

“Come and See; Go and Tell”

First Sunday after Christmas

Luke 2:1ff

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Prayer:

Almighty God, who has poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that the same light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

<http://www.bcponline.org/>

Read: Luke 2:1-38



Inside of eight days, the child Jesus is visited by several shepherds. Then, in fulfillment of the Law, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple for the purpose of circumcision. Surrounding this event are two affirmations of the child's identity, the first by Simeon and then by Anna.

What if someone saw your child and began to speak of him as the fulfillment of all the promises and pictures made to a nation? How would you respond? How do we capture all this part of the Story contains? Why shepherds? Why Simeon?

Why Anna? All of this happens within an eight day window of time. Verse 22 “refers to the provisions of Leviticus 12. A woman was regarded as ceremonially impure for forty days after the birth of a son. After the forty days two ‘purification’ sacrifices – a lamb as burnt-offering and a pigeon as sin-offering – had to be brought. But in the case of poor persons a pigeon could also be sacrificed in the place of the lamb. Because Joseph and Mary were poor, they brought two pigeons to be sacrificed in the temple at Jerusalem.” (Norval Geldenhuys, NICNT, *The Gospel of Luke*, 117, 118).

The promises are fulfilled; the picture is clear. Here lies in flesh, “Immanuel, God with us!” “This story excels by reason of its unaffected simplicity. In it we hear throughout the sound of sober, historical truth. In this narrative Luke recounts in a sober and life-like manner, events of a beautiful and miraculous nature, but at the same time actual history.” (Norval Geldenhuys, NICNT, *The Gospel of Luke*, 110).

Let us for a moment entertain sanctified speculation and creative imagination. In too few moments, I am caught up with the spirit of this unprecedented moment. There has never been nor will there ever be another moment such as this moment in all of history. All of the promises are “yes” in Him. Everything woven into the Story's fabric finds fulfillment in the birth of this Child. Often, when accusing someone of something poorly done, we will ask the rhetorical question, “What were you thinking?” In this short read I would like to ask the same, “What were they thinking?” Not because the question is rhetorical, but because much is left unanswered and assumed.

Based on the text, I would suppose only the shepherds had a chance of being present when Jesus began His earthly ministry leading to His death, burial and resurrection. I believe both Simeon and Anna would have since passed on to their eternal rest. What do you think the shepherds would have thought? Do you think they followed His development? Do you think they listened with attentiveness to anything that might have circulated concerning this unique child? Do you not think

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word of Mary's virgin birth and the various whispers of His 'bastard' birth made the rounds? What about His temple encounter at the age of twelve? I do not doubt for one moment that word disseminated and those who were "looking" listened attentively to all that was in circulation.

When Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day and the two turtle doves offered in ritual sacrifice for the uncleanness of Mary, what was the religious establishment thinking? I believe many were watching and waiting as faithful shepherds for the visitation of the Christ, but some were indifferent and cold. What do you think were the thoughts of the priests (vv. 21-25) when they heard the utterances of Simeon and Anna? Do you think they marked the moment? Simeon and Anna went out "on a limb." They put their proverbial heads on the chopping block, yet the story does not tell us what happened to them after the event. I would argue that some who heard these statements were young enough to be present thirty years later when Jesus would begin His earthly ministry culminating in His death, burial and resurrection. I believe they marked this moment and, like Mary, pondered its truths in the years that followed.

I cannot believe life would ever be the same for all those involved or that this truth only impacted the individuals noted in our text. I believe many were present who are left unidentified, but they too were forever changed. When John the Baptist began his work of preparing the way, there must have been significant buildup and electricity in the air. When Jesus was baptized and John identified Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, there was a great guttural groan of buried ecstasy.

The nation shook when John spoke these notable words of identification. John's words reflect and echo those of Abraham when as an obedient father he said to his son, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering" (Gen. 22:8). God did this by the voluntary and substitutionary sacrifice of His only begotten Son.

It is this event, the incarnation that will change all who encounter it forever. Life will never be the same. Like the angels above, there is a volcanic response to the enormity of what God did and does. It is impossible for any who encounter the living Christ to live unchanged. It is my continued prayer that all who enters into the Story written by God will be forever changed. May we continue to encounter the living Christ.

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