

With Jesus at Christmas

#0160

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—December 18, 1976

As we meet this morning to worship our Lord, our minds are led to the first occasion of worship after the incarnation. We do not know, of course, what day of the week or what day of the month Jesus was born, but the glorious fact is He was born:

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:
God was manifest in the flesh” 1 Timothy 3:16.

And in that little babe in Mary’s arms, anointed eyes discerned the Son of God.

As we meditate this morning on the story of Bethlehem, may the Holy Spirit minister to our hearts in appreciation. Learning more of God’s ways of doing things in the past, perhaps we shall be better able to appreciate how He does things now.

You know, He says:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your
ways my ways... For as the heavens are higher than the
earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My
thoughts than your thoughts” Isaiah 55:8.

And that doesn’t mean that He always chooses the splendid, the glorified. In fact, Bethlehem tells us just the opposite.

Where is Bethlehem? Oh, it’s a little village a few miles from Jerusalem. If PR men had been arranging the Savior’s birth, probably it would have been in Jerusalem, not in Bethlehem—just that little village. But that isn’t all. Where was He born? In a stable. Why? There’s no room in the Inn. Reservations hadn’t been made ahead.

Somebody might have said, There should have been better planning, and it’s good to plan, friends, and God has a plan:

“But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth
His Son...” Galatians 4:4.

But where human beings had not planned, the Father planned, and it was not an accident that Jesus was born in a humble village and in the stable. What is He saying to us? He’s telling us that He longs to be with the humble people as well as with the rich and influential.

Obviously, if God will reach down to the lowest, all in between can find a place, too, but if Jesus had come, first of all, to what we call the higher strata of society, the little folks, the common people, might have felt left out. Jesus started at the bottom of the ladder.

It's interesting that the first ones who worshipped Him were not the priests, the ministers, the leaders, in either church or state. Who were they? Shepherds. The eighth verse says:

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night” Luke 2:8.

Tell me, as you remember the narrative or look there at the scriptures, how did the shepherds know to come and worship? How did they know? Why, the angel of the Lord came. You mean the angels of heaven came to some simple shepherds out on the hills there near Bethlehem? Exactly.

Why didn't they go to some big folks? Well, they would have liked to, but you know, we are told that the angel of heaven who came to announce the Savior's birth looked over quite a bit of territory hunting for somebody that would be open to the announcement.

He came to Jerusalem but they were all busy there with forms and ceremonies, and finally, he noticed the shepherds out there on the hills near Bethlehem, and he noted that they were communing with God and with one another concerning the coming of the Messiah, whose advent was expected according to Daniel's prophecy about this time. Here, as he listened, he found somebody that he knew would be responsive. And so, accompanied by the angel choir, he revealed himself to these simple shepherds and gave them the message.

This tells me that God often works in unexpected ways. It warns me that I need to be careful that I do not decide in advance through what channels God will work. It has happened long before Bethlehem and many times since.

Think of Joseph in his experience in Egypt. Little did those brothers dream, as they came down to Egypt and met the governor, that it was their brother, the one that they had sold as a slave. Little did they realize that their Savior, for he was the Savior from famine, was one whom they had betrayed and denied. In all this, Joseph was a type of Christ, wasn't he? My point is God worked in an unexpected way, an unexpected way.

You remember that in Babylon, when all the king's wise men utterly failed in meeting his request to tell the dream and interpret it, a young man from Judea, a captive in a strange land, was used of God to bring glory to Jehovah and to give the king the answer to his problem. An unexpected turn of events brought Daniel and Daniel's God to the attention of the whole Babylonian empire.

And we might think of many experiences since. We think of the time there in the Middle Ages when one church ruled the Christian world, and God longed to reveal the light of simple faith in the righteousness of Jesus. How did He do it? Ah friends, He spoke to the heart of a monk there in Germany, and light broke forth. And as we study the history of the other reformation heroes, many of them were humble people used of God as they studied the word, poured over the scriptures.

We come down to the early years of the 19th century, and there we see William Miller, a farmer, studying the Bible, putting together the various verses as he looks up in his concordance and uses the marginal references. He keeps studying, studying, studying. He traces down the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation. He sees how they shed light one on another.

And so, as he studies, the angels of God—the same angels that spoke to these shepherds at Bethlehem—the angels of God lead his mind until the great truths of the advent message become clear and plain to his mind, and then he, a man that had no ambitions to speak in public, was, shall I say, forced, compelled, properly so, by the Spirit of God, to begin to exercise those gifts and to spread the message, and within a few years, hundreds and hundreds of ministers in this country and in England and in other places, were spreading the message:

“...Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come...” Revelation 14:7.

Yes, friends, all down through the ages, God has used humble people, and He has started His work in ways that were not auspicious, ways that did not appeal to the natural heart, ways that people would have said were not very winning, not very winsome.

But God has done this for two reasons. One is, He wants us to appreciate truth for its own merits, not because of the messenger that brings it. The Jewish leaders at Jerusalem did not even deign to investigate the story of these shepherds and what they had discovered. They were certain that, if God had anything that He wanted them to know, He would not pass them by and let shepherds know about it.

And when, sometime later, the wise men, who had started that night on their long journey, arrived in Jerusalem, they were treated with indifference and almost scorn. Would God pass by the Hebrews and tell some wise men in a foreign country, aliens, strangers, something of this kind? But He did, didn't He, friends. Yes.

And so, in this story of Bethlehem, I repeat, we are warned against closing our eyes, or our ears, or our hearts to what God wants to do through any channel.

The other precious lesson is, God is willing to use me, weak as I am, humble though I may be, and if we are unlearned, so were the shepherds, if we are strangers, so were the wise men from the east, if we are only farmers, as William Miller, think of what he did.

Moses, you remember, was a great man, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, but before God could use him, He had to send him out to be a shepherd, like these shepherds at Bethlehem hundreds of years later, and there in the wilds of Midian, he learned those lessons of listening for God, watching for God's providence. That made him a faithful shepherd over Israel for 40 years.

I repeat, God works in unexpected ways and in ways to encourage you and me that he has a place for us. Aren't you glad God has a place for you, my friend?

Now, this morning, as we're thinking of the story of Bethlehem, how do we fit in personally sitting here this morning? Here we are from near and far. Some live here on this campus, some in nearby communities, some, as I mentioned a while ago, from far away. Here we all are, met to worship God this Christmas season, remembering the gift of His love and remembering what prompted our Father to give us such a present.

What is our response this morning? What does God expect? Why does He so reveal Himself to us? What did He expect from the shepherds? Response. What did they say? The 15th verse:

“And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds” Luke 2:15.

First of all, they responded to the angels' announcement, and they didn't put it off. It says they came with haste. Ah, my friends, how God appreciates prompt response, prompt response.

And having come and worshipped the newborn Messiah, they became at once evangelists—tellers of the good news. They could not keep still. Everybody they met they told about the wonderful event that had happened.

And thus, when God could not find rabbis or priests to tell the glad news, as the angels told the shepherds, *they* became the spreaders of the evangel, they became the messengers of the birth of Jesus.

What is our response this morning? Are we simply enjoying the fact that something happened nearly 2,000 years ago, which means the offer of salvation to all who will listen, or is this experience of Bethlehem a present, living thing in our lives? You see, the One who came and took our humanity there so long ago wants to give us that same experience of knowing His birth in our hearts.

You remember that Paul, writing to the Colossians, says that the hope of glory is Christ in you, Christ in you. Paul, writing to the Galatians, speaks of the travail of soul that he went through in order that Christ might be formed in those converts.

In a spiritual way, the birth of Jesus is to be repeated in every heart that yields to Him. Don't misunderstand me. We can never be divine in the sense that He was and is, but through His exceeding great and precious promises, we are to be partakers of what? The divine nature.

But this is not something that we achieve by our human efforts, climbing up some human path. This is a miracle, like the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. He came and took our human nature that we might share in His divine nature.

And so, this morning, we have the privilege of welcoming in our hearts, not simply as a bit of history, but as a living experience, the Lord of glory. And no matter how humble our home, it can't be more humble than that stable where he tabernacled. No matter how poor we are, there's nobody here this morning probably as poor, certainly not *poorer*, than Joseph and Mary. And certainly, no matter how unlearned we are, we can identify with those shepherds, keeping their flocks by night.

And so, God is telling all of us that He wants to live with us. Do you know why? He loves us, He loves us.

I got a letter the other day from a friend of mine who is giving this message in a distant state, and just chatting in the letter, he said, Brother Frazee, I hope that in the earth made new my farm is near yours so we can chat together often. Well, I like that.

You know, we human beings, we like a little attention and appreciation. Don't we? Sure. Well, God does, too. That's why I said that. Jesus is so interested in us that He will come all the way from heaven to earth to live close to us so that we'll know He loves us and wants our friendship and fellowship. This is what the story of Bethlehem is telling us:

"And the Word was made flesh, and [tabernacled] among us, and we beheld his glory..." John 1:14.

Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing to have Jesus live next to you in the earth made new? Ah, He's invited us to something closer than that. Turn to Revelation, the 3rd chapter, 21st verse:

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" Revelation 3:21.

He came all the way from heaven to earth in order that He might take us all the way from earth to heaven, but in each case, the object is that we may be together. He came down here to get us, to save us from sin. He's coming again the second time. What for?

Do you remember those beautiful words of promise in John 14:

"I go to..." John 14:3.

What?

"...to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself..." John 14:3.

What for?

“...that where I am, there ye may be also” John 14:3.

He came into the stable so that we might have a mansion. But the object in both cases is to be where *we* are, to get close to *us*. He wants us with Him through eternal ages. Isn't that tremendous, friends.

And thank God, in the time between Bethlehem and the second advent, in this little moment, as it were, of the last hour down here in human history, He's arranged that you and I shall share His fellowship, even though it's unseen.

Notice the preceding verse, Revelation 3:20:

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” Revelation 3:20.

Ah friends, what a friend we have in Jesus. Isn't it wonderful to have Him? And listen, back there, coming with the limitations of humanity, He could be born in only one village, in only one place, but in what we're studying this morning, in this verse, we have just read, He offers each one of us the opportunity of accepting Him, receiving Him, welcoming Him, as a permanent guest in our home and in our heart. Isn't that wonderful?

Wouldn't it be nice to have Jesus spend the Christmas holidays with you? Oh, he wants to do more than that, He wants to do more than that.

I think I was telling some of you about an experience that happened in Japan after World War II. The American servicemen that were there in Tokyo—they decided that they would give a bunch of orphans a Christmas party, and so they got a big hall and arranged presents and all this, and had entertainment such as they thought the children would enjoy.

But in the midst of all this, one little fellow thought this must be a birthday party, and he wondered whose birthday it was, and so he went up to some of the servicemen and, trying to communicate, he asked whose birthday it was. He thought it maybe was that fellow with the red suit and the white whiskers. Thank God, we have somebody's birthday more important to celebrate. What do you say?

My point is this, friends. Will you have Jesus as your guest at Christmas time, or will you leave it to somebody out away, like those shepherds were away from the ordinary religious channels—will you leave it for *them* to welcome Jesus. Will you—shall I say, in spite of all the light that has shown upon us—will you open your heart.

Why do I say in spite of all the light? Because, friends, listen. The more light we have, unless we walk in it, the greater darkness it becomes to us. To have great opportunities does not necessarily ensure great experiences. We must have the humility and the willingness of the shepherds to open our hearts to the message, and we must be able to discern in Bethlehem in a stable the working of God.

We must not limit our Lord and say, You must either come as I plan or else I won't see you. I won't accept you. Let us open our hearts to the providences of our Lord, to the appeals of His Spirit.

“...if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will...”
Revelation 3:20.

What?

“...come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me”
Revelation 3:20.

Shall we this morning send Him the word that we want Him to be our guest, our King? How many would like to? Thank God for every hand and every heart.

Now, we're going to spend a little time in personal response. Jesus loves to have us do what the shepherds did—tell others what the birth of Jesus means to us. Perhaps, you'd like to come up here where the microphone will carry your message.

Come, Brother Magee, glad for you to be witnessing for Jesus this morning, and we want to invite our visitors from near and far, all that would like to, to come and bear your testimony, as well as those nearby. All are welcome to tell it in your way—what Jesus' birth and the gift of His love mean to you.

[Testimony meeting follows]

[Man from the audience] I suppose you all know what the shortest verse in the New Testament of the English Bible is, but do you know what the shortest verse is that would be in the Greek Bible? “Rejoice evermore,” (1 Thess. 5:16), and that's what I want to do because Christ was here in human flesh, and He offered to go through this for us, so I'm thankful.

[Elder Frazee] Thank you, brother. Now, several who wish to speak can come up and take a front seat so that we can hear as many as possible.

[Man from the audience] I'm just thankful today for Jesus' love for me, and I need that love from Him, and I ask for more today, and I need it more to share with others, and I'm so thankful for that.

[Elder Frazee] You've got special reasons for being thankful, haven't you, bless your heart. We rejoice with you. It's all made possible through the gift of Jesus.

Dr. Bushnell.

[Brother Bushnell] I have a habit of spending my Christmas vacations out here in the hospital. This is the third time, and it's really a blessing. I hope the Lord just makes me sick every December so that I can come out here and be blessed. I surely am thankful for the blessings I've enjoyed this trip, and I hope to have many more. May the dear Lord bless all of you. It's been a wonderful opportunity I've had this time of sharing my faith with others, and I'm just thankful for that.

[Elder Frazee] Like the shepherds.

[Brother Bushnell] That's right.

[Man from the audience] As I thought about my parents and my home at this season, I thought of how I missed my home back in the northwest, and as I was contemplating this, the Lord led me to the 11th chapter of Hebrews, verse 13, and it talks about the patriarchs and how that they were strangers and pilgrims on this earth, and how their real home was in heaven with Jesus.

And this gave me a new glimpse, gave me a new light, and it showed me that my wantings and my yearnings for this earth are so, so far below what Jesus has for me and has for all of us, and I'm thankful that He shared that vision with me today.

[Elder Frazee] Yes, Dr. Coolidge.

Brother Coolidge: Well, I am very thankful for my experiences in the past, how that the Lord has been with us, has guided and directed in everything in spite of our walking sometimes like Peter a long ways off. Sometimes we have realized, I've told some of my associates, that when we get to feeling that we're doing pretty well, the Lord gives us some experiences and some things happen that even anyone of ordinary intelligence oughtn't to make the mistakes, but that's the way we learn and have through the years, and I thank the Lord that we can still be here.

[Elder Frazee] We're so glad you're here.

[Woman from the audience] I'm so glad that even though none of us are worthy, but yet Jesus thought enough of us to come and die for us, and I'm so glad that He's given us ways and means to share this with others who don't know about it, and I just want to rededicate my life again this Christmas season to sharing it with others so that He can come and take us home soon.

[Elder Frazee] Amen.

We're glad to have you.

[Man from the audience] I believe God sent me to Wildwood where I could be saved. Just praise His name.

[Elder Frazee] God bless you, brother.

[Man from the audience] Just pray for me.

[Elder Frazee] Yes, we will. What is your name?

[Man from the audience] Russell Williams.

[Elder Frazee] Russell Williams. Where are you from?

[Russell Williams] Macon, Georgia.

[Elder Frazee] Macon, Georgia. We're so glad you're here. Just bow your head with us.

Dear Lord, bless our dear friend, Russell Williams. We're so glad he's here all the way from Macon, and may the Holy Spirit impress his heart that you love Him, that Jesus died to save him. As he gives himself to Thee right now, we know you accept him through Jesus. Amen.

[Man from the audience] One of my favorite texts since I've been here is in Psalms 40:2 and 3:

"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord" Psalm 40:2-3.

It means a lot to me because I was brought out of a pretty strange life compared to the people around here that I know. Took me 29 years to get baptized and I praise the Lord for that, and most of all, I praise the Lord that Jesus loved me enough that He brought me to this place and introduced me to the proper way of life, and I know I fall a lot, but I keep my eyes on Him, and I know He'll bring me through it, and I really praise Him for it.

[Elder Frazee] God bless you.

[Woman from the audience] I'm very happy about the Christmas story, but I'm thankful that it's much more than a story. You know, I've been hearing this for a good many years. It's becoming much more real to me that it was really God who came to this earth and that He loved me enough that He did this, and now I'm going to have a chance to live with Him for always.

[Elder Frazee] Amen. Some people might think this story is too good to be true, but it's too good not to be true.

[Woman from the audience] I don't understand very much about the incarnation, but I'm certainly thankful for the results, and no one can feel sorry for themselves when they have the confidence of the love of God and what He has done for them.

[Elder Frazee] Amen.

[Man from the audience] Like my friend, John, I found my thoughts turning toward my home while I'm here at Wildwood, and I really appreciated the sermon last night and the sermon this morning. They went together really beautifully for me. God is my Father. He's showing us that Father and Son relationship and, yes, I want to spend Christmas with my Father in heaven with Jesus, I want to spend the next month with Him, I'd like to spend the next year with Him, and I'd like to spend eternity with Him, and that's my privilege, and I don't deserve it, but I am so thankful.

[Woman from the audience] I just want to thank the Lord this morning for all His goodness and, especially, that my parents could be here to spend this special occasion with me, and I know I wouldn't appreciate these beautiful experiences that Jesus has given to me unless I really came here just as Moses had to go out in the wilderness with the sheep and learn some lessons, and I need to learn some lessons about life, and the Lord brought me here to learn those lessons, and I'm just thankful for His goodness and His love and that He's able to change our hearts and our lives and to bring us into harmony with Him.

[Elder Frazee] God bless you.

[Man from the audience] I guess it's natural for a person to think about home around Christmas time, isn't it? I read an article about that not long ago. I was thinking about home a couple months ago, and I'm glad to be home for Christmas.

I wanted to read some words that were on Mary's and Zacharias' heart as a result of having a part in the story that we're emphasizing in these days. In Luke, chapter 1, Mary says:

"...my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" Luke 1:47.

Who was she speaking of? Jesus, wasn't she?

"For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" Luke 1:48.

And down further, it says here:

"He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away" Luke 1:52.

And I've experienced that over and over again, where the Lord has filled me with good things. And then Zacharias' praise:

"That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" Luke 1:74-75.

[Elder Frazee] Thank the Lord.

[Man from the audience] I'm so glad Jesus came to make it possible for us to live the life that He wants us to live, and I'm sure we're all happy for that fact.

[Elder Frazee] Thank the Lord, Homer.

[Man from the audience] I don't know how it is for anybody else, but it's getting harder and harder for me to get up here, and I think the Lord must be changing me because it never used to be that way, and I praise Him for that.

But I just, after Russell spoke, it just really touched my heart to know that this is a miracle of God in each of our lives—that it's not just the incarnation of Jesus that we're celebrating here, but we can be born again, and that if we'll let this happen to us that daily, hourly, like Harry was saying, every hour, every year, every week, we can have the freshness, the newness of Christmas, of Christ's birth in our hearts, and I appreciate being born again.

[Elder Frazee] Amen.

[Man from the audience] We've only lived near Wildwood for a few months, but we've had contact with it since about '69 or '70-something, but at any rate, I'm always concerned when I come over here—I don't like to bother people or offend people, and I figure, Well, I have a lot of ways about me that just don't settle well because, you know, they don't do things that way at Wildwood.

And I was always wondering, Well, you know, what would Wildwood think or is this the way Wildwood would do it. Well, I've been trying to figure out just exactly what Wildwood is—what makes a person belong to Wildwood.

Well, while we were working on this Christmas program, of course, working very closely with people right from the campus, I begin to get an idea. Now, this is how I see it now. I may be wrong. I may be at least on my way.

Wildwood is two things. It's a place where we don't have to compartmentalize our lives and say, Over here we're secular, and over here we're sacred. If you refer to the Lord in a very warm, friendly way, as sometimes we like to do—well, here you can say, you know, "Isn't that nice? God is so good!" And they won't get upset with you.

And the other thing is you can commit yourself 100 percent totally and completely to getting yourself ready for translation and everybody else that you can get a hold of.

Now, to me, those two things constitute Wildwood and let me tell you, there are people on this campus who still drink milk and eat eggs, and there are others on this campus who wouldn't think of it, and yet they're both Wildwood people and, you know something, there are people on the campus that—I don't know if I'd get along with them if I worked too terribly closely, but I guess I would because if they're that committed and if I ought to be that committed, well, I guess we would get along.

But I'm just grateful to have the experience of being here because now, if the Lord is going to come into my heart, He can stay there. I don't have to say, Excuse me, I have other guests coming in. Can I put you in the closet for a minute, you know, and I'm very, very grateful for that.

[Elder Frazee] Thank you, brother. I'll have to think about that a while.

[Woman from the audience] As I see kids and children in the cities and things, all they know about Christmas is that they'll get something that they want or they see Santa Claus in the store, and he gives them a candy cane, and somehow I guess it just seems like it would leave me with me an emptiness that they don't know—it just

seems like there's something missing and I'm so glad I know what is missing, and I can have Jesus in my heart.

And I see older folks Christmas times going down the road in the city when looking at the Christmas lights, but every day they go down the road, they know that when they die (at least they think so) that that's it, that's all, and I'm so thankful that I can know that when I die that's not all.

[Elder Frazee] Thank you, sister.

Glad you're here.

[Woman from the audience] I just want to say how thankful I am to Jesus that He has given me the opportunity of visiting Wildwood. Although I've only been here a few days and my visit is only a short one, I have experienced a wonderful fellowship with you folks, and I do pray that God will continue to bless you the way that your light is shining, and I hope and pray that you will still gather up many songs for Jesus.

[Elder Frazee] Thank you. And where are you from?

[Woman from the audience] I'm from England.

[Elder Frazee] You're from England?

[Woman from the audience] Yes.

[Elder Frazee] Well, bless your heart. We're glad you're here, glad you're here.

All right. Let's turn to number 112. Some of you know this. All of us will know it better as we sing it. A simple tune; a wonderful message of response. Homer, would you come and lead it for me.

Notice each line of this beautiful hymn.

As with gladness men of old,
Did the guiding star behold,
As with joy they hailed its light,
Leading onward, beaming bright.
So, most gracious Lord, may we,
Evermore be led to Thee.

As with joyful steps they sped,
To that lowly manger-bed,
There to bend the knee before,
Him whom heaven and earth adore,
So may we with willing feet,
Ever seek Thy mercy seat.

As they offered gifts most rare,
At that manger rude and bare,

So may we with holy joy,
Pure, and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to Thee our heavenly King.

Holy Jesus, every day,
Keep us in the narrow way;
And, when earthly things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last,
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds Thy glory hide.

Copyright 2021. All rights reserved.

W. D. Frazee Sermons
435 Lifestyle Lane, Wildwood, GA 30757
1-800-WDF-1840 / 706-820-9755
www.WDFsermons.org
support@WDFsermons.org