

Luke 2:1-20, Matthew 2:1-12

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[0 : 0 0] celebrate with you guys. Take your Bibles and I want you to mark Matthew chapter 2, but then I want you to turn to Luke chapter 2. Okay, give you just a moment to do that. Mark Matthew chapter 2. We will be looking at Matthew chapter 2 verses 1 through 12, but we will be reading the Christmas story as is common to us in Luke chapter 2 verses 1 through 20 first. At the conclusion of our service this evening or this morning, we'll be taking the Lord's Supper together. It is something that traditionally we do on Christmas Eve night. It's on, is it not?

I thought it was. Well, we'll stay here, brother. It's on, but it's not working. There we go. I hear myself talking, so I'll stay right here. What about that? This new mic goes through the batteries a lot quicker than the old mic did, but it's okay. Anyway, this morning we'll be taking the Lord's Supper together. We typically do that on Christmas Eve night, but I thought we'd have the opportunity to do it as a church family because we don't always have the opportunity to do a Christmas Eve morning service. We've done a couple of them in the last seven years since I've been here.

Christmas Day has fallen on Sunday, and we've been able to celebrate together there, but I just love the picture of that, of rejoicing in his birth, but also remembering his death and anticipating his soon coming again. And what a beautiful picture that is as we gather together to do that. But this morning, we're going to start out in Luke chapter two. We'll be in verses one through 20 as we read there. And then we will go to Matthew chapter two and read verses one through 12. There are other verses that pertain to our message, but I will not read them because we've already read them with one another. As we've been making our way through the Christmas story, and we've been looking at each and every part of it, we have been amazed at the wonder of Christmas. And we have seen how God is continuing his unchanged purpose. We have seen how he has shown up and moving in the most unbelievable of locations.

And this morning, we will look at how he uses unlikely people. And in that unlikely people, we can include Zacharias and Elizabeth and Mary and Joseph, but we've already read their accounts. So we won't reread them. But we will read the accounts that we have before us this morning. So when we get into the text and we're looking at, I'm going to take a little bit of liberty in including those within this message. And I encourage you to go back and read them again, even though it's only been a couple of weeks since we've done it. And I know that we are so familiar with the Christmas story. But we want it to reign over us with fresh freshness and excitement and anticipation. So if you are physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together, we read Luke chapter two, starting in verse one, I'll go down to verse 20. And then we'll go over to Matthew chapter two, the word of God says, now, you know, this, right? You know, this now, in those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his known city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son. And she wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. In the same region, there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. And they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, do not be afraid. For behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all the people. For today in the city of David, there has been born for you a

Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased. When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to

one another, Let us go straight to Bethlehem then and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us. 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. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

[4 : 47] Now go with me over to Matthew chapter 2. Matthew chapter 2, starting in verse 1. Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea and the days of Herod, the king Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem saying, Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east and have come to worship him. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. And gathering together all the chief priests and the scribes and the people, he inquired to them where the Messiah was to be born. And they said to him, In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what has been written by the prophet, A new Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah. For out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. When Herod secretly called, the Magi determined from them the exact time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, Go and search carefully for the child. And when you have found him, report to me so that I too may come and worship him. After hearing the king, they went their way and the star which they had seen in the east went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And after coming into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell to the ground and worshiped him. Then opening their treasures, they presented to him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the Magi left for their own country by another way. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. Thank you for this season, for this glorious opportunity which we have to come and to worship and celebrate together and to read your word. Lord, we pray that the familiarity of it does not dull nor quench the excitement which we see in the word of God. May it speak to our hearts and minds. May we understand it with clarity. May we understand it with purpose. And may you do a great work in our hearts and minds for your glory. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Throughout the Christmas account, we see a number of amazing things. We see how God's purposes and plans are unchanged and undaunted, even though 400 plus years of silence. One of the glorious events that surround Christmas to me is that when God breaks the silence, he is still saying the same thing he had said so many years before. We have seen also how it is some of the most unlikely and unbelievable, unexpected places. Sure, we look for Bethlehem, but what about Nazareth? There's no mentioning in the Old Testament of that. We see Nazareth, Bethlehem, and then Egypt just concerning the life of Christ. And now we come to the people that are involved in this account. We've been reading of them and about them throughout the entire thing, but we want to focus just a little bit on the people because God uses unlikely people. One of the things that assures me in scripture is that God uses the most unlikely of people to do the most unbelievable things. That God searches hearts and minds and he doesn't look for what the world looks for. He doesn't look as he tells Samuel as he's getting ready to anoint David. He does not see as man sees, but he looks beyond what man sees and looks at the heart of the individual. We can see that in the Christmas account, some similarities between these unlikely people, and we'll see that. But God uses people that we wouldn't expect. Now that gives me hope because when I know me as well as I know me, and I would guess as you know you as well as you know you, you would assume that God could never use you. That you were probably the most unlikely of people that the Lord would ever commission or use or call for his purposes and his glory. But the good news is is when we open up scripture, we find people just like ourselves that God is using. When we read the life of Christ, we see that he commissions the most unlikely of people to take this unbelievable news, this herald, this proclamation from the very beginning, the heralds of the gospel, which literally means good news are people that we would not anticipate. If you think about it just for a moment, the first ones to preach are shepherds. They preach the coming of Christ. The first ones to preach the resurrection are women. And then the most unlikely of people that he calls to make a proclamation and

to evangelize the world are all those who had forsaken him right before he was crucified. God uses unlikely people, which gives us hope and it gives us purpose and it reassures our calling because

he's not just using a select few, he's using all people for his glory. Now, when we look at this and we include in this account, Zacharias and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the Magi of the wise men, and we see how unbelievable and how amazing Christmas is. The first thing that we notice about the people that God uses is that each and every one of them have a revelation. Number one, there is a revelation given to each one of them. Now we would anticipate that Zacharias would be used.

We would anticipate it because Zacharias is a priest and he's in the temple of the Lord and he's burning incense at the time of prayer. He's in the right place at the right time. He is doing matters in a way that we would expect God would speak. But Zacharias doesn't appear to be the priest that we would choose because Zacharias is old, remember? And remember men, his wife is not old, she's advanced in years. He never says she's old. He says, and my wife is advanced in years. He is old, she is advancing and they are beyond that childbearing time and it seems to be the most unlikely of people that God would ever call. But yet in all of the priests, in all of the 400 years that this ritual continues on, this is the individual that God chooses to give a great special revelation to. And this revelation comes to him with the word of God being affirmed as to what God is doing. We meet Mary. She is in the most unlikely of places and that is she's in Nazareth and God gives a great revelation to Mary. Joseph has a revelation, shepherds have a revelation, and even the Magi from the east have a revelation. We notice this, that God meets these individuals and reveals to them what he is doing and what he is about to do. The one thing that we notice about Zacharias and Elizabeth and Mary and Joseph is they are declared to be righteous. That is, they are living their life according to the standard that God has called them to. The shepherds, we don't know much of their character, but we do know they're working diligently and they're out in the field and they're watching their flock by night. The Magi are using the revelation that God gives them and we'll see that in just a moment. We don't know much and we don't want to confuse this, okay? Let's not say that the wise men were pious. Let's not, let's not go too far and extend this and say, well, they, they accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior and they were redeemed. We don't want to read into the text that which is not there. More than likely, these people, people were from either Arabia or Persia and that region and they had come to acknowledge a king that was being born. We'll see in just a moment exactly how God gave them a revelation as to that. But one thing we notice is that every one of the people that God includes in the Christmas story are people that are given a revelation and the revelation meets them where they're at. This is astounding. Zacharias is in the temple, meets him there.

Mary is, for all we know, engaged in daily affairs and God meets her there. Joseph has a dream. God meets him there. The shepherds are in the field watching their flock by night and God meets them there. The Magi are doing what they do. They are astrologers, not to the point of fortune tellers, but they study the heavens. They study the stars. They are known historically for their advancements in medicine and they are known for their wisdom beyond their time and they are studying the stars and God meets them there. And this revelation is given to each one of them in the course of their daily activities because God is beginning to show them what he is about to do. But what's even more astounding is that the revelation God gives to them, listen to me friend, he does not give a new revelation. He gives a fuller revelation.

[13:02] That is God reveals what has been consistent to what God has been saying all along. The revelation that God gives is in accordance with the word of God already declared. This is important because there are a lot of people throughout history who claim to have had a revelation from God. And we look throughout history and we see these who have a revelation and they do horrendous things. But these revelations are not something new. These are revelations that fulfill what God has already said. Even the Magi studying the heavens of the stars is one of the greatest case studies you'll ever do in scripture because you say how in the world did they ever know?

Numbers 24:17 says, I see him but not yet a star shall arise out of Judah and the scepter shall never depart from his hand for he will rule. Isaiah has prophecies of the heavens declaring the coming of a king. And you say, well, how in the world would they ever have these? Well, God saw so fit that at one time in the disciplinarian action of his children, he sent them to Babylon, the Babylonian captivity. When they were in Babylonian captivity, one of the first Jews to ever be brought out of Jerusalem and brought into Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar were the young men. You remember them, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and also this man named Daniel. Daniel was given the ability to foresee revelations and visions of God.

Daniel is promoted within the Babylonian empire. Daniel becomes the lead soothsayer or the lead seer or the lead, stay with me, Magi in the Babylonian empire. And being the lead of anything in that day in time means you would have been able to put inside the library the books that you trusted. The books that Daniel trusted would have been the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, of which the book of Numbers is one of them. And any other Magi would have studied the works of the leaders of their ages before them. Numbers 24, 17 would have been something that they read over and over and over again. And all of a sudden, God begins to open up and reveal what he has already said.

And they begin to take notice of this. See, friend, what we notice is the people that God use are people that receive a revelation in the course of their daily life that is consistent with the word of God, which means if we want to be those unlikely people that God used, we must first of all know his word and we must also walk close to him. We must be living consistently. We must be living accurately because God is not going to give us a revelation that is new. He is giving us a revelation that is full. And unless we know the word of God, what it has declared, we will not see what God is saying to us. These people understood that the hope of all of Israel was longing for a Messiah. [15:54] And the revelation that God gave was joined to the longing in their hearts that was imparted because of the word of God already declared. How important is the word? Well, it is of utmost important because God will always continue to say what he has already said. We see these are people of revelation. A revelation is a wonderful thing, but we must get to the second thing. The second thing is we see they are people of response. Because if a revelation is made and no response is ever taken, and it is, as I like to say, just a collection of useless information. If God shows you something and reveals something to you and opens up the word of God to you and you don't do anything with it, or if there is no change in your life, if there is no adjustment, if there is no redirection, no movement, then we are just collecting information and not doing anything with it. We call that useless information. Many of us know useless facts. We kind of hold on to them, things that really do not impact and change our lives, things that do not affect how we live our day-to-day activities, that do not affect how we give our finances, do not affect how we spend our time, do not affect how we lead our family. But the revelations that God gives to the people he uses are those which dictate a response. Of the people in the Christmas account, only one of them was hesitant in his response, and that was Zacharias. Zacharias says, how can I know these things will be for sure? You remember that right in Luke chapter 1? He doubts what the angel tells him. He is held accountable for his doubt because he is a man who has been given much and therefore much is expected of him. He is a priest in the temple burning incense at the hour of prayer and he doubts the fact that God would hear his prayers. And God strikes him deaf and dumb until the fulfillment of these things. He would not be able to speak. So we see that God disciplines him for his lack of faith or lack of response. But yet when these things come about, the response of Zacharias is amazing and astounding. We'll get to that in just a moment. We see every other one that God gives this revelation to, they respond. Think about this.

When the angel Gabriel appears to Mary, Mary has her hesitations as well. Mary should have hesitations. She had no idea. She understood as someone once said, she knew biology and she knew that this wouldn't happen because biologically there's an impossibility that confronts them, right? I've never been with a man.

And she understood these things and even her youthfulness. But yet we see she surrenders, right? She calls herself the handmaiden or the servant of the Lord. And she surrenders her life to his leading and to his revelation. Joseph awakes from his dream and takes Mary to be his wife. Don't discount that response because that's an astounding thing in that time, in that culture, in that day. Joseph responded in obedience. The wise men, when they see the revelation, if you read the text and we've just read it this morning, it says, as soon as the angels departed, it says, let us go straight to Bethlehem then and see this thing that has come to pass. Now, think about this just for a moment. Where were the wise men? Well, they were out in their fields.

I'm not the wise men. Where were the shepherds? They were out in the fields. What were the shepherds doing? Keeping their watch over their flock by night. So for them to go straight to Bethlehem, what did they have to do? They left their flocks behind. You ever thought about that? The thing that their life depended upon, the thing that they were held accountable for, the thing that that Jesus says a good shepherd would lay down his life for his sheep. They left the sheep behind to go see this thing that has come about. Why? Because a revelation had been given to them and

they knew the response was greater than the responsibility the world had given them. They left something behind.

[19 : 40] The Magi from the east, they're there. They see the star coming and we know this journey is treacherous. If you look at the distance that they traveled and we don't know exactly where they came from, but either way you put it from the east, if you're coming from the east and traveling west, there's a whole lot to the east of Israel that doesn't look very pleasing and appealing to the eye.

And yet they decided to take this long journey. Why? Because they knew something was happening. They responded to the revelation given to them. Friend, listen to me. The people God uses are not only people who understand the word of God, they are people who do something because they understand the word of God. God opens it up and he shows them a fuller revelation of what God is declaring to them and they did something. Elizabeth and Zacharias. They took on the responsibility. Mary surrendered. Joseph took the wife.

The shepherds left the flock and the wise men made the journey. Every one of them did something. Because in order to be used by the Lord of Lord and King of Kings, to be used by him in his work and in his manifestation of his glory, it requires a response in light of a revelation.

There are many, many, many people today, by the way, that are going to hear the word of God proclaimed to them around the world. There are many people today who will sit under either faithful preaching and by the way, it doesn't even have to be faithful preaching because the word of God has greater power than even the unfaithfulness of the man of God, even though the man of God is held to a higher standard of that.

There are many people that will open up scripture today and God will show them something. God will, they will see something new and it will not be new to God. It will be, they will see something for the first time. You ever open up scripture and I don't know how many times I've read through the Bible and I really don't know. And I don't say that in a boastful or braggadocious way because I'm still so biblical illiterate when it comes to scripture, right? And yet when we read scripture and all of a sudden we go, wow, look at that. The wow, look at that is like the shepherd seeing the angels in the sky going, wow, look at that. But if we go, wow, look at that and then go back to doing what we've always done, we really haven't done anything. Because whenever God opens up his word and gives a greater revelation, the call is to look at that. Now, what should I do?

[22 : 01] There's a response and the response is of utmost importance because what we see is obedient response leads to the third thing that is a realization. There's a revelation, a response, and then a realization. Did you notice that God had declared something to them either through the heavens declaring his glory or the angels appearing in the temple or in the field or in the dream or in the field with the shepherds? God had revealed something to every one of these individuals, but it wasn't until they responded that they really see that what God had declared was an actual reality. There's a realization based upon their response. That is, God had declared something to them. They did something in light of that declaration. And when they did something in light of that declaration, they were able to go, you know what? God was right. Zacharias doubted for a moment. He was disciplined of the Lord.

But I wonder how long it's been since you read the end of Luke chapter one, when Zacharias' voice is given back and he declares his name shall be John. Why? Because that's his response, right? God had told him, you shall name him John. And he says, his name shall be John. At least nine months of silence. And the first thing he declares is our faithful obedience. And as soon as he declares his name shall be John, read the rest of Luke chapter one and see the reality of what he sees. It is praising and declaring not only John, but the coming of the Savior. He declares that his son, John the Baptist, will be the forerunner who goes before the Savior of all mankind. He will prepare the hearts and minds of people to receive the Savior. Do you notice that? That the response, all of a sudden, his name shall be John, leads to a realization that this son is not the end all be all. He is the one pointing to the end all be all, right? John the Baptist can say, I am not he. There is one coming after me that is greater than I. I must decrease and he must increase. The reason John the Baptist could say that is because the very first prophetic word that his father uttered over him was, John, you're not the end, but there's one coming after you that is greater than you. And there's this realization that all of a sudden, the Savior is coming and I know he's coming because my son's going to be the one who prepares the way.

We see the magnificent, it's called, of Mary. She declares when she goes to meet Elizabeth and she declares this thing. And I've said this sharing it with individuals. The only thing Mary ever declares is that she is humble. She is, she's not worthy to be the mother of the Savior of the world. And she declares the glory of the child that is to be born, not the glory of her own position. We see the shepherds coming and they come into it and it says that they wonder and they are astounded. They see, the text tells us that when they came in, it says they came in a hurry and they found Mary and Joseph and the babies that slept in the manger. And when they had seen this, look at what it says. It says they made known everything that had been told them about this child. See, they came and the realization brought about this astounding thing. And it says that when they left, they went back glorifying and praising God. I hope you see a consistency here that with every one of them with a revelation and in a response, in light of that revelation, it led to this reality and the reality inevitably led to the worship, right? Everywhere around the Christmas story, people are worshiping. We don't see anybody, you know, be all doom and gloom, right? The only person we see doom and gloom is Herod.

You notice that everybody else seems to be worshiping and celebrating and they're excited and they're anticipating something because all of a sudden, because they were obedient, what God has declared would happen has just happened and it's right before their eyes. The mad guy, they, now we don't want to give them this air of holiness, but we know that they make this journey. And I love what Matthew tells us. And when they came into the house and they saw the child, do you notice that? What does it say?

And they fell on their faces and worshiped him. It is when response led to a reality that all of a sudden worship was the natural order of events. When they saw the child, they fell on their face and they worshiped him. And then they opened up their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. We don't need to go through. There are a number of sermons that have been preached about what each of those represent and there's greater men than me. They could declare those things. And each one of them have representative to the office of Christ and they're united into his, his kingship, his priesthood and his death and his sacrifice. We understand those things. But what we notice is that when they come into the room, it says, and when they saw him, they fell on their faces. See, revelation didn't do anything until they responded. And when they responded, the reality of what God was doing was made known to them, which all of a sudden moved their hearts to worship. You know, one of the greatest tragedies, I think, why we see so little worship among the churches in America today. Now, I don't mean fanaticism. I don't mean goosebumps. I don't mean, we see a lot of that. You can go in any church and see goosebumps. You can go in any church and see a production. You can go in any church and see, and I'm not here to disregard, dispute, or belittle any of that. I'm not talking about putting on a show.

[27 : 12] I'm talking about genuine, authentic worship. You know, the reason we see so little of that is because we have so little response to what God has told us. So these things aren't real to us.

See, when the truths of God become a reality, no one has to lead you to worship. People have to keep you from worshiping. It's heartbreaking, isn't it? When these things are really real, no one had to ask the shepherds to worship. No one had to lead the wise men to worship.

No one had to ask Zacharias to make this prophetic declaration. No one had to urge them on. No, the reality of what was taking place led them to worship. The reason there's so little worship is because there's so little really grasping the reality. And that's the truth. Revelation, response, and reality. Here's the good news. The fourth and final one. That's why the good news is it's the final one. There's also a return. Did you notice in the text, in the text of the Christmas account, in the end, every one of them went back to where they started?

Right? As far as we know, Zacharias and Elizabeth never left. He was in the temple living outside, probably in the suburbs of Jerusalem or living somewhere around Jerusalem. We understand that. Suburbs isn't what they would call it, right? That's me kind of taking today's modern terminology, but they were living somewhere near Jerusalem. They never went back. As far as we know, they never left. He would never go into the temple again because that was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

[28 : 57] So he had his once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. He had a great revelation of God while he was there. He responded in light that revelation. His name shall be John. He worshiped, and then he fades off the scene. We don't see him much anymore. We don't see him ever again anymore, and yet, as far as we know, they're just where they were at. We know their son ends up in the desert and the wilderness out there, but yet they're still there, right? We go to Mary and Joseph.

Joseph is warned in a dream. They leave Bethlehem. They go to Egypt, but when they leave Egypt, they go back where?

Nazareth. All the way back to where they started. They're in Nazareth. When the shepherds come, they see this child, and they make known everything that had been declared to them about this child, but what does our text say? And then they went back glorifying and praising God. When the Magi came in, and they saw the child, and they fell on their faces and worshiped him. They opened up their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and it tells us that they went back another way. They didn't tell here. They went back another way. None of them stayed in that same place. They didn't linger there. Why? Because the good news was more, was for, what did the angel say?

All the people. Behold, I bring you good news and great joy, which will be for all people. One of the wondrous things about the people that God uses is they not only cross a spectrum of individuals, but they also cross a vast array of geography. And God called all these people to one locale to reveal a truth to them, and then he sent them back. And he sent them back with what they had seen. And we have to understand that they would have never been the same, but they all went back, and they went back with the glorious news of everything that they had seen, everything that they had heard, everything that they had witnessed. It is an astounding thing that we look throughout Scripture, and we see how God sends people back. I'm reminded in the book of Acts, when Philip is being led by the Spirit, and he ends up in the wilderness, and he's out there in this desert, and he meets this eunuch, this Ethiopian eunuch. Remember the Ethiopian eunuch, right? And he meets him, and he declares Christ to him, and this Ethiopian eunuch accepts Christ and says, what prevents me from being baptized? And he's baptized, and Philip is cast away. Where did the eunuch go? He went back to Ethiopia. You know how we know that? Because when you read church history, and some of the apostles finally made their way into Ethiopia, there was already a church there. How do we know there was already a church there? Because God had already commissioned an individual who met a man named Philip on the road, who sent him back. One thing we notice is that when God gives a revelation, man responds, and the reality becomes real. He puts those people back. Why? Because God wants his glory declared to all people.

We leave here in just a few moments. We're all going back, going back from where we came, or going different places. And the revelations and the realities that God gives us in one locale are not to stay here. They're to go back with us, because that's how God uses people. He shows them something in a moment, and it will change their life forever, so that they will go back. This is the whole purpose in scripture. Come and see, now go and tell. It's real easy. That's the great commission.

When Jesus called his apostles to him, he said, come and see, come and see, come and see. Come with me, and I will do. Come with me, and I will do. And then he goes on and says, come with me, and you do. Come with me, you do. And then a little bit longer, he goes, you go, and you do, and then I'll come back later. Right? He always sends them back. And in sending them back, they are declaring the glory of God, because when these things are reality, you no longer want to talk about yourself. You want to talk about what you've just seen. And these are the unlikely people God uses, which the good news is, they're just like us. They're just like you and I, because we were the last people that God, we would ever envision a holy God would ever use, but because of Emmanuel, God with us, and because he's called us not to a manger, but he's called us to a cross, and he's called us to fall on our faces and worship him and adore him and to give our lives to him. [33 : 02] And he now sends us back to declare what we know to be true. He didn't just keep them there. They all returned and went back. And the amazing thing of Christmas is that God began to declare and proclaim the message to each one of these individuals before the world was really ever ready for it.

But what does scripture say? In the fullness of time, God brought forth his own son. At the right time, in the right place, to the right people. Friend, listen to me, and I'm wrapping up here. And I know these series of messages have been totally different than what I normally preach. I'm going to stop right here. The reason you've accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, if you have, is because God has shown you something of himself. He's called you to himself. He's revealed his love and care and concern for you. You responded to that through humble submission. You said, Lord, be master of my life. At least I hope you did. And when you did that, the reality of who he is becomes real to you.

The moment you surrender and you respond, the reality of all the promises that he's given in scripture become real. The peace that passes understanding, joy in the inexpressible moment, joy that is greater than the miseries of the world, all those things, the fruits of the spirit, they become realities.

[34 : 22] And those realities are within you, and they are known as the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. And he's called you, it says, John 14, 15, and 16. Some of you are reading through that right now.

Jesus says, greater works than I have done, you will do. It's amazing to me that Jesus ever declares his people will do greater works. And it doesn't mean greater in scope. It means greater in measure. He sends them out. He limited his ministry to one place, but he sends them out.

The reason you have, if you've accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, the reason he called you to himself, gave you a revelation that you responded to, was so that you could return and declare his glory for a time such as this.

At the right time, he called you to himself. If you've never accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, then maybe he is calling you. Maybe he's calling you for a season such as this, not just to know some facts, but to surrender life and to respond.

To say, Lord, I want to know if these things are real. You know the greatest way you know they're real? Someone said, well, pastor, if you can ever prove it to me, I'll prove it to him like this. The moment you surrender, they will need no proof. The shepherds took off walking based upon what they had seen in the word of God.

[35 : 36] Nobody had to prove anything to them later. The greatest proof I can tell you, the Bible says, whoever trusts in Jesus Christ shall be saved. Take him at his word, surrender to his word, and respond according to his word, and these things become a reality to you.

And we see then he causes us to return to declare his glories. And we see the amazement of Christmas that God uses the most unlikely of people. Let's pray, and then we'll have a time of invitation.

Lord, we thank you for this day. I thank you for your glories and your power and your position. I thank you for the purposes of your work and wonders of our life.

Lord, we ask that you take the truth of Scripture and help it to resonate within our hearts and minds.

We pray that you would use it according to your glory, for your glory.

We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Would you stand with me?