“A Christmas Comparison”

**Luke 2:1-21**

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 12/19/21)

 Christmas: Eternity born into time; omnipotence clothed in human frailty. For love’s sake, the unapproachable Creator chooses to be approached on friendly terms with His rebellious creatures. God keeps His ancient promise to come to people like us, so that people like us can come to Him. If people like us are to dwell with Him, we need His Son, Jesus. The reconciliation of the unholy with the Holy is only possible through our Savior, Christ the Lord.

 Luke 2:1 starts off with “It came to pass…” NOT “Once upon a time…” We’re talking actual, recorded, human history. God is breaking into time and human experience to rescue His people from their sin. Here’s the KEY: God rules human affairs so that His purposes are carried out. Caesar may have issued a decree, but look at God’s decree in Micah 5:2, issued hundreds of years previously. God used a human decree to fulfill His purposes. Joseph and his very pregnant wife walked 90 miles from Nazareth (in Galilee in the north) up to Bethlehem (just outside of Jerusalem). You see, what God purposes to do, He will do.

 Notice in Luke 2:8 that “flock” is singular. God has a flock that He is watching over. In the Old Testament, it was Israel. In the New Testament, it is the church. There’s just one flock. And on this earth, there are only two types of people: those that belong to God’s flock, and those outside of God’s flock. We were created to follow our Shepherd, but we have all gone astray. We selfishly believe that our way (apart from God) is the best way. This alienation will continue forever in Hell unless God rescues us and changes our destiny. And irony of ironies, the flock is saved by a Lamb! When John saw Jesus coming (John 1:29), he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” The Lamb of Atonement came to save the whole flock! Isn’t it incredible that God the Creator made Himself so dependent, a human baby? But he didn’t come for the manger; He came for the cross! He came to die and save His people from their sins, to reconcile His people to God forever! (Q1) (Q2)

 In Luke 2:15, the angels depart. The extraordinary returns to the ordinary. But the shepherds had a choice, and they chose to go and worship the child/King. You also have a choice. How will you respond? You need to stop delaying and make a beeline straight to Jesus. Will you accept His gift of salvation today? The shepherds responded by glorifying and praising God. They became the first evangelists! What about you? What is your response? (Q3)

 Mary also had a response. Luke 2:19 says that Mary treasured these things and “pondered” them in her heart. “Ponder” means to “put into context” or “put it all together based on what you know to be true” (see Ps. 119:130). What is your response to the Gospel decree? Jesus said that He is the only way to the Father (John 14:6). He sacrificed so much for us. Today is the day to say “yes” to Him (Prov. 3:5-6). Will you? (Q4) (Q5)

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Read Luke 2:14 again. What is this peace (see also Micah 5:4-5a)? If it is only for those with whom He is pleased, how does one please Him?
2. Read Luke 2:10 again. What is the “good news… for all people”?
3. If you have never repented of your sin and accepted Christ’s offer of forgiveness, NOW is the time. If you have already done so, what is your response to this message?
4. Read Is. 9:6-7. Discuss these names of our Lord and what they mean to your walk with Him.
5. In the second stanza of today’s hymn, what does “meekness” have to do with “receiving Him”?

“O Little Town of Bethlehem” (Brooks)

 O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

 How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv’n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heav’n.
No ear may hear his coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

 O holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray,
cast out our sin and enter in,
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Immanuel!