

B 4 or 3 Advent <i>Or whenever Christmas Day falls on a Sunday morning</i>	Belief that Matters Luke 1.26-55 by Tim Isbell	12/14/2008
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Thesis: Belief that matters to God is belief that includes action.

Let's look at 4 accounts of God intersecting with people.

1. Mary, a virgin young girl engaged to marry an older man.

Angel of the Lord says, "... do not be afraid" before giving her some striking news: "You've been selected to be the mother of God's son, who will reign as King forever."

2. Joseph, a simple carpenter and Mary's fiancé.

Angel of the Lord says "... do not be afraid, she's pure, innocent, pregnant with God's own son. Marry her; parent the boy like he is your own. Name the boy Jesus; he will save people from their sin."

3. Shepherds working in field at night.

Angel of the Lord says, "... do not be afraid. I bring you Good News: the Savior of the world is born; he's in a stable. Go greet him." Then a choir of angels arrives to encourage them to get moving.

4. Wise men, Gentiles from a country east of Palestine.

They had read Jewish prophets and knew something about the Jews. One night they see a star and sense God's prompt to follow it to a new King born to the Jews. God also prompted them to take treasures with them to lay it at his feet of this newborn.

Four intersections with God.

In each case people rearrange lives to respond to God's Good News.

Mary accepts her role as the mother of God's son, and does it "gladly."

Luke 1:38 (NLT)

³⁸ ... "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

Luke 1:46-49 (NLT)

⁴⁶ ... "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. ⁴⁷ How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! ⁴⁸ For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me

blessed. ⁴⁹ For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me.

And Mary's response blessed the heart of God. Heaven must have responded, "Way to go, everyone here holds you in high regard."

Joseph marries Mary, probably expecting it wouldn't be the last time his life is intersected by God. He was right.

Soon after Jesus' birth, the angel of the Lord comes to Joseph in a dream that warns him of great danger for the child.

Matthew 2:13-15 (NLT)

¹³ ... "Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother," the angel said. "Stay there until I tell you to return, because King Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." ¹⁴ That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, ¹⁵ and they stayed there until Herod's death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: "I called my Son out of Egypt."

I can see God looking down on the situation and saying to the angels ... "yes, we've got just the right man on this. Way to go, Joseph. All heaven holds you in high regard."

Shepherds, simple laborers, but wise enough to follow the angel's direction!

Luke 2:15-20 (NLT)

¹⁵ When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." ¹⁶ They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. ¹⁷ After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. ¹⁸ All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, ¹⁹ but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. ²⁰ The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

I'm sure their praise and worship, and their sharing of the Good News blessed God's heart and he said, "Yes! Way to go shepherds! Even though earth may not hold you in high regard, all heaven does!"

Wise men, Gentile kings from the east, as special as the shepherds were common, dropped what they were doing when they saw the star and moved into action.

Matthew 2:1-2 (NLT)

¹ ... the wise men traveled to Jerusalem and asked, ² "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him."

Matthew 2:11 (NLT)

¹¹ They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Though they didn't know what their treasure would mean, they gave it. In hindsight (to us, at least) this treasure financed Joseph/Mary/Jesus' escape to Egypt, and years later

their return. It undoubtedly blessed God to see these well-to-do wise men trust his prompts enough for him to say, "Way to go. Heaven holds you in high regard!"

Four intersections: These people didn't ignore them or "blow them off."

Instead they all promptly moved into action, rearranging their lives around the promptings of God. And it blessed God's heart; all heaven rejoiced.

God is intersecting some of our lives today, saying "Do not be afraid, follow my prompt, receive my good news."

But what, exactly, is God's Good News?

That his son, Jesus Christ, the one born in Palestine 2,000 years ago, is still alive, living in heaven but reigning over all the creation even now. Someday every person will see that Jesus is indeed Lord of all, now and forever. We who follow are different in that we acknowledge that Jesus is Lord now, in our lives and in all the world, and we actively rearrange our lives to live as citizens in his Kingdom now and forever.

This is the Jesus Christ who offered himself for the forgiveness of your sins and mine, all of them, even the embarrassing ones! God knows we've all sinned, fallen short of his design, and worshiped wrong things. But he loves us enough to give his life for our forgiveness.

The core of the Good News is that it every one of us who puts full confidence in Jesus can grow to the point where we can walk routinely and easily in the power and character of Christ.

This good news is for the sinner, the poor, the captive, the blind, the oppressed, all of us.

How about you today?

Is God intersecting your life right now?

Do you sense his prompt?

Belief that matters is belief that swings into action.

Will you swing into action like Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the wise men?

Here's a way that you can swing into action this morning:

Repeat the Apostles Creed.

Respond by coming to the altar and telling Jesus that you are responding to his prompt.

Other resources:
Click on the link for the Google Slides . (Similar to PowerPoint)
Audio file: On 10/16/2005 New Life started posting audio files of sermons online. To find the file for any sermon: go to the upper right hand corner of the first page of this sermon notes file and note the earliest preach date. Then go to New Life Recordings and browse to that date.
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