



DECEMBER 27, 2009

TEXT: LUKE 2:1-20

SERMON: "CHRISTMAS LESSONS FROM LUKE IV: GOD'S UNEXPECTED ACTIONS"

As I continue our series on the Gospel of Luke, we will see this morning how God works in the world...we will see that God is continually doing the unexpected.

Almost every year I go shopping with Kim and we buy a number of outfits for her and for Erin and Adam and now for Alex and Luke...often, they did not come with boxes...so I had to go out and buy boxes that would fit the outfits.

So often we do the same thing with God. We put Him in a box in our lives and we don't let him out except when He's allowed. He can come out Sunday Morning for 2-3 hrs. He can come out when we talk to other church members. He can come out on Christmas and Easter. But all the rest of the time he stays in this nice convenient box...not allowed to interfere with our lives.

We are going to see this morning that God does not fit into any box. The Jews of the first century thought they had God in a nice neat box of laws and ceremonies... God did not stay in the

box. He again and again did the unexpected. We are going to see the unexpected actions of God.

We will see 4 actions of God that were totally and completely unexpected.

Action # 1 "God unexpectedly gave and continues to give the greatest Gifts in the smallest

packages" REPEAT Let me **reread Vrs 7 READ 2:7**

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

The Greatest Gift of God was wrapped in a very small baby.

The people were expecting the messiah to suddenly appear and be King of Israel. Instead they got a very small Child. Bigger is not better. This is a false notion in our society.

I believe this can be seen in the church. I have been part of very large churches and small churches.

When I was in Pittsburgh I worked at Fox Chapel Pres. Church. It has a membership of over 1000 and budget of close to 1 million dollars. In Niagara Falls I worked for a church that had 70 members and a budget of \$15,000.00. Let me say bigger is not better. It is the small church that is the heart of Christianity. I prefer the small church. This church is not a mega church, our budget is no where near a million dollars.....but in my time here I have discovered it is large in faith. I do not believe

you will discover a better place to worship God than here.

Do not be fooled...Bigger is not better...Have the faith of a mustard seed and you can move mountains. Believe in this small baby and salvation will come to your home. It's the small things in life that are important.

Action # 2 God unexpectedly brought important news to unimportant people and called them to be the announcers of the news REPEAT **READ 2:8-18.**

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

We are people who are impressed by important people. We run up to celebrities to see them or to get an autograph from them...I remember taking my kids in my Youth Group to Mellon Arena once and they insisted in waiting by the employee entrance to get autographs. This is not true with God.. God is not impressed with importance of an individual. Who did God use to predict and carry

out this greatest of all births? He used Micah, the farmer, to predict it. He used John the Baptist, the hermit, to prepare the world for it. He used Mary, the peasant Girl, to be his mother. He used Joseph the poor carpenter, to be his earthly Father.

Throughout history God uses the unimportant people. And After the Birth who should go forth and announce this marvelous event. Should it be the Chief Priest of all of Jerusalem?...No that's not who God choose. How about Herod the King of Judea? No that's not who God choose. At least the mayor of Bethlehem... No that's not who God choose. But then Who? God choose shepherds. Shepherd were very, very low on the social scale of that society. Because of their work they could not adhere to all the Jewish purification laws and therefore were not allowed in the temple or synagogue. They were not in the box that the Jews had created. And God first declared this news to them and God used the shepherds to be the announcers of the Good News.

You see God almost always uses unimportant people who can not play around with the truth to be his great announcers. I remember a young person I was sharing the Christian Faith with. I gave him all the logical arguments for why God existed and why Christ came and died. And he went

away a couple weeks later he came to me and said "Pastor Doug I've become a Christian."...I said "great..how'd it happen." He said "I have a friend who simple told me Jesus loves me" God uses untrained people to announce the Good News. He used the shepherds...He uses me and you . Let us be announcers of the Good news.

Action # 3 God unexpectedly causes major events to occur in little towns. REPEAT **READ**

2:15

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

This is a fulfillment of a prophecy given 500 years before in **Micah 2:5**

"Out of Bethlehem, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come one who will be ruler over Israel."

If you read a newspaper often, which I do, you recognize a problem...they only report news from Big cities. In the course of a lifetime for more important events happen in small towns. I saw this cartoon Two farmers standing under a calender dated **February 12, 1808** they talk asking "Anything important happinin Jake"

"Naw nothing at all, oh yes...Mary and Tom had a baby they named Abraham but nothin important".

And so was the announcement of the birth of Abraham Lincoln.

We live in a small town...expect God to do marvelous things here in the our own area. God works in small towns. I expect God's hand to be on New Bedford and Pulaski township. I expect God to do great and wonderful thing here in a small town using unimportant people.

Finally, Action # 4 God very unexpectedly allowed himself, the infinite God to become a finite man. REPEAT This is the heart of the Christmas story. God became man. I remember the first time I decided to change the brake pads on my car. I was in college and I worked at a car dealership. They had service manuals there so I sat down and read a book. I was a typical college kid and thought books had all the answers. I read and was lost. I didn't even know the names of parts so it was all gibberish to me. So, I went to one of the mechanics and asked him if he could help. So together we replaced the brakes on the front right. Then he said... "there now go and do the others yourself." So I started on the next side.... but I again and again went back to the first one to look at it and see what it was suppose to look like. The principle is this... illustration is far, far

better than instruction. For thousands of years God had given his people instructions on how to follow Him. In Jesus Christ He gave us illustration.

Is there a God? What is He like? Does He care for me? Does He love me? Look to Jesus Christ and his illustration and you receive your answers. William Barclay states this about the Birth of Christ.

"That there was no room in the inn was symbolic of what was to happen to Jesus. The only place where there was room for Him was on a cross. He sought an entry to the over-crowded hearts of me; He could not find it; and still His search... His rejection...goes on."

The infinite God entered the Finite man reaching out for you and for me. Let us not place God in a nice neat Box. Let us not just state our love with words. Let us not be too busy. Let our lives not be so full that we push Christ to the fringe. Let us allow him in all parts of our lives.

Amen