



Oblivious
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The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

This week we are continuing our study called **The Night Before Christmas**. Last week we discussed waiting. This week is about being oblivious to the miracles around us which are occurring amid the distractions of the pandemic. Today, we can miss very important events owing to busyness and difficulties, but most of the people living in the first century missed the greatest event of all time – the birth of our Messiah, Jesus Christ. So today, we are looking at the emotions and reactions to God coming in the flesh and looking at ourselves as some of us are still missing Him today.

QUESTION: Tell us about a time when you missed an event that was really important to you or someone else.

SCRIPTURE¹

Luke 2:1-3 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)³ And everyone went to their *own town* to register.

Luke 2:8-18 (NIV) And there were *shepherds* living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you *good news* that will cause *great joy* for *all the people*.¹¹ Today in the town of David a *Savior* has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Matthew 2:15-18 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and *see* this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.¹⁷ When they had seen him, they *spread the word* concerning what had been told them about this child,¹⁸ and all who heard it were *amazed* at what the shepherds said to them.

John 1:35-46 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples.³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”³⁹ “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.⁴¹ *The first thing Andrew did* was to find his brother Simon and *tell him*, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).⁴² And he brought him to Jesus. The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “*Follow me.*”⁴⁴ Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.⁴⁵ *Philip found*

¹ All scripture translation is NIV unless otherwise indicated.

Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip.

OBSERVATION

Luke wants us to know what was really happening when Jesus was born. Bethlehem was part of the Roman Empire which was the greatest superpower the world had ever known. And Rome's greatest emperor was ruling – Caesar Augustus. It was during his reign that he ordered a census – a counting of all the people who were then required to return to their hometowns in order to register. Mary and Joseph had to return to Bethlehem, a small town five miles outside of Jerusalem, even though she was very pregnant and it was a strenuous journey. Normally there would have been about one thousand residents there, but owing to the census, it was chaotic and extremely busy as people gathered in their hometown. Long lines and so much paperwork!! No accommodations available!! No one was looking for the birth of their Messiah. They were totally oblivious to what was important. Now we have another interesting **MODGNIK** event happening. This is **KINGDOM** spelled backwards and illustrates how God does things that seem backward to the way we do things in our culture: He invited shepherds, outsiders both socially and spiritually, to be involved in our story of Christ's birth -- not the rich and famous of Bethlehem. They were shepherders doing a kind of boring job -- watching sheep. Everyone else is preoccupied, but these shepherds were at a place where they were able to hear the good news – and then respond to it!

APPLICATION

We can learn a few lessons from these men: **1) The shepherds were in a place to hear the good news** while everyone else was too busy to be able to hear. We have all missed something that really mattered: Appointments, weddings, kids' programs, the end of a ballgame, interviews, etc. We became distracted or forgot to set an alarm or a DVR, right? Do you remember Martha, sister of Lazarus, who was so busy in the kitchen that she missed her sister Mary's experience at Jesus' feet? Is that where we are – not in a place to hear from God?

QUESTION: When have you been so busy with your "duties" that you missed Jesus?

Stress does not create who we are, it only magnifies what is already there. Is it possible that we are in a unique place this year and cannot hear from God? Surely, we have selective hearing, don't we? Especially this is true of our kids! They never hear, "Please take the garbage out." Our spouses never hear, "Honey, please help me with this." And often this describes our relationship with God. We have selective hearing, especially when we don't listen for His voice. How can He communicate with us if we aren't in a place to hear Him? Busyness can be a protection from emptiness. The emptier we are the busier we try to be – we are afraid that if we slow down we will be forced to see some things about our lives that we don't want to acknowledge. Perhaps the harder it is to slow down to encounter Jesus the more desperately we need Him.

QUESTION: How does God speak to you?

QUESTION: When do you have selective hearing and miss His voice?

QUESTION: What you think God is asking you to do during this season?

2) The shepherds responded to the good News. They didn't just go back to their fields and resume shepherding. Their response was to go and tell. From the day that Jesus arrived, His presence demanded a response. As He called his Twelve, He said, "Come and you will see." Shepherds and disciples together took a step and their lives changed forever -- this is true for us today if we will see, hear and respond to the call.

QUESTION: How open are you to respond to the call of Christ on your life? What changes would be needed for you to become a true disciple of Christ and take on a servant's characteristics?

Some responses that would be needed if we are to allow Jesus to direct our lives: **1) Reconcile a relationship.** Paul tells us that as far as it is possible, and depends on us, live at peace with everyone.

2) Forgive a wrong. We forgive because we are forgiven. **3) Give sacrificially.** The early church did this so that there was no needy person among them. **4) Tell someone about Jesus.** Invite them to come and hear what you have heard. The shepherds got it right and we can, too. They weren't too busy and they were changed relationally and spiritually and so can we. Perhaps 2020 has not been our best year, but it's not too late to end it by experiencing Jesus in a new and profound way. Christmas isn't about the ornaments, food or Hallmark movies – it's about the One whose birth gives meaning to the season.

QUESTION: When was the last time you got Christmas right? How can you make it right this year?

And, for those of us who have experienced Rooted, let's set aside an hour of time with Jesus this season as we did in our prayer event – and listen for His voice. If ever there was a time to submit ourselves to God in this way it is now.

QUESTION: What would keep you from praying the following prayer from King David's heart – Psalm 139:23-24?

PRAYER

“Search me O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.” We want this Christmas season to be the most profound and life-changing of our lives. Help us to always have our spiritual ears open to Your voice so we never miss You again. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

QUESTIONS

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QUESTION: When have you been so busy with your “duties” that you missed Jesus?

QUESTION: How does God speak to you?

QUESTION: When do you have selective hearing and miss His voice?

QUESTION: What do you think God is asking you to do during this season?

QUESTION: How open are you to respond to the call of Christ on your life? What changes would be needed for you to become a true disciple of Christ and take on a servant's characteristics?

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