

The Unexpected Guests (Luke 2:8-11)

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Preacher: Jayson Turner

[0 : 0 0] Amen. Thank you, Brendan. Thank you, worship team. Sure. Should you enjoy that this morning? You say amen? Did you enjoy that breakfast?

Yeah, I figure my work is cut out for me this morning now that you guys are all filled and digesting. That's fair.

A couple of things I want to make mention of we have Discipleship Classes beginning on January 5th 9 a.m. This bookmark you can get these at the information table or back on the resource board and want to encourage you to consider participating. I know we're changing from our neighborhood groups back to content driven gatherings.

There's something on here for everyone and I do want to make mention we have we are continuing to offer our lead elective or our doctoring class and if that's something that you're interested in please email me and let me know we try to limit that to about 20 people so there can be plenty of space for dialogue interaction and I also have a number of books that I need to order for that class so I would like to get a kind of an idea of who's going to participate if you want more information about that you can see me or you can see Kamesh put your hand up Kamesh so you can see either one of us and we'd love to share with you but this is a class that we want every member of fourth to go through whether you're a teacher whether you're Anything everybody this is kind of a baseline just to make sure we're thinking rightly in all facets related to ourselves and to God So grab one of these Also, we have a book club discussion coming up on January 15th So for some of you that have not yet started reading the C.S. Lewis biography by Alistair McGrath You pick up a copy on the resource board today and on January 15th

We will have that discussion now look forward to that go ahead and turn open to Luke chapter 2 Looking at just a few verses this morning Verses 8 through 11 as we continue this Christmas series the Christmas you didn't expect Kind of like the weather we did not expect And maybe we'll get a white Christmas, but probably not so Let me pray for our time and then we will Will dive in father. Thank you for this morning. Thank you for our time just to be together and to Interact and bless and listen and encourage and Thank you for Melissa the team that put the breakfast together this morning Just pour out your blessing on them Lord Encourage them and might we be thankful if we see any of them to just thank them for their labor And the blessing they were this morning Lord would you speak to us?

[2 : 4 6] Would you send our affections on Jesus and just the beauty of the gospel as a result of our time in the text? We love you Jesus in your name. We pray and all guys people said Amen well There are many distractions as we hit the holiday season amen And we have one less week so there's a lot of a lot of stress out there on the road But there's a lot of distractions and I would say a lot of the distractions are actually good things Families gathering with one another I saw yesterday So I was driving around a lot of folks were down at the Davenport looking at the trees and There's a lot of good things that we can participate in as we think about Christmas But centrally this advent season is to remember that God is Relentlessly committed to sharing his joy with those that bear his image Almighty God entered a world that he created

In order to clean up the mess that we were responsible for Scott last week began our series by just centering our minds on the mission for which We celebrate Christmas why Jesus was born We have the the verse Matthew 1 21 that we were given last week. I like to read that for us. Do we have that on a slide?

There we go. Let's read it together She will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus For he will save his people from their sins Christmas is the fulfillment of God's first Gospel promise that we see in Genesis 3 15 that a snake crusher would come and I will say this This is probably not how any of us would do it This is probably not how we would rectify the the situation with sin entering the world. This is God's Story, so this is how it's done. We would probably decide let's send like a legion of angels down and clean house and start again We wouldn't do it this way and yet this is God's plan to send this snake crusher and This entire book is about this individual

This snake crusher coming. In fact, the Bible is a book about Jesus. I Got to share with a with a gal Friday night I got to share actually this verse with her after I I was gonna drop her off and she wanted to talk so I Finished the ride and we spoke for about 10 15 minutes And I just got to share the gospel with her and I and I and I started actually here in in Genesis chapter 3 she was a Jehovah's Witness and and Didn't really think much about Jesus and I just had to tell her hey this entire book is about Jesus and And that's why we celebrate Christmas because the snake crusher has arrived and he came to save his people from their sins It's not how we would do it. That's how God did it He inserted himself in his story and he did it really in a very unexpected way Jesus was born in a remote village in a place where livestock would have been kept a

Cattle shed. There are a number of scholars that believe it actually may have actually been a cave the most inauspicious of beginnings and yet this is God's perfect plan to reverse the curse of sin bearing down upon mankind and so this morning The way that we're going to continue the series is we're going to be looking at it at a first group of unexpected guests at this first Christmas and so just to set the context for us We know that in the region of Bethlehem Bethlehem being about five six miles south of Jerusalem We meet this young couple Mary and Joseph they are betrothed That would be like engagement in our day and age, but stronger binding. It was a legal binding Agreement Even though the marriage had not yet been consummated Mary is still a virgin and yet she is with child and

[7 : 24] They have made their way to the ancestral city their ancestral city to register for a census We see God's providence in getting them to Bethlehem Using the most powerful ruler of the day Caesar Augustus this adopted son of Julius Caesar and Really God used this individual to help fulfill a prophecy that was made 500 years prior See was prophesied that Jesus would come this snake crusher would come from Bethlehem Micah 5 to we know this We read it often at Christmas time But the prophet writes but you owe Bethlehem Ephrathah and Ephrathah is just an older name for Bethlehem may have also talked about Referring to the region around Bethlehem, but it says but you owe Bethlehem Ephrathah Who are too little to be among the clans of Judah from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel Who is coming forth is from of old from ancient days? So?

There's a ruler coming and he'll be born, but he's coming from ancient days and and we have this this little illusion here to the eternity of Jesus of the second purse of the triune Godhead But he is from ancient days He will be born in Bethlehem and so Caesar Augustus and intended this census To be taken and really to expand his kingdom, but Almighty God had purposed in eternity past That this census was not for Caesar. This census was for Jesus This is the moment in history that God had chosen in eternity past to dwell with men We read about that in the New Testament in Galatians 4 Paul writes verse 4 But when the fullness the completion of time had come?

God sent forth his son born of a woman born under the law Don't you love that how the pieces are moved around God uses this powerful ruler who thinks he's in charge But it was really to get Mary and Joseph to the place that was prophesied 500 years prior for Jesus to be born God's a genius God gets what he wants and we see it here in this Advent narrative Perfect time for the gospel to reach the nations That was the point in history. God says I am going to send my son. Why at that particular time?

perhaps a number of reasons but Politically there was stability for Christianity to rise at that time This is the golden age of Rome Pax Romana or the piece of Rome is referred to during of this period So at this time when when Jesus was born where he lived and when he died and rose again and the gospel is now Being moved throughout the world there's safety to be able to travel Throughout this large empire. There's roads to travel on and Because of Hellenism and Rome's appreciation for Greek culture There's a common language coin a Greek and So all of these cultural realities allowed for the gospel really to advance easily. This was God's perfect timing God's joy being spread to the nations Well, let's get to our text this morning and we'll pick up the story now in Luke chapter 2

Here beginning in verse 8 Luke writes and in the same region there were shepherds out in the field Keeping watch over their flock by night Before we consider our unexpected guests and we are alerted to who they are the shepherds We're gonna take a little detour so humor me I know I don't normally like to do this And I know you're digesting food, but I'm still gonna take it so stick with me on this Just indulge me if you will because this verse Alerts us to perhaps some awkward news and the awkward news I want to share with us this morning is that Jesus was most likely not Earthly born on December 24th or December 25th Okay, we're okay so far I Know this might ruin Christmas for some of you

[12 : 13] But I'm not intending to do that. It's just that in scripture. We don't have a date actually given when he was born Earthly here on planet earth But Luke 2 verse 8 it actually Suggest that December is not the correct time of year for which he's born because what we just read is Shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flocks by night Jewish custom of the day shepherds they sent their flocks out into the fields during the springtime Until the rains the first rains of autumn okay, that's lambing season And that would have been between the months of May and October Okay, during the wintertime Sheep were kept in corrals So I guess if we want to be biblical Maybe we do Christmas in the springtime

This is not as Scott says this is not a die-for issue It's not even a divide-for issue Okay, if you want to leave your tree up till spring not because of lethargy because you just want to try to be biblical Okay, that's fine. If you want to put fake snow around your nativity Go go with that. I'm okay The pastoral staffs not gonna come around and inspect Tell you well, there's probably not snow if you want snow you just go for that I Think however this does lead to a more substantive question as we consider what we as Christian families and individuals do with The celebration of Christmas From time to time I interact with Christians Who will say I don't celebrate Christmas?

And I don't do it Because it's really a pagan holiday and maybe maybe you once were there Maybe maybe you know of individuals that exists there and I just want to touch on this before we get to the shepherds Because the text actually lends itself to talking about this And so we need to ask the question, you know is is Christmas just a rip-off of an ancient pagan holiday?

If Jesus wasn't actually born on December 25th, where did we get this right and perhaps you've heard about other ancient winter festivals? During this time of year that have nothing to do with Jesus Ancient Germans they worship the god of Thor who lived in a tree during the winter solstice The Asher occult Read about the asheras in the Old Testament and The asher occult this fertility goddess the goddess of of the sea They worship trees they brought them into their homes and they decorated them So if we do that are we being like is that what's going on here?

I think the most famous festival often associated with the origins of Christmas It's the Roman celebration of Saturnalia The the Greek goddess equivalent is Chronos But there's a festival where the Romans the Roman god of Saturn is worshiped and and Worship of the Sun occurred during this winter solstice and that festival is replete with immorality and and carousing And just as an aside, this is actually more maybe reflective of Christmas for much of culture even today I drove a couple young man who were dropping off their inebriated girlfriend at the house so they could go out for round two as they said and they said hey because it's the holidays and so So how a lot of culture celebrates right at the time to Drink to excess because it's Christmas Well, let me be clear this morning. Okay

[16 : 22] Christmas is not a pagan celebration Okay, it's always been a time of celebrating the incarnation regardless of the when and Essentially what the church did in the fourth century was they took a current cultural practice of the Romans the celebration of Saturnalia and they redeemed it to lead people to worship as opposed to leading them to idolatry December 25th is simply the day chosen by the early church to celebrate the birth of Christ in order to Move the affections of Christians away from the pagan celebrations to worship the living God it was evangelistic in Nature to move people from a lie to the source of truth and life and in fact one fourth century Theologian it's attributed to Augustine. We're not we're not sure specifically, but he's the one off accredited was

Commenting on this Writing we hold this day December 25th. Holy not like the pagans because of the birth of the Sun S-U-N but because of him who made it And that good And so the central issue for believers related to Christmas is what will we decide to make the content of the holiday?

Knowing that some of the traditions have morphed out of pagan practices Are we committed To the initial meaning or can we redeem something and hold to its new meaning and honor our Lord?

I believe we can In fact, we're in good company because God did this In fact, he took the pagan symbol of circumcision practiced by the Egyptians and redeemed it For Abraham and infused new meaning into it as a way of God's ancient people to worship him I am the God that gets all of you Right down to your sexuality and I'm the God that wants to see you raise godly families and see a godly lineage come forth So God took something a practice and redeemed it and infused it with new meaning I Think the ultimate example of redeeming a symbol It's the cross Right the cross is an instrument of death and symbolizes brutality For Christians, however, it's a symbol of life of new life

And so we have one on our wall over here But could you imagine this gathering before Christ had died on the cross having this? it would People would wonder what is wrong with you because of what it represented at that time But today people wear it around their neck. They have it right as a symbol on their You know jewelry some just I don't know extreme people will even put it places forever But God took something and redeemed it and so I Think we have freedom here. I think it's wonderful that we have a time every year where we talk about it We and we think about the incarnation and For why Jesus actually came Which we talked about last week So yes, please decorate enjoy your Christmas tree at home Okay, I know that the Druids right in northern Europe and the Vikings and Scandinavia worship the evergreen

[20 : 21] That's not what it means to us Right in fact, it was in Germany Where it's credited that this tradition of the Christmas tree began as we know it today in the 16th century Committed Christians brought decorated trees into their homes Some built Christmas pyramids of wood decorated them with evergreens and candles and it is widely held that Martin Luther in the 16th century the Protestant reformer who loved the gospel was Most likely the first individual To add lit candles to a Christmas tree not saying it was the safest choice But it grew out of a deep profound love for the gospel and in fact He was inspired while walking home one winter evening Composing a sermon and was awed by the brilliance of God's creation The stars twinkling amidst the evergreen so to recreate the scene for his family he placed a

Tree in the main room in his home wired branches with lit candles and to remind them of Jesus The one who left the stars of heaven to come to earth Isn't that good?

So there's something transcendent about a tree and Luther was the one that captured that and maybe that will even Heighten your love as you see lit trees The God of heaven the God of creation left heavens to come to earth beautiful Okay D2 are over J you got all that out of the shepherds being out in the fields What can I say? All right Let's read verse 8 again, but in the same region There were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night now What do we know about shepherds?

How many shepherds do we have here this morning? Kind of not a really a profession that happens so much in Spokane in our day and age In ancient times in the Old Testament Shepherds often not always but often they were actually children. I don't know if you do that in A family was often the youngest son who was the shepherd and He was the shepherd until he got strong enough and he could do harder manual labor Where he was called into action elsewhere, so it could be that you had some very some teenage boys We don't know who all can just shepherds. No, no their age I think that's kind of interesting But if this was your profession as an adult your blue collar Shepherds were seen as as ordinary they were Common Often overlooked

Unnoticed in a town they came into the room only way you notice them is maybe you might smell them They're not the esteemed of a society They're not the movers the shakers are not the beautiful people. They are not those in a culture that would be influencing that culture In fact rabbis of the day considered shepherds religious outcasts Their testimony not being actually even admissible in a courtroom So they were the lowest tier of society So you can't think of who is equivalent today?

[24 : 02] Don't say it because you probably offend someone so I'll pick on myself. We're just you know a bunch of gig working uberdrivers We would be the shepherds, okay? And For these shepherds what started as a typical ordinary night it changed in an instant Like a crack of lightning something happens That was so unexpected verse 9 Luke describes it this way and An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were filled with fear These guys were in the middle of doing their job They were caring for the sheep their livestock Perhaps at this point maybe they're sitting by a fire. We don't know exactly the scene. Maybe they're recounting the events of the day Doing what they've always done

Every night prior to this night and then something unexpected occurs A creature Who's not present appears from nowhere You ever had an experience like that where you're just you're locked into a project Maybe your headphones are on Someone enters the room. You're not aware and then they make you aware and You Are you right your heart? Something that you need to know about our staff. We really enjoy one another We do have a staff member who has I don't want to say it's a mean streak But it's I'm gonna call it a joy streak because she Derives Joy from scaring her co-workers and

I just was thinking about that as I'm thinking about the shepherds this this I mean could you imagine? Yes, I'm talking about Melissa and I Can't tell you the number of Fridays when the office used to be closed That was typically a study day for me and I'm I was the only one here and I have a window actually in that little corridor And Melissa would often show up to do different ministry things, but she would never come into the office Pleasantly like hey Jake it was always sneak up to the outside window and I can't tell you the number of times headphones I'm preparing like Communion with the Lord. I'm just like and then all of a sudden she flips around and starts banging on the window and I tell you I can't believe I'm alive today because My heart it stops And yeah unnecessary joy she derives The shepherds that's like small potatoes compared to what the shepherds would have experienced an

Angelic creature How many of them have they seen in their lifetime? zero and Then all of a sudden from nowhere this angel Appears no doubt this experience Is like the Melissa effect times a thousand This these angelic creatures by the way, I know you have in your mind. Oh Clarence right. It's a wonderful life. It's like my grandfather No, it says here in the scripture Luke says and the glory of the Lord showed around them How many lumens is this I don't know But no one stares at the Sun you don't do that and yet right now the glory Associated with the maker of the Sun is present

Would this be frightening absolutely? Oh, yes yes And in fact the angel has a word for these common men. Let's look at verses 10 and 11 and the angel said to them Fear not for behold. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all People for unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior who is Christ the Lord So first off fear not okay, that's the obligatory message right every angel has to put to memory before deployed into service Fear not right because God's glory is somehow they've been in the presence of the living God and it's just It's continuing to radiate off of them But I love that the angel says fear not because if an angel says fear not what kind of news is it going to be It's probably going to be good news if the angel says fear

[29 : 24] What follows is not going to be good, but this angel says fear not right This is going to be a good news message You're not going to die tonight gentlemen. In fact, you're going to be blessed beyond anything that you can comprehend. I Have good news for you and this is not good news of great wealth It's not it's not good news of of great fame Great entertainment no it's better than that it's It's great joy good news of great joy and it's actually initiated Tonight it's news of joy that was predicted 500 years prior to the prophet Micah. We already read that Micah 5 to It's news of great joy that was predicted 700 years prior by the prophet Isaiah Isaiah for 714 behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and she'll call his name

Immanuel if you want to translate Immanuel it just means with us is God Isaiah 9 6 and 7 for unto us a child is born to us a son is given The government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called wonderful counselor mighty God everlasting father prince of peace of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end It's good news of great joy. It's an eternal king With an eternal kingdom that has arrived good news of great joy In fact, there's a king that has just arrived. That's also called the prince of peace And it's peace that will never end. Oh I want that We want peace in our souls Our Culture wants peace right one of the billboards for one of the dispensaries as peace of mind. I

Think it's why I spent so much time outside dispensaries because people are looking for peace I'm out there as an Uber driver. I'm not not visiting Prince of peace people looking for that And I don't know that the shepherds obviously fully understood this evening Not yet piecing together. Oh this king. It's God in the flesh. He's gonna grow up. He's gonna die in our place They weren't like us reciting Matthew 1 21 Understanding the forgiveness new life Was going to be offered But they get to be there at the beginning of this message going out and This is what sort of buff should be flutterless about this story This is the greatest news ever shared that joy that peace is possible for all people through Jesus and God did what he chose to communicate first to whom not the people we think he should communicate to To this unlikely group of individuals on this night

Just a group of ordinary people They're not dignitaries. These are not the elite The educated The movers and the shakers right the folks that could put together a marketing strategy to get this message out God said I'm gonna go to shepherds I'm gonna go to the ordinaries The people that most of you don't even see We would never have done it this way and yet God chose Shepherds, huh? Why?

Essentially, that's the key question Why did God do it this way? Well, this news offered first to shepherds. It tells us this The gospel it's not for the elite of a society It's for them if they want it But the gospel is If they want it but the gospel it's for everyone and That's what I got to share with this gal Friday night who was committed to being the Jehovah's Witness and I got to share with her The gospel is for everyone. It's not just a select 144,000 that do the right stuff in kind of your theological stream because the Bible says for gospel of the world and That's what this tells us God would come to shepherds to say the gospel is for everyone. It's for it's to rescue ordinary people from their sin

[34 : 11] Doesn't matter who you are. It's for the stay-at-home moms. It's for the college students for nurses and engineers and farmers and doctors and Uber drivers, right? It's for your neighbor down the street It's for some of the folks that we met we did our little Christmas Celebration to come in they maybe they don't worship with us normally. It's for It's for the ordinaries You know Mary caught this about God as she described herself and in her song the they called the Magnificat This song of praise after receiving the news that she was selected to birth the Christ because she writes in Luke 1 48 For he has looked on the humble estate of his servant For behold from now on all generations will call me blessed Mary understands My humble estate I'm just a servant. I'm just a comet common peasant girl. I don't have any name. I don't have any status. I don't

I don't have a title She got it. Yeah, God's love the world I mean this announcement given to shepherds. What would be the equivalent today?

So you where could this announcement have been made? It's like God could have come down to some of those parking lot attendants at the park a downtown You're like them Or maybe it's a bunch of the you know the warehouse workers out on a smoke break out at the Amazon fulfillment center Angel shows up gives them the news like that's not what I would do, but that's what God did Jesus is a lover and a pursuer of people Regardless of how ordinary or unseen they happen to be in the sight of the world Status has nothing to do with his offer of life Simply recognize that you are That you're not enough to be your own savior and cry out to Jesus No status required to be part of God's family It's just a willingness to repent of your sin Bow your knee Bow your knee to the king who entered our world 2000 years ago and these shepherds

We're not gonna get to it, but in the narrative it's described it actually they go Into town they find Jesus and they actually worship and In verse 16 it says they made haste like they were they were amped They were excited Church that would have been quite a night to be a part of a man and Maybe you can capture some of that in your mind's eye these shepherds these first worshipers of The king of kings born as a baby And I would say yeah, so it would have been a great night to be a part of but actually we get to be a part of it You can still be a part of it Because the offer of great joy is still available. Amen, and at fourth we talk about that We believe that joy is actually found in Surrendering your life to the king of kings a Life that is forgiven and made new it's a new life

It's a new orientation Or are we now for the first time we didn't we were born thinking man I want to give God glory, but now we begin to have a hunger and desire for that I do want to live for God's glory. I do want to live to bless others I want a different orientation and and we get to have that We no longer have to be people that just demand our rights and we live in a culture that lives that way church Yesterday I was driving on the Monroe Bridge I had some passengers and it was traffic central and there was a car that snuck in and the car behind did not like That this car snuck in I've never seen this before we're on the bridge the car sees him sneak in and just Accelerates into the car You took away something that belonged to me Those ten feet that was mine Demanding rights and then we just do Idiotic off and I just felt so gross watching this

[38 : 43] And that's not now our posture. It's a different orientation I'm not gonna just think about me anymore and and as I do that what happens is I am filled with joy Because my life is now gets to be a blessing. Amen we're gonna serve someone else and In serving God gets glory and then we get extra joy It's beautiful church And it's the best way to live And I would just say You know if God's spirits and edging your spirit today, and you've never surrendered your life and experience joy in forgiveness The forgiveness of your sins then why?

Pray today Ask the Lord to forgive you your sins to be your Savior. He came for your joy and There's a promise that we read about in John chapter 1 Where he says but but to all not to some but to all Who believe in his name?

He gave the right to become children of God You now get to be part of God's family and That is a lifetime family. It's a forever family as you bow your knee to Jesus church Jesus came for the shepherds the ordinary the forgotten Which means also what?

He came for me in you Amen Let me pray father. We thank you For this Not just story This is history This is what occurred and it's recorded for us and Lord we know that your ways are not like our ways But we love that you remind us There's no one too ordinary too broken To come to Jesus And God you cemented that when you decided to go to people completely unseen and said man I want to I want to love you and I want to give you good news of great joy And I pray God that we would revel in our salvation today if we've trusted in Christ We'd experience your joy If there's some here that have never done that that they would that they would worship you This Christmas The God who left the stars

To walk among men so that he could redeem them And if we're here and we've never bowed our knee to you Jesus, I pray that we would simply cry out to you Lord. I'm a sinner Would you forgive me I Believe that you're God in the flesh. I believe that you died in my place And that you rose again And if you pray that this morning in the quietness of your heart you tell someone you You come share with me your Scott or friend that you came with and Lord we're so thankful that you're a God that loves to take broken things Things that are dirty and make them clean and Make them whole and Lord in that wholeness I pray that we would experience your joy today and In that I pray that we would be able to bless Because the fact that you would come for ordinaries God means also that you have called ordinaries into action And so now we get to be part of your movement

[42 : 16] Your kingdom advance in this time this place And I pray that we would be Cognizant of sharing this good news of great joy with somebody else this season Give us opportunity for a conversation Let us share the hope that we have in you Jesus and we'll give you thanks for whatever you accomplish in that It's in your name. We pray Lord Jesus and all guys people said Amen