
the **FOLLOWERS**

December 21, 2014
Celebration | 8:45 am
Pastor Dave Mitchell

The Shepherds: The Faithfulness of Jesus Followers Luke 2:1-20

Be Faithful because...

The will of God is in control of people and circumstances. Luke 2:1-7

"Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth." (v.1)

- He rules over the people in power. Luke 2:1-3 (see Digging Deeper)
- He rules according to His Word. Luke 2:4-5, Micah 5:2
- Be faithful even when His will seems chaotic and confusing. Luke 2:6-7

The work of God is achieved through Jesus Christ. Luke 2:8-12

"In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night." (v.8)

- He works through insignificant but faithful people.
"In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night" (v.8)
- He works in spite of poor conditions and appearances.
"you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger" (v.12)
- He works through Jesus for our salvation and care. Luke 2:11-12, Ephesians 2:8-10
 - Jesus is God
 - City of David—kingly heritage.
 - Christ/Messiah—kingly character anointed by God.
 - Lord—kingly nature as deity.
 - Savior—kingly function to save us from our sins.
 - Jesus is a man
 - Baby—human flesh like ours but sinless.
 - Clothes—human character needing warmth, care, protection, comfort.
 - Manger—human condition—dirty, homeless, poor, desperate.

The worship of God should be our response. Luke 2:13-20

"So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them." (v.16-20)

- We are to seek Jesus and His truth Luke 2:13-17
- We are to encourage others with the message of Jesus. Luke 2:18-20

Digging Deeper:

The shepherds were the first to learn of the birth of Jesus Christ. This is totally unexpected since shepherds had a reputation for lying and stealing. In fact, they would not be used as witnesses in a court room since they could not be trusted to keep their word. Also, they were among the most despised as a class of people. Some might argue with God as to why He would reveal Jesus to these people since they might not be believed when they pass on the truth of Jesus' birth. But, as we learn in this birth scene, God works contrary to what we might expect so He can prove that His will and work reign over all people and circumstances. Therefore, we must remain faithful to His Will and Word as we respond to Jesus Christ.

LifeGroup Discussion & Questions:

God was in control of Caesar Augustus as he issued a decree for a census. Although this was terribly inconvenient for Mary and Joseph, this caused them to go to Bethlehem where Jesus was then born. Their obedience then fulfilled the prophecy of Micah 5:2 which predicted Jesus' birth in Bethlehem some 700 years earlier. Read the following passages and discuss what they teach you about the power of God to accomplish His will in the world today? Does this motivate you to trust Him in the circumstances of your life?

- **II Chronicles 36:22-23**

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia—in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah—the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, 'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!'"

- **Ezra 6:22**

"And they observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had caused them to rejoice, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel."

- **Proverbs 16:33**

"The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD"

- **Proverbs 21:1**

"The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes."

- **Ecclesiastes 9:1**

"For I have taken all this to my heart and explain it that righteous men, wise men, and their deeds are in the hand of God."

God will often work contrary to human wisdom. By presenting Jesus to the shepherds rather than the religious leaders of that day, He risked a publicity problem since these people were not usually believable. While God will use people in positions of power and fame, he also loves to work with people who seem insignificant and unimportant.

Read I Corinthians 1:26-29. What does this passage teach you on why you really are important to God?

Read I Timothy 1:12-17. Why would some not want to use Paul based on his past history? Why did God choose to use Paul in serving the Lord? What does that communicate to you if you feel reluctant or unworthy to be used by God for His purposes?

Next Steps:

1. **Join a LifeGroup in 2015 to be encouraged by others and grow in your faith together.** LifeGroups are ongoing small group communities that gather together throughout the week to CONNECT in a smaller setting, GROW together in our faith, and REACH out together to our community. There are many LifeGroups available on Calvary's campus and in homes across Orange County. Learn more at calvarylife.org/lifegroups
2. **Use Calvary's new discipleship study called 'Following Jesus' so you can grow in your faith and knowledge of God's Word to deepen your faith.** Following Jesus, with editions for both students and leaders, is available in Calvary's Corner Bookstore. calvarylife.org/grow