

LUKE – CHAPTER 2

PRAY

Spend a few moments together in prayer asking that you would be open to God's voice speaking through his Word today.

READ

Take time to read through Luke chapter 2.

EXAMINE

Here, in this chapter, Luke provides us with detail surrounding the birth of Jesus. Something to take note of throughout this chapter is the frequent references to praise. Luke emphasizes that Joseph and Mary are faithful in adhering to the regulations surrounding circumcision (v. 21) and purification (v. 22 and 27) in adherence to the customs of the Law. This emphasizes a couple of things; firstly, that Mary and Joseph are faithful in following God in accordance with their faith and, secondly, that Jesus will save all people by fulfilling the Law, not by abolishing it. The birth of Jesus is a long-awaited moment and all of creation ends up joining in glorifying God as a result. Today we will focus upon the different groups and individuals who give praise to God for Jesus.

1. In verse 9 an angel of the Lord appears (perhaps Gabriel again) announcing the birth of a Saviour in the town of David. This is good news that will bring great joy for "all the people." At the sound of this news a great heavenly host appears praising God. What is the significance of the angels joining in the praise of God at this news?

Luke particularly emphasizes that the message of salvation is for all people. Note this brings "great joy for all people" and also the fact that this occurred during the census of the whole Roman world; a reminder that the people of Israel were under occupation by a foreign power. Here the angels joining in praise signifies that it's even bigger than that. All of heaven and earth will join together in the praise of God because of Jesus' birth.

2. The shepherds are next to join in praising God (v. 20). Their response is connected to the angel's message since the events were "just as they had been told." Gabrielle (assuming it's the same angel) is now 'three from three' – the promise to Zechariah, Mary and now the Shepherds. Consider the place of shepherds in their society. What is significant about them joining in the praise of God?

The shepherds were (as you might expect) people who cared for sheep. Sadly, the impurity of their profession meant they were excluded from Temple worship. Ironically, it's probably safe to assume the sheep they raised were taken to Jerusalem for that very purpose! Now, having encountered Jesus, they were set free to glorify and praise God – becoming some of the first people to see the baby Jesus after his birth. They represent those who were previously far away from God being brought near to Jesus.

3. Read vs 21 – 24. Mary and Joseph fulfill their obligations as new parents under the Law. Why do you think Luke would make sure he included this in his account of the gospel?
Whilst the gospel is for all people it comes through the people of Israel. If Mary and Joseph had ignored the requirements of the Law then the Messiah would not have been faithful to God's requirements from God's people. Jesus' fulfillment of the law includes those aspects that his parents performed on his behalf. Luke is keen to show this here.
4. Spend some time discussing Simeon and Anna. Theirs is a remarkable story. In your conversation be sure to take note of the role of the Holy Spirit, their faithfulness over many years, and the place of an old man and an elderly widow in the gospel.
5. Finally, we come to Jesus as a worshiper. Luke tells us he "grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him." (v. 40). The next story reveals something of where this growth took place – in the Temple. He was found there, after his parent's frantic search, sitting down among the teachers asking questions. Jesus was himself one who (much like you are now!) sat down to learn about God from others. At the same time, he taught with wisdom well beyond his years. What can we learn about growing in faith and wisdom from this story?
6. Discuss anything else that has stood out in this chapter.

REFLECT

1. Can you remember a time when, like the shepherds, you had an experience that caused you to glorify and praise God? Share these together.
2. The shepherds praised spontaneously, whereas Mary and Joseph did so "according to custom." Do you think there is a benefit from the presence of "spontaneity" and "customs" in our worship?

Who are the "Gideons" and "Annas" in your life – those who have been faithful over many years, speaking prophetically into your life. How have they impacted positively upon you?

IMAGINE

1. List three things that have really stood out from this passage.
2. Without worrying about any restrictions, what would the church look like if those things were always present? You might like to consider this from a global or local perspective (or both).

PERFORM

1. What action can you take today (taking account of real world restrictions) that is a step towards that dream becoming a reality?

PRAY

Spend time in prayer for each other, particularly for the actions you've committed to.

For next week....

1. Long Slow Read (LSR). Read chapters 3-4, slowly over the course of week. You can do this as many times as you like.
2. Tempo Read – Read and reread Chapter 3 several times. Take note of verses/phrases/characters that stand out – e.g. Jesus, Holy Spirit, poor, women.
3. Repeats – Choose one verse to memorise. Repeat it many times throughout the day and over the course of a week or so. Meditate on the verse and pray it in and out. Repeat the verse many times throughout your day.