

THE AUDACITY OF DIVINE JOY AND PEACE

Luke 2:1-20

The definition for; **Audacity**: *daring or willingness to challenge assumptions or tackle something difficult or dangerous*. Throughout history God has a way of showing up at the most *inopportune* times boldly proclaiming, that which only “faith” can see. **The birth of Christ was one of those times.**

(v.1-7) **AUGUSTUS**; the imperial title assumed by **Caius Octavius Caepias**, successor of Julius Caesar. **QUIRINIUS** was the Roman governor of Syria also called **Cyrenius**, in the **KJV**. The census was not a local affair; it was a decree to *tax* the world, or the *entire* Roman Empire. Bethlehem is around 72 miles from Nazareth; it lies 6 miles south of Jerusalem. *Some have estimated that walking this distance could have been well over 100 miles; and Mary is 9 months pregnant.* Mary and Joseph seem helpless in the face of the powerful Roman Empire, and its “decree.” However, a greater “decree” had actually summoned them to Bethlehem; a **decree** issued “hundreds” of years before by the living God. **(Micah 5:2)** **“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.”** God’s word always takes *precedence* over the “decrees” of men; **Balaam** discovered this. **(Numbers 23:20)** **“Behold, I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.”**

(v.8-16) The angel appears and has the *audacity* to deliver a message of **“Great joy and peace!”** Everything about the birth of Christ, *from a purely human perspective*, was “wrong!” **For one, if I were God; I would have had my son born in a more “civil” time.** Being born during the reign of Herod the Great was not a “wise” move, *humanly speaking*. Historians tell us, Herod was a “cruel” and “wicked” ruler; *he was known to have murdered several members of his own family*. He was extremely “selfish” and paranoid; he had an estimated nine to ten wives, and on the “slightest” suspicion had his favorite wife murdered; he also murdered his three adult

sons. It was said of Herod; ***“It was safer to be Herod’s pig than his son.”*** Thus, in **Matthew chapter 2** we find this same Herod “plotting” to kill the Christ-child, whom the wise men declared, “King.”

Consider Mary and Joseph’s situation; *they were facing higher taxes, homelessness; Mary is nine months pregnant.* Outwardly it appeared as if God had “forsaken” them! *Their circumstances seem to contradict the word of God declared over them by the angel Gabriel earlier.* Consider also the shepherds. They were “blue collar” workers, and were also subject to higher taxes. They’d been up all night “fretting” over their 401k’s, a.k.a. “their sheep,” *protecting them from the wolves seeking to devour their investment.* Yet in the midst of this; despite Mary and Joseph’s situation and the concern, *which kept the shepherds up all night;* in what seems to be the most “inopportune” moment God announces **“joy and peace!”** In our text today there are two aspects of “faith,” which are essential to experiencing the divine *peace* and *joy* God’s desires for us.

The **first aspect** involves; **Resting in God’s sovereignty.** Mary and Joseph found themselves in a situation beyond their control; however, faith enabled them to “journey” beyond their *comfort zone, Nazareth, to Bethlehem, (v.4, 5).* *We often face situations beyond our control; whereby we feel like we are losing control; yet at the point we “lose” control, is when we need to realize God is “in” control. David understood this.* Scripture declares he was a *man after God’s own heart,* because he learned to “rest” in God’s sovereignty over issues *beyond* his control. **Turn to: 2 Samuel 12:16-23.**

Faith in God’s *sovereignty* enables us to “rise” up from the ground; *to wash our face, anoint ourselves, (oil on your face); to exchange our garment of “Mourning” for “praise!” (Isaiah 61:3); His sovereignty; “Prepares a table for us in the presence of our enemies.” (Psalm 23:5).* Therefore, when confronted with situations we cannot “change,” rest in God’s *sovereign* ability to “sustain.” David said: **(Psalm 56:3) Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.**

The **second aspect** of faith involves; **Resting in God's sacrifice**. The word of God in, (v.11); moved the shepherds from a "field" of unbelief to "faith" in God's promised Messiah. **Notice: (v.16)**; they came with "haste." ***When you're desperate for "good news," no one has to drag you along.*** They understood that the "righteousness" of this Savior would secure for them ***everlasting*** "joy and peace," because by His "wounds," "fear" has been eliminated. **(John 20:19, 20)** Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. The wounds of Christ serve as ***evidence*** of God's ***great*** love for us, in which we can "rest." Thus, the angels proclaim, "peace," to ***all*** who make "haste" to place their ***trust*** in the ***sacrifice*** of Jesus.

However, before we can rest we must "ponder." (v.17-20). When they saw Jesus, ***looked in the face of divine love***, their lives were forever "transformed." **Mary pondered these things in her heart, (see also v.51).** This is the ***true*** heart of a mother; mom's "ponders." Mary is connecting the dots; the words of ***Gabriel, Elizabeth***, and now the ***shepherds***. **Notice:** the two responses in (v.18, 19); they are similar to the ***response*** you'll find in churches on any given Sunday. Many come to "marvel," and leave ***unchanged***; while others take God's word to heart, and "ponder," ***thinking deeply, meditating upon the word***, and are "transformed."

(Malachi 2:2) "If you will not hear, And if you will not take it to heart, To give glory to My name," Says the LORD of hosts, "I will send a curse upon you, And I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, Because you do not take it to heart." "Faith" in God's truth leads to "blessing." **Mary's pondering led her to the cross! Only in Christ's sacrifice can we find everlasting "joy" and "peace."**

CONCLUSION: Despite the political, economic, and personal challenges they faced; Joseph, Mary, as well as the shepherds experienced the ***audacity, (boldness)***, of God's divine "joy" and "peace." ***Unbelief is the only thing keeping you from God's "audacious" liberating love, found in the face of Christ!*** The question is do we have the ***audacity*** to believe; to

leave our “comfort zone,” (*Nazareth*); or our place of “worry,” (*shepherd’s field*); and fix our gaze upon Christ? **Will we ponder or continue to wonder aimlessly through life, without hope? (Romans 15:13) Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.**