Sunday October 16, 2022

Luke 2:1-40

I don’t know about you, but I noticed different things as I read this chapter of Luke again and again, now, when it is not Christmas eve.

You might have noticed that there is no dream for Joseph in Luke’s account, and no astrologers coming from the East.

Luke is not claiming to include every detail, and every event of Jesus’ life, but those that will give us a firm foundation, through his sources, which are different from some of the sources that Matthew had access to.

Reading this passage now, I came to this scripture with different eyes.

What struck me first was how quietly, silently, the wondrous gift was given.

Taxes have to be paid, a census taken, the bothers of life, especially in an occupied territory.

Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem, to the city of David, and she gave birth to a son, just as the angel had said.

They laid the child in a manger, he was wrapped in bands of cloth, as newborn babies were.

No grandeur, no splendour, two very ordinary folks, Mary and Joseph, have a son, in a shed.

Could this really be the long promised Messiah, the fulfillment of the scriptures?

In the same region shepherds were out in the field, watching their flocks.

An angel appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them.

Can you imagine for a moment what the glory of God is like?

This encounter with the living God’s messenger overwhelms the shepherds and they are filled with fear.

These are not men who scare easily, and they were filled with fear.

The angel had a message of hope and joy for them and for all God’s people; ***“A child has been born who is the Messiah, who has come to save them, who is their new King.”***

Suddenly the night sky erupted with an angel multitude praising God and saying;

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace- shalom, well being among those with whom God is pleased!”

Do you ever wonder who is included in this message?

Who is God pleased with?

Who does this message of shalom include?

Luke’s account of Jesus’ life seeks to answer that question.

I understand that the date of the coronation for King Charles has been set, and when he is crowned their will be visitors from around the world in attendance

Queen Elizabeth received wonderful gifts, tributes from many, when she was crowned Queen.

The Messiah, the fulfillment of the scriptures is born in a shed, and shepherds came to worship and give tribute.

God has a surprising list of those who are included already.

The shepherds left praising God and Mary pondered these things in her heart.

Jesus was brought to the Temple in Jerusalem, as a child of faithful parents, according to the Law of Moses.

Simeon was a devout and righteous man, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

It was revealed to him that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.

Simeon was led to the Temple when Mary and Joseph were there with their newborn son, and upon seeing the child Simeon bursts into a song of praise to God.

In seeing the child Simeon declares that he can die in peace, for he had seen God’s salvation.

This child would be glory for Israel, and a light for revelation to the Gentiles.

The prophet Isaiah, speaking about the promised servant of God said; “***God says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”*** (Is 49:6)

Simeon declares that this child brings salvation and light to God’s people Israel and to the nations, all peoples of the earth.

*John’s gospel begins with the words; “1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was in the beginning with God. 3All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4In him was life, and the life was the light of people. 5The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

*6There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8John was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.*

*9The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*

Simeon goes on to tell Mary and Joseph that this child is ***appointed for the fall and rising of many, and for a sign that is opposed, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed***.

A new King has been born, some hearts rejoice, those who worship, those who are awaiting God’s good news.

Those who welcomed the announcement ranged from shepherds, who lived in the fields, and Simeon and Anna who worshipped day and night in the Temple.

Jesus, the Messiah, the promised King of God, brings life and light, but there are forces which embrace darkness and death and oppose Him.

Jesus’ life divides and reveals hearts.

For those who want to be on the thrones of their own lives, or want to be over others, wielding their own power, or simply throwing their weight around, the coming of this King is not welcome.

We were made for life, we were made as God’s own people, to be rightly related to God, and rightly related to one another.

Our original family, Adam and Eve, wanted to be wise in their own eyes, they wanted to be like God, which led them in a path towards death- separation from God, fear of God and one another.

God’s intent is to restore us to life, to bring us salvation, and light and shalom, and wholeness for all the peoples of the earth.

But God is not going to overwhelm us, there are quiet invitations, words of testimony, words of hope and life, strains of angel’s songs, voices of the righteous, and the prophets of long ago.

If we have ears to hear, if we are seeking, the light will dawn over us.

So, we have to decide to welcome this King or not.

His life divides, and reveals the truth about us.

His ways are different as we are going to see in the chapters that follow.

We are invited to be like Mary and ponder these things in our hearts.

We are invited to worship like the shepherds upon hearing the great good news which is for all people.

We are invited to keep reading and understand what it means that the Messiah, the new King is born, for his rule is different, and worshipping him calls us to be different too.

Last note, Mary and Joseph fulfilled everything according to the Law of the Lord.

They continued in every way submitted to God and God’s ways.

Thanks be to God.

Let us pray: God help us to ponder your word in our hearts. We have angels and shepherds, your righteous ones, Simeon and Anna, who all proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah, the fulfillment of your promises, the life and light of the world, the hope of every people, and we are invited to worship him and welcome him.

Lord, we also hear that Jesus divides, and reveals hearts.

And we confess Lord, that we do not always welcome you as King of our lives.

Forgive us, cleanse us, make us anew, that we might know the light and hope you bring. Amen