



Sermon Discussion Guide

Joy of the Shepherds - Tim Knipp

Sunday, December 11, 2022

Leader Preparation

1. Take some time to look over these questions ahead of time. Choose the ones that you want to make sure you cover with your group. We have highlighted what we think are **key ideas/questions by bolding them.**
2. Pray for your group and your time together as you prepare. This is so helpful!
3. When meeting online you as the leader will need to be more directive than in person. Don't be afraid to invite everyone to answer a question, invite them to share by name, and thank them when they finish. The online format requires a little more intentional orchestrating than an in-person group.
4. Try to start the gathering by getting everyone talking at least once to begin. The Hook section is great for this. When in doubt, have people share stories about their past. (How the week was, favorite memories about the topic for the day, etc). This is a great way to help your group continue to get to know one another.
5. Next, look at the Scripture and what it means. We believe Jesus is discipling people through this Word. Get people into the Scriptures and the Scriptures into people!
6. Finally, end with what God is saying to people and how God is inviting them to respond. These aren't just ideas to know but realities to live in!



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Hook - Getting to know one another

- Have you ever been in, watched, or directed a nativity play? If you could be in one today, which role would you like to play and why? How many scenes would your play have?

Book - Scripture

- Read the scripture passages and discuss to understand **what the text is saying**:

Luke 2: 1 - 7

1. Why do you think Luke mentions a Roman emperor and governor in the prologue to the account of Jesus' birth? How is the prophecy of the Messiah's birthplace (Micah 5:2) fulfilled? What contrast or clash do you see being described here?
2. Put yourselves in the drama unfolding in these verses. If there are women in the group: describe Mary's thoughts and emotions. If there are men in the group: describe Joseph's thoughts and emotions. If you were a movie director, how would you portray this scene?

Luke 2: 8 - 12

1. Who were shepherds in their society? Why do you think God chose shepherds to be the first ones to hear the good news of the birth of Jesus?
2. Why is the announcement by the angel "good news of great joy for all people"? What contrast do you see between the situation into which Christ was born and the majestic titles He is given? (see verses 6-7 and 11-12)

Luke 2: 13 - 20

1. What is the reaction in heaven to the birth of Jesus, the Messiah?
2. What do you think "on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased" means?
3. How do the shepherds respond after seeing the baby lying in a manger?
4. What can we learn from the shepherds and from Mary in this passage?



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Look - Connections to our world today

- This section focuses on implications about **what this text means**

In his sermon, Tim noted that the birth of Jesus “infused the shepherds’ ordinary lives with incredible meaning that brought joy. They would never see themselves as just shepherds or the field where they heard the announcement as just a field.” Think about your own life and our collective life as a church. How can our ordinary moments “become infused with the delight and joy of God”, both our joy and His?

Took - Personal Application

- This application focuses on **how God is calling us to respond.**

Let the Holy Spirit bring a renewed sense of JOY to your heart as we re-read the passages perhaps even with a carol playing in the background like [Silent Night](#). (3:43)

Another option: listen with childlike wonder to the *Jesus Storybook Bible* version of the account of [the birth of Jesus](#) (4:16) and [the shepherds and the angels](#). (4:38)
There is another YouTube video of [the account of the magi following the star](#). (4:28)

Still another option: Earlier we shared how we might portray the birth of Christ if we were a movie director. If you have time, watch [an abridged version of The Nativity Story](#) (16:48) and discuss how close it comes to what you envisioned.

Finally, read and thank God for this passage in John 1:9-14 ⁹*The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.* ¹⁰*He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.* ¹¹*He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.* ¹²*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,* ¹³*who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* ¹⁴*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Time of Prayer - pray with one another for those you know to receive Him and for the deep joy of abiding in Christ and being a witness for Christ to be our experience this Christmas.



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Christmas 2022 - **Beholding Jesus – Awe and Intimacy** - by Jason Hubbard (Jason gave us permission to share this wide and far)

Some astronomers estimate that neutron stars may actually be ten trillion times denser than steel and can spin at rates of up to six hundred times per second. Astronomers estimate that the sun is around 27 million degrees Fahrenheit at its core. It burns up around 4 million tons of its own mass every second. And it's so huge that even at that rate it would last another 5 to 6 billion years. And the sun is just an average star in the universe among billions of others! In fact astronomers tell us there are more than 100 billion stars in our Milky Way galaxy! A billion is a huge number – for example you can fit approx. 10 oranges in a large salad bowl, 1000 oranges in the back of a pick-up truck, a million oranges in a large swimming pool - a billion oranges would fill a stadium to the brim!

Job says, "Stop and consider God's wonders..." (Job 37:14).

Genesis says that Jesus spoke these galaxies into existence with his word, upholding and sustaining all things by the word of his power!

And yet Job speaking of this creation mentions, "how faint the whisper we hear of him? Who then can understand the thunder of his power?" (Job 26:14).

WOW ... And then to consider that the God who spoke creation into existence as a 'mere whisper' invaded the human race taking on human flesh, becoming one of us! Just think of the restraining power that must have been yielded to keep the second person of the Trinity wrapped up now in human flesh!

Christmas does not mark just another observance in the church's annual calendar. Rather it defines a monumental, unparalleled, unrepeatable moment where the INFINITE became an INFANT ... It marks a moment when the all-powerful Son of God stepped into weakness, in real time and space and history!



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The New Testament message is that the Living God has come to us as one of us! Jesus himself is God among us, permanently united to us, taking strategic action for us, to save us and liberate us. This kind of incarnation requires nothing less than a God-orchestrated INVASION. As David Bryant writes ‘the Invasion of the Incarnation!’

I believe the incarnation, the doctrine of Jesus’ full humanity and full deity, is the most extraordinary miracle in all of Scripture. Jesus retains unity with the Trinity and with our humanity, both at the same time. He embodies two natures without confusion and without division. He did not change what He was (God), rather he took on what He was not (Human).

The Incarnation is the most profound mystery in all of the universe!

As Bishop Melito of Sardis writes,

“He appeared as one of the sheep, yet he still remained the Shepherd. He was esteemed a servant, yet he did not renounce his Sonship. He was carried in the womb of Mary yet arrayed in the nature of his Father. He walked upon the earth, yet he filled all of heaven. He appeared as an infant, yet he did not discard the eternity of his nature. He needed sustenance inasmuch as he was a man; yet he did not cease to feed the entire world inasmuch as he is God.”

Jesus Christ is the All-Consuming One, the All-Sufficient One, the All-Satisfying One, and the All-Deserving One.... "He defies all human categories; there is no language that can adequately describe Him. He is the incomparable One! He remains in a class by himself...no duplicates, no clones. His importance eclipses all others. He outranks every other being in Heaven, earth, or hell. He is the exalted One; for all eternity he holds the primary focus of our praises. He holds a position of unrivaled distinction, prestige, and majesty.

He will be the joy of all peoples, the desire of all nations. He is the Victorious One. None of his enemies will prevail, he will defeat all of his foes unconditionally-both human and demonic and will emerge forever unthreatened, unhindered, and victorious over all opposition, permanently and forever. He is the Preeminent and Supreme One...in time and space and history he lays



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claim to the universe, it all belongs to Him. He is the all sufficient One. Nothing can exhaust his power or resources. He will forever prove totally adequate for all of our longings, fears, needs or heart cries. He is faithful and true! (Bryant, Christ is All, pg. 41-42)

He is indescribable in his beauty, unfathomable in his wisdom... He is outstanding! He is the well-spring of eternity, the fountainhead of all glory; glory that flows from him and through him and back to him... He is the dazzling one, the radiant one, the chandelier of heaven, and the Light of the World! Jesus' countenance is said to be brighter than the sun. The worth of Jesus is so stunning that the angelic host of the heavens collapses under the weight of his Glory! Literally 100 million angels catch a glimpse of Glory and fall down saying,

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth, wisdom and might, and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

The more we understand the Scriptures, the more majestic and magnificent and awesome Jesus Christ is. May our worship, prayer and service to Him be a direct reflection of that wonder and awe!

In conclusion, what was the motivation of his heart to come to us as one of us?

I believe it was his LOVE for you and I!

To think that this God is the God who pursues us, who takes delight in us, who enjoys us even in our weakness. As God declares through the prophet Zechariah,

"The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he rejoices over you with gladness; he quiets you by his love; he rejoices over you with loud singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

Let's spend time this Christmas season, Beholding Jesus in 'Awe and Intimacy.'

Love you all, Jason