

NOTES FROM STEVEN DRVERS SERMON- 10th DECEMBER 2023 am

TITLE: “The light of God’s Glory” TEXT: Luke 2 verses 1-20

Series: Christmas 2023 Part 1

Scripture references from the ESV

Luke 2:1-20 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. ⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” ¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

We all feel powerless at times. We may feel that way because of personal circumstances or when we read about terrible things that are happening in the world. When we consider our own sin, we can feel powerless to change or to undo the consequences of

something we have said or done. We might be aware of besetting sins such as anger, pride or gossiping.

In the grip of our powerlessness to deal with any of this, we then feel undeserving of the love of those around us and our participation in church. Everyone else seems so much better than us and we feel undeserving of the light of God's glory.

If you feel powerless and undeserving, you are not the first and you will not be the last.

The first chapter of Luke's gospel is full of promises:

- The birth of John the Baptist, who will prepare the way for the Messiah, to Elizabeth and Zechariah, despite their age.
- The promise of God to Mary that she will conceive a son – the 'son of the most high' who will be given the throne of David.
- Both Zechariah and Mary speak of promises from God that he will reverse the powers of this world.

God has announced what he is going to do, as we shall see in the rest of the gospel, but this first chapter largely concerns this small family unit. However, Chapter 2 moves us out to the power of the Roman Empire and the most powerful man in the known world – Ceasar Augustus. At his decree there is to be a census, so the whole empire is on the move. In terms of power, Luke's list of people starts at the top and descends to the apparently least.

He starts with Ceasar Augustus (Emperor of all the people), then mentions Quirinius (the regional leader), then we hear of Joseph (a carpenter) and Mary (unmarried and pregnant). At the bottom of the list, there is a baby with apparently no power, no station in life and sleeping in an animal feeding trough. Yet this baby moves not just the Empire, as Augustus does, but all creation. The shepherds demonstrate this. We see

The most powerful and perfect one coming for the most powerless and undeserving

We are not told anything about the shepherds except that they are shepherds and that tells us all we need to know.

They are despised outcasts, who were distrusted by the local community. They were powerless and seen as undeserving. We read that it is night (v8 above) and that reflects their state. They are in the dark and powerless to do anything about it. Yet that darkness was shattered as two opposing worlds collided.

The darkness of night was overcome by the light of the Glory of God.

There were no shadows – this glory shone all around the shepherds. It is the glory that would normally be associated with the temple in Jerusalem, which only the religious elite were able to go near. The glory of God is a fearful thing and the fear that swept through the souls of the shepherds, overwhelming their emotions, was entirely appropriate to what they were witnessing. No human power could have made this happen.

Yet God's power in this display of his glory was not shown to Ceasar or to Quirinius or to the religious elite

in Jerusalem. God's glory was displayed to these lowly, powerless, undeserving shepherds, showing us that

The most powerful and perfect came for the most powerless and undeserving

God was making it clear that he was not coming for the rich and powerful and those who think they have got this world sorted out by their own merit. He does not come to those who think they are better than everyone else:

He comes to those who are lost in darkness and in need of his marvellous light.

There is no power like our God and no other radiance or majesty that can compare. There is no limit to his love as we can see from his message to the shepherds (vv10-14 above). That message was not just for the shepherds but for all people – including us. It is a timeless message for all who will read and respond to it. The news we hear gives us a vision of Jesus that shows the power and glory that he embodies:

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord (v11)
This message draws us back to Isaiah 9:6:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called

Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

The one who has been born is God incarnate. All powers and dominions must bow to him.

- This baby is born in the city of David, reminding us all that he is the promised King of David's line, who will rule over an everlasting kingdom.
- This baby is our Saviour, Christ and Lord – he is the promised King of kings, the almighty deliverer of his people

The angels have brought the news that the light of the glory of God has come down to earth. All the promises of God are being fulfilled in a way that no one had anticipated.

God is fulfilling these promises himself.

**All of the glorious light of God, the magnificence of his splendour,
the Saviour, Christ and Lord**

**is a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a feeding trough meant for
animals.**

The most powerful and perfect comes for the most powerless and undeserving (us)

He does it by becoming lower than us.

A newborn baby is so fragile – yet that fragile newborn baby is who the shepherds went to see.

The most powerful becomes the most lowly and he is doing it to save us.

Before Christ's incarnation, he was richer than anyone could imagine. He could have chosen to come as an adult, though that would still have been a big step down. He chose to come as a powerless newborn to show us how low he was willing to go. He did this to make the light of his glory known to us personally, and to bring us everlasting peace with him (v14).

He came in the lowest way for the lowest people.

**He came for those who know their powerlessness and their own undeserving sinful
heart.**

He came so we can know him.

At one time, his glory was hidden away, distant and something to be feared, but now he has come in person, bringing great joy to the hearts of those who recognise their need and come to him.

- None of us deserve God's love but out of his great love for us, Jesus came to save us.
- None of us are powerful and we cannot deal with the sin that separates us from God, let alone the problems of the world.

The most powerful came down to do what we could not do for ourselves, to save us and to bring us into an eternal relationship with him.

With Christ's death, resurrection and ascension, we can know that we are included in a future hope, no matter how powerless we feel now. We will reign with him forever. Paul tells us: **For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich (2 Cor 8:9).**

The most powerful becomes the most lowly for the most lowly.

What is the shepherds' response (v20)?

They are overflowing with joy, glorifying and praising God – joining in with the angels. It is a distinctive of the Christian life that we do not rejoice because we deserve God's love. We rejoice because we do not deserve it!

If you feel powerless and undeserving you are not the first and you will not be the last

The shepherds remind us of this.

- When you have fallen into sin, and feel undeserving, you can rejoice and proclaim to everyone that Jesus came for you.
- When you feel powerless over the sin in your life, you can proclaim that Jesus came for you.

Jesus has freed us from the power of sin so that we can know him more.

Let us rejoice in song but also in proclamation as we tell people what Jesus has done.

Let us join with the shepherds, the angels and all Christians.

Let us praise the Lord who came for us.