

Glory to God and Peace to Men

Some years ago I read a story in a newspaper of a young garbage collector who was singing as he collected the garbage. As he collected the garbage outside an elderly lady's house he sang. Before he could move away from the house the gate opened and the lady came out asking who was singing. Of course he and his colleagues weren't sure what to suspect but he owned up to the singing. She then asked him to go inside and sing for her. She then proceeded to make arrangements for him to go for formal music training in Italy as she considered him to have a beautiful voice and she, being a musician herself, thought that it should not be wasted.

How often have we gone through life living in our routines when suddenly, unexpectedly, something happens that changes our lives forever. Maybe it doesn't always happen so dramatically to everyone but it did happen to a group of shepherds 2000 years ago.

Luke 2: 8 – 15

1) The glory of God came down

- The shepherds were doing what they normally did – watch their sheep.
- Unexpectedly an angel appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone all around
 - The word 'glory' can mean dignity, honour, praise or worship
 - It is also used literally to shine or illuminate.
 - In this sense when the angel of God appeared the glory of the Lord literally shone – illuminated – all around.
 - The splendour of the Lord was revealed openly to the shepherds
- God's glory shines with a brilliance that man cannot look at it
 - Moses had to veil his face when he entered the presence of God
 - Paul was blinded by the brilliance of the light of the glory of Christ
- So why was the glory of heaven being revealed on earth at this time?
 - The very God of heaven – the king of glory – had come down from heaven and was being born into this world
 - Heaven had literally come to earth
- The glory of God came with the angels to give the glorious news
 - Good news of great joy for all the people
 - We don't need to fear heaven coming down because it is good news not bad news that is brought.
 - The news of a Saviour who was born in the town of David – Bethlehem
 - He is Christ the Lord – the Messiah – the one who you have been waiting for and expecting for years.
- How will you know who he is?
 - This will be the sign: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger
- God had been giving signs through prophecies to the coming of Jesus and now he still gives a sign who the Lord of glory is
 - He did not appear the way the Jews anticipated.
 - They would have expected him to have been born in the palace as royalty as the Messiah was prophesied to be the king in the line of David.
 - That was only one of the predictions of the Messiah

- What about the others – that he would be born of a virgin
- God made sure those who were humble received the news and found their Saviour – their Messiah
- We who know Christ have tasted of the glory of God – the glory of heaven

2) Peace to men

- One of Jesus titles in Isaiah is “Prince of Peace”
 - Here in a world of turmoil the Prince of Peace was born.
 - The world was in much turmoil during the time of Jesus’ birth as it is now.
 - The Romans invaded Israel and were ruling it as one of its many colonies.
- Jesus didn’t come to be a political leader to attempt to bring about peace between nations on a political level
 - We can look at the world and see that most political peace treaties have been broken
 - The problem is that when there is no peace in our hearts there will never be peace in the world
- Jesus came to reconcile us with God allowing us to be at peace with God.
 - When we have been reconciled with God we will have peace within our own hearts
 - We can then be at peace with others
- Sin in our own hearts is the cause of our lack of peace.
 - Jesus came to deal with our sin on the cross
- Jesus taught his disciples to pray: May your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 - This can only happen when heaven has filled our own hearts

3) We are responsible for what we know

- The shepherds went to find Jesus as the angels had told them
 - We can be quite comfortable in our ignorance but when we have been told something that we didn’t know before we are then responsible to act on that knowledge
- God could have stayed in heaven and left us all ignorant in our sin – but then we would have all perished in our ignorance
- Jesus came down bringing the kingdom of God to earth
 - We who know this are responsible to spread this good news of the kingdom
 - The good news of the glory of God come to earth
 - The good news of a Saviour come to us
 - The good news of the arrival of the long awaited Messiah
 - The good news of peace to all men on whom God’s favour rests