



Christmas Steps: WORSHIP AGAIN

Sunday 15th December 2024

Luke 2:15-20

I wonder, if we didn't have to go through all the preparations, do you think Christmas would be more or less enjoyable? Getting busy getting ready for Christmas seems to consume us in a way perhaps no other event does, except maybe a wedding.

But today I want us to see how those who had the least preparation time for the first Christmas were actually the most ready. And then ask ourselves this question: **If I have no more time to prepare am I ready?**

1

So let us take up God's word from Luke 2,

2

So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷ Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. ¹⁸ And all those who heard *it* marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart. ²⁰ Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

There are 4 ways in which the shepherds show us they were ready, that we need to adopt into our approach to being ready to worship Christ.

3

1. **They were ready to go now** (not planning to go once they had each booked some annual leave)

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This is reflective of the call of Christ to the first disciples in Matthew 4:19-22,

Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ They **immediately** left *their* nets and followed Him.

²¹ Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, ²² and **immediately** they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

When Jesus calls and Jesus speaks even the wind and the waves obey and did not have a planning meeting in the heavenlies!

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2. **They went directly** 'go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass' – they didn't google it to see if this was real, or how popular an event this would be.

6

The call to live in worship from Hebrews 12:1 tells us,

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

When the Bible says 'lay aside every weight' that includes everything that will delay us, deter us, or slow us down. **He has made a way for us to come and worship and we cannot make it simpler or easier, but we can make it more difficult and much slower.**

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God has led many of you through some very uncomfortable places this year, places you would never have chosen, but places where HE has stripped your faith back to the simplicity that is in Christ.

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3. **They listened (and obeyed) what God alone had said** – not checking in with how popular it would be amongst friends

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This is the direction Paul gives in Romans 12:2,

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The call of the Christian is to leave the thinking of this world behind (repent) and think in a transformed way. The end goal of the Christian call? To prove that what God has designed is true, and is perfect, and is enough.

Some of you find yourself trapped in habits and patterns of behaviour that have developed over time but they cause you to either question everything or get stuck in your own thinking loop. The gospel calls you to Jesus today as you are. **The reason that feels so unnatural is because it goes against most things this world will ever tell you to do.**

10

11 4. **'They came with haste'** – they hurried to get to Jesus.

Those who are very measured and need to feel in control, this feels like a very out of control reaction. 'If we hurry we will forget something!'. No worries, Jesus said come as you are. The only reason we will not hurry to come to Jesus

12 is because we are not ready. Psalm 86:5 tells us clearly,

For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.

God is ready, are you?

13 Look at the words of Jesus in Luke 19:5-7,

And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." ⁶ So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. ⁷ But when they saw *it*, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."

Yes, some will say you can't hurry to Jesus because you are not ready, you haven't prepared yourself properly. **There is only one who can make you fit and ready to meet Jesus, and that is Jesus Himself.**

14 You can go to the last page in the Bible and you will find the same invitation in Revelation 22:17,

And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

Some of you have come here today because that's what you do, it's your Sunday thing, for some because it's your family's thing, for some because it's a Christmas thing. But God has brought you here today so it can be a Jesus thing. You may call yourself an atheist, an agnostic, you may say you're not ready or you're not sure. God has said all He is going to say.

16 So now, one question remains: are you ready?

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1. Ask God to take the shackles off your feet so you can go now
 2. Ask God to take away the passion you have for things that stop you being ready for Jesus now
 3. Don't head for the nearest popular opinion – take God at His word and believe

4. Running to Jesus, means running from whatever else you are holding onto. Get your running shoes on and make haste, not more plans to make haste one day.

The result will be as Luke tells us in 2:20,

Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

18

If you will ready yourself, you will find yourself ready to worship again, and worship again, and worship Jesus again, and again, and again.