human heart that is actually the source of the whole spectrum of evil out there.

What do we really need? We don't need stories that inspire us to try a little harder, we need the glory of God to appear. We really need the glory of God to break in from outside and intervene.

#### 2. The pattern of Christmas

Let me show you how these two points are linked together. You say, "Okay, so you're saying the Son of God came into the world to help us deal with our darkness. What's he going to do?" The pattern is in verses 4–7, and it comes down especially to perhaps the most famous part of this passage: "She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

One of the things that comes across in Luke 2, all the way to the end is Luke drives home the poverty of the family into which Jesus was born. The whole point of this is this is brutal. The nativity is brutality. There's no room. He's poor. They don't have a place to stay. He's in a feed trough. He's rejected. This is the pattern. In the beginning of the beginning of the beginning of Jesus' life, you see it in seed form. This is how he's going to save us. This is what he came into the world to do.

He's rejected by the world. He doesn't come as a general. He doesn't come as a philosopher or a professor. He doesn't come into a palace. He comes into a stable. Look in the stable, and there you see God stretched out on the straw. Why did he come in weakness? Why did he come subject to the darkness? Why didn't he come as a king or as a general? He came to take the rejection we deserve for our self-centeredness, for our wrongdoing, for our sin, so that someday he can return and end evil without ending us. He came not to *bring* judgment; he came to *bear* judgment.

Here at the beginning of the beginning we see the pattern. Here he is put into a rough wooden feed trough, but later he'll be nailed to a wooden cross. Here he's rejected by an innkeeper; later the whole population will yell, "Crucify him!" Here he's wrapped in old cloths, but then he'll be stripped naked, and his last possession, his garment, will be sold, and he'll be killed. Here, as it were, he's rejected by the world, but on the cross, he's even rejected by his Father. He gets what we deserve.

Jesus Christ was rejected so you and I could be accepted.

There was no room for him so you and I could dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

*Now what does that mean?* Well, it means there is hope. Believe in him and there is hope. Jesus *is* our hope. If you are in Christ, you have reasons for hope — this is what Christianity *means*. Peter tells us that "God, in his mercy, placed hope in your heart by causing you to be born again."

There is real light in the darkness. John declares this in John 1:4: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." This means that the light that shines in the darkness is the light of LIFE (John 8:12). The life of the Son IS the light of the world. The reason the light will triumph over the darkness is that it is life. It is living light. "What about now? How does Christmas help me right now?"

Let me give you two specific ways and one general way in which the pattern of Christmas can affect the way you live immediately.

1) First of all, it means if you're a Christian, you should not be surprised when you get rejection. In fact, you ought to question yourself if you're *not* getting rejection. Jesus was rejected, and we just said he had to be rejected in order to save us, but why was he rejected?

There are a number of places in the Bible where Jesus says, "If the world hated me and you're my followers, the world will hate you." So, my question is ... *Are you getting rejection?* If not, are you walking in integrity? Are you standing for integrity and purity of heart? Purity of spirit and integrity, Christlikeness, will bring rejection. If you're getting it, realize you're walking with Jesus. Don't let it get you down. *If you're not getting it at all, why not?*

2) Here's a second application of the pattern. The most beautiful thing in the whole world was in an old ugly feed trough.

In our culture, by and large, it's very important how you look, but when you take a look at the most beautiful thing in the world looking as ordinary as Jesus did ... not even just ordinary, but rough and plain ... you begin to realize there's beauty outside the coating. There's beauty on the inside.

To the world, the outside is more important than the inside. The pedigree is more important than anything else. Christmas says that is bunk. The spirit of Christmas is absolute antithesis of the spirit of snobbery. Christians care about their insides. They care about character. They care about compassion. They care about integrity.

A Christian realizes, "Under the plainness, under the unhandsomeness, under the social marginality, there was an absolute beauty." Once you realize that, you know better. You say, "All that matters is that I give myself to Him, that He will bring about change in my own heart, my own love, my own compassion, because that will last forever. Someday my outsides *will* look like my insides."

Do you know what Christmas means? The way up is down. The way to really get greatness is to serve people without thought to how much recognition you get. The way to really get the love you need is to love selflessly without worrying about how much love you're getting. That's the way to get the love you need. Aim at heaven and you get earth thrown in; aim at earth and you get neither.

*What kind of king gets born in a barn?*

*What kind of God comes to messy places?*

Jesus, the Light of the World, who came and embraced the cross to die for our sins and was raised again to be our Friend and our Guide and our Forgiver. We want to know Jesus. Deeply. Intimately. Personally. And forever.