

Explore the Bible: You Will Find

December 13, 2022

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Dec. 25 focuses on Luke 2:1-15.*

One of the special moments of the Christmas season in our family is revisiting the familiar story of Christ's birth. Like the man who enters his storeroom and brings out both new and old treasures (Matthew 13:52), we bring out the Christmas treasures of old, as well as dream of the opportunities for new memories that might be made in the year to come.

The passage in Luke 2 is, for many, an old treasure. It may bring back memories of children's plays or possibly grandpa reading it on a cold winter night. A special memory for me is the year my 4-year-old daughter attempted to memorize it every morning as she ready for school.

Let each one come to the passage and remember the humility of the circumstances, the beauty of the Lord's inclusion of the marginalized, and the audacity of the God who created all things becoming flesh so that we may be reconciled back to him.

Humility

The road-weary Joseph and Mary were displaced and tired. Because of the census, they found themselves traveling at a very inconvenient time. The passage makes no mention of their disappointment or anger. It simply presents the small family honoring the wishes of a faraway governing official and in doing so fulfilling the ancient prophecy of Micah. "But you, Bethlehem ... out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient times" (Micah 5:2).

Their child would not be born in the comfort of the community he would

eventually be raised in, but far from home in a humble stable in Bethlehem. Meekly they received what the Lord provided and laid their newborn child in a manger. Jesus began his life the way he would live it during his ministry, no bed to call his own (Luke 9:58).

This sacred passage is crystalized in the memory of millions through the tradition of creating and displaying nativity scenes during December. Why do these figurines continue to capture the imaginations of generation after generation? People connect with the simple beauty of a family that lovingly welcomes a precious child. This mother and father adore not only their expected son, but their expected Messiah.

Humility was evident not only in the earthly surroundings of the birth of Jesus, but in the theological implications of the event. As noted by the Gospel of John, the Word became flesh. The baby Jesus was the radiance of God's glory (Hebrews 1:3) made into the frail flesh that night. The long-awaited Messiah has appeared.

While Luke depicts many of the details of Jesus' birth, Philippians speaks of the Lord's humility in this act. Jesus "made himself nothing, by taking the very nature of a servant, being born in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:7-8).

Included

When the Lord brought forth his Son into the world he could have first made his proclamation in the halls of power, or in the impressive Temple in Jerusalem, or among the most devout Jewish synagogue leaders. But instead, he sent angels to proclaim the good news to shepherds. The glory of the Lord was not reserved only for the mighty but for the meek and marginalized. It would be for all people (Luke 2:10) but it was first proclaimed to them. "This will be a sign to you" (2:12). The humble birth of

Jesus and his laying in a manger was a sign for the shepherds that they too were included to the Kingdom of the Messiah.

The shepherds proclaimed with great joy once the angels had left. “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the *Lord has told us about!*” (2:15) The Lord of all creation had made known to them the birth of the Messiah.

The Lord is always near the hearts of the brokenhearted and marginalized just as he was that night. He still calls out to them today, “Come! Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.” (Revelation 22:17b)

The Lord’s Great Gift

The passage of Luke 2 is summed up in this proclamation of the angels “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah.” (Luke 2:11) The Lord’s greatest gift was given to mankind. It was the gift of himself. The audacity of God who would humble himself and become flesh so that he might reconcile us back to himself is beyond comprehension. He came to gather the whole world to himself; from the lowliest of men to the greatest of minds. What a blessed Lord we serve who came in humility but will return in victory.

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