

Christmas Resolutions

By Bob Young

Introduction

The Christmas Story Retold: Often, when we think about the Christmas story, we focus on the main characters. Those who are highlighted in children's Christmas plays are those who play primary roles. Few children come home with excitement in their eyes to tell their parents they get to be one of 20 shepherds. Luke's account of the role of the shepherds (Luke 2:8-20) is not very long, and may not contribute much to the average Christmas play, but the text suggests four things that should make the top of your "to do" list as you think about the upcoming holiday season.

Scripture reading: Luke 2

Good news/bad news: Three sermons compressed into one.

May seem too little text for such a big undertaking.

Commentary: I want to hear the story afresh.

Babies are delightful. But we must see beyond the baby Jesus; see the dynamics in the story that are often overlooked and unseen.

We may be able to respond to the traditional Christmas story in an untraditional way. With apologies to C. S. Lewis who wrote a delightful little piece about the citizens of Niatirb (Britain spelled backward), I am thinking about a place I am calling Aslut and the things that will happen in the average household in this imaginary real town over the next two weeks.
(Expand)

Who is Jesus?

One of the questions Luke 2 seeks to answer is, "Who Is Jesus?" Luke 1-4 (parallel to Matthew 1-4:16, Mk 1:1, John 1:1-17) is an identity passage.

I want to know who Jesus is. One of the goals/resolutions for this season should be this thing: Knowing who Jesus is, remembering who Jesus is, reminding of who Jesus is. Can I hear anew a story that is old? Can I escape the familiarity?

Consider the identity narratives of Luke.

Events leading up to his birth, e.g. Zechariah/Elizabeth, John the Baptist still in the womb, Quirinius, stars aligned, shepherds in fields.

His birth, identity as lineage of David, Savior, Christ, Lord. Jewish shepherds understood.

Temple story

Baptism

Temptation

Initiation of ministry

Transfiguration

Triumphal entry....

[Song: Emmanuel, Emmanuel]

Christmas Resolution #1: I will seek him. I want to understand by faith, I want to know.

The shepherds responded to the news of Jesus' birth by resolving to see for themselves, to go and seek him. For most of us, Christmas is a rather tame holiday. This is not to make light of all of the activities that we generally cram into the holiday season. This is the simple observation that most people limit their Christmas thoughts to a little baby Jesus on a bed of hay. We are viewing God in the flesh, God with us, Savior, and King.

Consider: a lot of people pay some respect (honor, worship) to Jesus at Christmas who do not pay any attention to him the rest of the year.

If I see him, I seek him. If I do not see, I will not seek. If you do not seek, you will not find. Do you really know who Jesus is? Foundational to faith, explains perseverance.

[O Will You Not Tell It Today?]

Christmas Resolution #2: I Will Share him, spreading the Good News

When the shepherds arrived in Bethlehem and saw the child lying in the manger (feed trough), "they spread the word concerning what had been told about this child".

Christmas is a time for telling.

Christianity is a belief that demands sharing.

One cannot keep quiet about the story—not only at Christmas but throughout the year.

What will you do with the Jesus story?

We have an amazing list of characters in the early chapters of Luke.

- Zechariah/Elizabeth, representing Jewishness at its best.
- John the Baptist, yet in the womb.
- Joseph/Mary
- Quirinius
- Innkeeper
- Bethlehem residents
- Shepherds
- + magi, wise men, Herod

Our challenge, 2000 years later, is to respond to the story more thoughtfully, with greater awareness. These may have been unknowing, but we can know. We can see the "so what".

We can see the impact and results.

What are we going to do with the Jesus story? Christmas is a good time to resolve that question.

[Here We Are to Worship]

Christmas Resolution #3: I will serve him, experience him, Worship and Praise Him

The shepherds were overwhelmed at the angel's announcement. They experienced what some have called "holy wonder". The message is incredibly unbelievable: Good tidings of great joy, the birth of a baby, but the fulfillment of the promise that a Lord and Savior is coming. Many

people miss the experience of Jesus because they want a Savior without first honoring and recognizing him as Lord.

The conclusion of the shepherds' story raises a third question: **What will you do about Jesus?** It is parallel to the question Pilate asked. What shall we do about Jesus? Indeed, that is the question of this season.

Some will go to church on a special occasion, a special night. Some churches will have special events. Some will try to experience him in the once-a-year format.

I tell you boldly, that is not the reason God sent his son into the world. He did not send him for an annual celebration or two.

The shepherds were filled with awe and worshiped, praised, and glorified him. For what they had been told, for what they had seen, for the exactness of the story.

Here is the grand truth about Jesus-----

Almighty (Rev. 1:8; Mt. 28:18)

Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8; 22:13)

Amen (Rev. 3:14)

Author and Perfecter of our Faith (Heb. 12:2)

Beginning and End (Rev. 22:13)

Bread of Life (John 6:35; 6:48)

Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4)

Christ (1 John 2:22)

The child who is born

Creator (John 1:3)

Deliverer (Rom. 11:26)

Eternal Life

Everlasting Father

Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11)

First and Last (Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13)

God

Good Shepherd (John 10:11,14)

Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14)

Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23)

Heir of all things (Heb. 1:2)

High Priest (Heb. 2:17)

Holy and True (Rev. 3:7)

Hope of Glory (Col. 1:27)

I Am (John 8:58)

Image of God (2 Cor. 4:4)

Immanuel (Mt. 1:23)

Jesus

King Eternal (1 Tim. 1:17)

King of Israel (John 1:49)

King of the Jews (Mt. 27:11)

King of kings (1 Tim 6:15; Rev. 19:16)

King of the Ages (Rev. 15:3)

Lamb of God (John 1:29)
Life, Light of the World
Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5)
Living One (Rev. 1:18)
Lord (2 Pet. 2:20)
Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16)
 Master (Lk. 5:5; 8:24; 9:33)
 Mighty God (Isa. 9:6)
 Morning Star (Rev. 22:16)
Only Begotten Son of God (John 1:18; 1 John 4:9)
Our Holiness, Protection, Redemption, Righteousness
 Power of God (1 Cor. 1:24)
 Prophet, Priest (Acts 3:22)

 Rabbi (Mt. 26:25)
 Resurrection and Life (John 11:25)
 Righteous Branch (Jer. 23:5)
 Rock, Root, Ruler
Savior
Son of David, of God, of Man, of the Most High God
Suffering Servant
 True Bread, Light, Vine
 Truth (John 1:14; 14:6)
Vine
 Way (John 14:6)
 Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24)
 Word (John 1:1)

Conclusion

Will you seek him, share him, serve him?

Will you commit to these simple Christmas resolutions?

Make this a season of power and praise? Make this a time of spiritual growth and sensitivity?

Seek him by hearing, believing, obeying in baptism.

Seek him by returning to the fold of the Good Shepherd.

Share the good news with your neighbor.

Serve him faithfully.