

# The Incarnation Exalting and Calling Out

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[ 0 : 00 ] We come here today to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

! The day when God Himself became a man for us. The theological term for this is incarnation. We're going to use that word a lot in the sermon today, so I figured it'd be good to just have a good running definition of incarnation.

That is when God Himself became man for us. The incarnation of Christ is a beacon of hope for all people who would seek salvation.

Isaiah the prophet, we had preached through this a couple of weeks ago, but Isaiah the prophet had said that those living in darkness have seen a great light. Darkness is a description that applies to all of our lives at some point before Christ.

It was the darkness of our sin, our hopeless state before a righteous God. And from the start of God's story, man has always had a problem with rebelling against their loving Creator.

[ 1 : 16 ] It's a sinful nature that has been passed down through history. We can see it in the Bible as we follow Israel's history. There's always been this problem where Israel can't seem to obey.

They constantly are rebelling against God. And that's a sinful nature that has been passed down all throughout history to even us today. But even from the beginning, when man originally rebelled against God, God had promised that things would not always be this way.

That sin would not always reign supreme in our lives. That He would send someone to crush the head of the serpent, which is what we are celebrating today, the coming of that Savior who is Jesus Christ.

And throughout the Old Testament, again, we talked about this last night in the candlelight service.

There was just this aura of anticipation that was leading up to the birth of Christ.

We saw how everything in the Old Testament was longing for something better. Even the people that seemed to be starting off well, that seemed to be doing all these great things, still fell short.

[ 2 : 25 ] And there was still something better that we were left hoping for, that Israel was left hoping for. And that person was Jesus Christ. Now darkness, another way that we could apply this and see this happening, is Israel in this particular time when Jesus came into the world.

After they came back from captivity, it was first the Babylonians and then the Persians took over. Then there were 400 years of silence from God after they returned from exile. And then after this time of silence, actually even during this time, they have come under the occupation of yet another foreign power, which was the Romans.

There was little hope that the Jews really had to hold on to. And all they really had to hang on to were the promises of God's deliverance.

That he himself, as Ezekiel said, would come to shepherd his people one day. That once again, a great deliverer would come and sit on the throne of David.

But how? The tree of Jesse was now a stump. The kingly line seemed to have ceased. So how was God going to fulfill these promises in a time when there seemingly was no hope?

[ 3 : 46 ] Well, God has a way of taking what seems impossible and bringing himself the greatest glory through those circumstances. In 1 Corinthians 1.27, Paul says this, that God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise.

And I really think that's a great description of the story that we are going to read today. The most unlikely circumstances. The most unlikely people. God has somehow gathered together in this one story to bring about the fulfillment of all the promises that he had made in the Old Testament.

All the promises of deliverance. All the promises of a savior. Of a shepherd. Coming to deliver his people. All fulfilled in Jesus Christ with this band of unlikely misfits.

So today we're going to see two truths from the Incarnation before we read. The first is that the Incarnation exalts the humble. And the second is the Incarnation calls us out.

So with that in mind, I want us to go to Luke 2, verses 1-20. It's a familiar passage for all of you, I'm sure. In chapter 2, starting in verse 1.

[ 5 : 02 ] In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered. The first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.

So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town. 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, to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Now in the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to him, Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all people.

[ 6 : 15 ] Today, in the city of David, a Savior was born to you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be the sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger.

And suddenly, there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace on earth to the people that he favors.

And 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. For the Lord has made known to us. They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger. And after seeing them, they reported the message. They were told about this child and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard, which were just as they had been told.

[ 7 : 26 ] Church, this is the word of the Lord. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. Lord, we thank you that you have gifted us, Lord, with your final revelation. Lord, we know that we can trust in your word, that we know that we can place our full assurance in your word, knowing that everything is true.

Lord, you are faithful. You are just. And we know that you are faithful to keep your word. So, Lord, we pray that today that Christ would be glorified as we continue studying this story of our salvation coming to earth.

We pray for all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. So, it's funny to me, the characters that God has put into play to fulfill all the promises that he has made.

You have this pagan emperor, unclean shepherds, a lowly carpenter and a young virgin. Starting with the emperor. The emperor, he didn't worship God.

He didn't have any care about God or really know who he was. But, unbeknownst to him, God had used this emperor's decree to bring Mary to Bethlehem where Jesus was going to be born, thus fulfilling the prophecy in Micah 5.2 that the Savior would be born in Bethlehem.

[ 8 : 39 ] God was directing this whole thing. He was completely sovereign over what he was doing here. He was being faithful to the promises that he had made so long ago.

You know, in Jeremiah, God was talking to the young prophet and in Jeremiah 1.12, God said this, I am watching over my word to see it fulfilled.

God is in control of all this. And every element that happened, it wasn't by chance. It was a sovereign will and accomplishment of our holy God.

Now, the angels, they also didn't just start singing in some random field and hoped that there was going to be an audience. Again, this was all part of God's plan. The emperor could have called a census at any time that he wanted.

But again, God remembered his promises. And he was going to see to it that they were filled, that he was going to be faithful. So really, there are three truths that we can take from the Christmas

story.

[ 9 : 41 ] The first one being that God is completely faithful. His promises can be trusted. They are so sure of being completed that you can place your full assurance and hope in the promises that God has made.

But the second one is that the incarnation exalts the humble. The people that God had chosen to be recorded in his holy word shows the exaltation of the lowly.

The first is we see the shepherds. You know, by the very nature of a shepherd's career, they were ceremonially unclean. Not like, ooh, they're dirty. They smell like sheep poop. But they were ceremonially unclean.

They weren't allowed to be part of regular Jewish life unless they had gone through some ritual cleansing because of their job. Shepherds were of a lower class in society.

And I can tell you, speaking from experience, after delivering a baby, these are not the type of people that you would want walking into your delivery room. Just throwing that out there.

[ 10 : 42 ] But these lowly shepherds were the very ones that God had chosen to reveal this great news to. I don't believe this was a mistake or coincidence because God has always had a certain affinity for shepherds.

And we'll get more into that here in a little bit. But truthfully, God has always had a way of accomplishing great things. This is the obedience of seemingly insignificant people.

Through the great message coming to the least of these, God is showing that this good news is truly for all people. It wasn't just for the exalted in society or the great or the influential. This was news that was for all people.

Now the next group of people that we see in this story are Mary and Joseph. We really don't know much about Mary and Joseph. Other than that they were Jesus' parents, the truth is we don't know much about them because there wasn't much to tell.

Joseph was a carpenter. Mary was a young virgin who was awaiting for her arranged marriage. Nothing out of the ordinary. And Mary understood this, that there was really nothing worthy about her to be part of bringing the Savior into the world.

[ 11 : 53 ] In Mary's song that she wrote in Luke 1, verses 46-49, she proclaimed this, and Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior because He has looked with favor on the humble condition of His servant.

Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed because the Mighty One has done great things for me. And His name is Holy. The incarnation has taken place amongst the most humble in society.

This doesn't make being a shepherd more glamorous, nor does it exalt the position of a carpenter. But what it does show is that God's favor is going to rest on anyone that He chooses and that He exalts the humble.

I really think that's a theme that you can trace all throughout Scripture. It says a couple of times in Proverbs that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. This is not out of God's character to do things like this.

First of all, this is good news for all of us. God doesn't need the most powerful people or people with the greatest influence in society to do His will.

[ 13 : 09 ] All that He requires is faithfulness and obedience. Just as we heard Mary say in her response to Gabriel, I see I am the Lord's servant.

May it happen to me as you have said. Now, God is also not seeking greatness. The only greatness that He requires, the only greatness that we require to do His work is His greatness.

He just wants our faith and obedience. And we also can't overstate the significance of Jesus coming in the lowliest form. He didn't come in wealth and splendor.

He didn't even come as a middle, upper class citizen. He was born in a stable. He was laid in a manger. No doubt, His conception with an unwed virgin, that probably caused a lot of rumors in society.

But from Jesus' birth to the humiliation of His death, Jesus has come showing that He cares for the lowliest of people.

[ 14 : 16 ] And not only is He willing to exalt the lowly, but to show that His grace knows no bounds, He became the lowly for us so that He could make a way for salvation. The last group of people that was mentioned in this story, and this was in the angel's proclamation, is all people.

It's good news that it's for all people. This is not just for a select few. Well, I believe that the Christmas story highlights the lowly in society. This was a message that was for everyone. Poor or rich, great or small, the incarnation is good news that can and should be celebrated by everyone. You know, what kind of good news brings peace to all people? You know, good news is often relative to the person that's hearing it. For those of you that don't pay much attention to the stock market or have much invested in it, the price of shares right now probably doesn't concern you.

For those of you that have a great deal of money invested in that in your retirement, you're probably so stressed that your eyebrows are falling out. But news is relative to the people that are hearing it. [15:33] The angels also proclaimed peace on earth. And in a strange way, peace is also a relative term to whoever is hearing it. Peace on earth for Romans was the Pax Romana, which was in effect right now.

Literally translated, this meant Roman peace. There was no war within the Roman Empire at this point. For the Romans, this was great news.

War is expensive. It costs money, resources, it costs lives. War is expensive. So for the Romans, the Pax Romana or this Roman peace as it's literally translated, this was a great thing.

Now for those that were living under the rule of the Romans, like the Jewish people at this point, this did not bring peace. Peace at the point of a sword does not bring peace to the heart.

It brings submission to tyranny. But not peace. So what kind of news brings peace to all people that are hearing it, to all people that would accept it?

[16:35] This news is the kind of news that answers everyone's greatest problem. It is not news relative to the hearer. It is absolute for all people.

And here it is. Sin has fractured all of our relationships with God. And Jesus has come to fix it. Nobody else can.

We can't fix it. Only Jesus is the answer to our greatest problem of sin. He has come to bring peace not between man and man but between man and God.

This is good news for everyone who hears it. And God has finally come to proclaim peace. True peace. A peace that can only come by enmity between God and man being done away with.

Our Savior had come and this was good news for everyone. Peace between God and man was now possible. The second point is that the incarnation calls us out.

[17:38] news that's this good we can't keep it to ourselves. This good news called the shepherds from the field. I mentioned earlier that God always had an affinity for shepherds in His word.

God has always been known for calling shepherds from the field to do His will. Again, this is nothing that's out of God's character. We see that Moses was called from the field to deliver his people from slavery. We see that David was called from his sheep to deliver his people from oppression.

Amos was called from his flock to preach repentance to a rebellious nation. In Ezekiel, God promised that He Himself would come as the good shepherd to shepherd His people.

And now the angels have appeared to these shepherds beckoning them to leave the field and behold the good shepherd who had finally come to bring them the peace that they had longed for for so long.

after being drawn to their Savior says in a certain way that the shepherds were sent out. I want to read verses 17-20 again.

[18:44] Chapter 2. After seeing them they reported the message that they were told about the child this being the shepherds talking to Mary and Joseph. And all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them but Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them.

Then the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had seen and heard which is just as had been told to them.

The shepherds had seen face to face their good shepherd but this shepherd was going to be different. This good shepherd did not come to fight off the wolves or to be a mighty conqueror.

He didn't come to lead His sheep to water. He himself as the good shepherd would be the living water that would satisfy His sheep. This shepherd would not only tend to His sheep but He would become one of the lambs to be slaughtered for our transgressions.

He had come not only just to do away with the wages of sin but He came to take those wages on Himself and to pay our price in full. Only He could do that.

[ 20 : 02 ] The light of the world had come to deliver all His people from the darkness of sin. This good news that called out the shepherds is still calling us out today.

The light of the world is shining into our darkness and we are still being sent out those that would receive it we are still being sent out to proclaim those that are living in darkness that there is a way out.

That there is a way back to God to be reconciled to Him. The incarnation should not just be something we celebrate once a year. This is an event in history that provides hope for every single day.

It also provides purpose for every single day. It is a story of our salvation coming to earth and it is a story that is meant to be shared to all. And the angel said something that we also need to highlight here in verse 14.

It said, Peace on earth to those that He favors. Who does God favor? How does a sinful person receive favor from a completely holy and righteous God?

[ 21 : 12 ] Favor is received through faith in Jesus Christ. Favor is received through a right standing with God that can only be made possible by believing on the name of Jesus Christ that He was born of a virgin so that He could live a sinless life that we could not.

Die a death that we deserve. And He conquered the chains of sin by rising again from the grave and now is constantly interceding for us as our new high priest.

If you're here today or maybe you're listening on our live stream and this is something that you have not done yet, maybe God is calling you out today.

Maybe He is reaching into your darkness and calling you out into the light of His favor. Don't delay. Some may think that my darkness is too great and that there is too much to forgive.

How can God possibly reconcile my life to be made right with Him a perfectly holy and just God? I'm telling you now that it is possible because a holy God not only saw your darkness but He stepped down into your darkness to show you that peace between God and the lowliest of sinners is now possible.

[ 22 : 36 ] So if this is you, if you sense that God is calling you, don't delay. Don't wait. That peace on earth that we have talked about that Christ has brought to all of us who would receive it, that peace on earth can be born within you today.

And it's not possible through anything that you bring to the table. It's not possible through any amount of righteousness that you think that you can gain through yourself. It is all completely made possible.

the perfection of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who took on the lowliest form so that there could be peace between God and man.

Let's pray. Father, we cannot say thank you enough for the gift that you have given us.

Lord, we do not deserve this gift of salvation that you have provided for us, but Lord, you loved us enough that you sent your Son, Jesus, to become one of us, to step down into our darkness, to become the light of the world, to be our good shepherd, to take on the wages of our sin so that we could be made right with you.

[ 23 : 56 ] Lord, that is the joy of the Christmas story. Lord, it's not about presence. It's not about peace between people. It is about peace being made possible between God, between you and our rebellious people.

And Lord, we thank you that you have made that possible for us. So Lord, I just pray today that if there is anyone here that is listening, that has not called on your name for salvation, that has not placed their faith in Jesus Christ, then Lord, I pray that you would draw them to yourself.

Lord, I pray that you would do a mighty work in their lives and that this peace on earth would be born in them today. I pray for all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.