

(INTRO) HOPE IN UNEXPECTED BUT ORDINARY PLACES

[1]WELCOME: Good morning everyone and Merry Christmas. If you're new with us or just now tuning in online, my name is Nic Cook and I'm one of the pastors here at Cornerstone Church in Auburn, IL. I love to encourage you, if you haven't already, to go to auburncstone.info and fill out a digital connection card and let us know you're here and let us know how we can be praying for you. We're continuing our new **SERIES:** called **THE THRILL OF HOPE**. Last week we talked about how we can have hope that God is at work not just in minutes and moments, but over months, years and millennia. That even when we can't see it and he seems like he's silent and distant, that God is moving his plans forward. So, we're called to actively wait by worshipping and praying. **This week we're going to see how God is able to give us... [2]**

- **HOPE IN UNEXPECTED PLACES AND ORDINARY SPACES:** So, this morning if you have your bibles, go ahead and turn to **[Lk. 2:1-20]** **We're going to pray and then dig in on one of my favorite parts of the Christmas story. [read scripture] [3-13]**

(TEACH/APP) SHEPHERDS & MANGERS (God)

THIS MORNING I WANT TO START BY USING SOMETHING THAT I CALL

REDEEMED IMAGINATION: I want you to and imagine being the angel Gabriel and speaking to God. God says, okay Gabriel. I've sent you to Zechariah, I've sent you to Mary, I've sent you to Joseph. It's time to announce the birth of my Son, Jesus. I want you to tell them Good news, news that will make your heart want to explode, news that's going to change the world. **I want you to say that born today, in the city of King David, a new King has come. He's the Savior you've been waiting for. He's the Christ. He's the Messiah, the anointed ruler of God. He's Lord, he's master and owner of the universe.** And You're thinking, alright, this is amazing. Where do you want me to go God? Jerusalem? You want me to go tell the rest of the priests the one and true final priest is coming? How about Rome? You want me to walk in and terrify Caesar and tell him the times up and that the King of Kings is coming and he's going to bring his Kingdom? Where are we off to? God looks at Gabriel and says, just outside of Bethlehem, there's some...get this, and God has a twinkle in his eye... shepherds. I want you to go tell THEM what I told you. Then burst out into a concert, have a blast singing your hearts out, just don't get too crazy, this is just for the shepherds to see and hear. **Instead of a**

worldwide announcement to the most powerful, influential people of the world, we see God stepping into the lives of...[14]

ORDINARY BLUE COLLAR SHEPHERDS: Now over the years I've heard the shepherds described as being dirty, uneducated, and looked down on. The truth is, was it the most desirable of jobs? No, not really. But it wasn't a despised job either. The bible regularly spoke of how God was like a shepherd, and how the leaders of God's people were supposed to act like shepherds. The most famous king of God's people, King David, had at one point been a shepherd. So, I don't think it's fair to paint them as dirty stupid outsiders. The reality is though, that this wasn't a job that brought a lot of recognition or prestige. Even though David was a shepherd, it was his job because he was the lowest man on the totem pole in his family as the youngest. Good honest work, but probably not the job that people dreamed about doing for the rest of their lives. This is one of the incredibly beautiful things about our God. **[15]**

- **OUR GOD LOVES TO SHOW UP IN UNEXPECTED WAYS THE LIVES OF ORDINARY PEOPLE DOING ORDINARY THINGS:** The bible doesn't even record their names. But God knew all about them. God had paid attention to them. God knew their names. And God thought they were worth delivering the greatest news in human history to. God decided an angel concert would be something they would appreciate. Not because they had done anything spectacular to get his attention, but because God sees each one of us. **There are no insignificant people to God.** You may wonder if God sees you. You may wonder if you're valuable. You may be wondering if God has a plan for your life since your life seems so ordinary. One of the aspects of the story of Christmas is that we have a God who sees us, who loves us, and draws near to us. **We have a God that says, I don't care if the world thinks you're great, or important, I see you and you're important to me! Not only does he love to show up in the lives of ordinary people doing ordinary things, but...[16]**
- **OUR GOD LOVES TO SHOW UP IN THE LIVES OF ORDINARY PEOPLE IN ORDINARY PLACES.** Now I'm about to ruin some Christmas images for some of you, so please don't get angry. But the image of baby Jesus in a barn, or in a cave, simply doesn't fit with what we know of Jewish culture. We have this picture that has been passed down of Mary and Joseph hurrying into town while she's in labor and running to an inn and being told there's no room, but we have a barn out back. **First of all, Joseph was from the family line of David,** so if he came into town and said I'm David, son of Heli, the son of Naggai, from the line of David,

people would have definitely opened their homes to him. Middle Eastern culture was one of hospitality. You didn't dare turn someone away who was in need of a place to stay. Secondly, the phrase "no room for them in the inn" doesn't mean they rolled into town and the Mariot was totally booked. The word that is translated "inn" is better translated as guest room. It's the same word that's used when Jesus says to his disciples at Passover [Lk. 22:10-12] Many middle eastern homes looked like this...[17] There was a place inside the house with a door to let your animals into the house at night, so they didn't get stolen and were out of the cold weather. Then on the edge of the next floor they would carve something called a manger out of the stone where they would place the animal's food. It was up off the ground where the animals were, but low enough for them to reach to eat. Then you would walk up some steps into the family area. This was an all-purpose area. You cooked here, you ate here, and the kids slept here. Then there would be either a separate bedroom that when honored guests came, the owners of the house would sleep with the kids and the bedroom would turn into the "guest room". Sometimes this bedroom would be up on the roof and the family room would be the only thing on the second level. So most likely, David was staying with either a close friend or with family in their house, but there was someone else there already who was staying in the only "guest room". So, the birth of Jesus, as miraculous as it was took place in a...[18]

○ **BORN IN AN ORDINARY PERSONS HOME, IN AN ORDINARY LIVING**

ROOM: The God of the universe was born into the living room surrounded by ordinary people, in an ordinary town. I mean, can you imagine 30 years later looking at your neighbor and saying, hey guess what? God was born in my living room! Too often we expect to have these huge amazing experiences with God on mountaintops, or in sanctuaries, and He does show up there as well, but more often than not, **God meets people right where they are, at their job, in their living room. I spend quite a bit of time with him in my office at home sitting in my comfy chair or out on the golf course.** I'll explain that a little more. But let's keep going with the story. [19] The Shepherds probably got into town and started asking around if anyone knew about a baby being born recently until someone pointed them in the right direction. They would have probably walked up to the door and knocked. They might have said, I know this sounds kind of strange, but we're looking for a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes in your manger

and whoever was the one at the door their eyes would have gotten all buggy as they slowly open the door more. The shepherds slowly and tentatively walk in and right there laying wrapped up like a little mummy lying in a carved-out stone was a little baby boy, just like the angels said. I think if it was me I would have flat out balled tears of joy! Maybe they stood silently in awe, maybe they simply bowed down. Who knows, but at some point Mary and Joseph would have asked, how did you know to come and find us? That's when the excitement would have built. We were told by an angel that a Savior would be born, He's the Christ, the chosen Messiah of God, he's Lord, ruler and master of everything and everyone. Right here! In the middle of us! In a feeding trough carved out of stone. I know I might have messed up your nativity set by telling you Jesus was born in the living room and placed in a stone feeding trough, but I think this picture is far more comforting. **God breaks into this world and announces to ordinary people doing ordinary things that His Son Jesus has come for them and they find him in an ordinary home. So, there are two things I want you to hear this morning... First is that...**[20]

(JC) JESUS COMES TO US RIGHT WHERE WE ARE AS WE ARE

This is good news both for those who haven't given their lives to Jesus and for those who have. As a pastor I have heard over the years, I really want to get my life in order before I give my life to Jesus. I need to quit doing certain things before I can come to him. I need to be a little better before I feel like he'll want me or I can deserve to be forgiven. The truth of Christmas is that we can't possibly get cleaned up enough to come to Jesus. **Our sin isn't something that we can wash off enough of to be clean enough to come to God. Our sin is so deep inside us that we can't get to it. We can fix ourselves!** That's why God came to earth to fix it for us! **The other great truth is that Jesus knows how broken and sinful we are and still wants to be close to us.** He breaks into the workplace of the shepherds. He breaks into our living rooms and is placed in the same dusty, dirty environment that we're in. As a man, he stepped into Peter's boat, his workplace, he ate with tax collectors and prostitutes and was called their friend. You don't have to get cleaned up before you can come to Jesus, He comes to you. All you have to do is accept him.

- **FIRST STEPS:** This morning if you'd like to learn more about Jesus and how to give your life to him we'd love to talk to you more. Maybe you're ready to take the first step in letting Jesus make you clean through baptism. [auburncstone.info] I also know that many of us think to

ourselves, **Yea, that's amazing that God showed up in powerful ways to ordinary people in ordinary places, but I haven't had an angel concert, I want to experience Jesus in my ordinary life too. I want to feel his presence. Then let me give you some good news as well. Jesus came...[21]**

(NXT) FROM HEAVEN, TO THE MANGER, TO OUR HEARTS

Jesus didn't just want to come to LIVE BY US, he wanted to come much closer and LIVE IN US. There is a hint in this part of the Christmas story that tells us God's plan in Jesus was much bigger than simply coming to earth as huge as that is. It says that Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes. These would have been lots of strips of linen cloth. So, he was wrapped up like a little mummy. The he was laid in a carved-out section of stone. Luke is saying this baby that has come will one day be killed, wrapped in linen and then buried in a carved-out stone tomb. **The feeding Trough points us to the Tomb. But Jesus didn't stay in the tomb, he rose three days later proving he was God and the King of this World.** Then he rose into heaven and is ruling as King and will come again to finally set things right. But before he left he told his disciples **[22][Jn. 16:5-7].** Jesus tells his disciples that it's a good thing that he's going back to be with the Father because that means they will receive the Holy Spirit. Later in the bible we're told **[23-24][2 Cor. 13:5] When we give our lives, somehow Jesus is closer to us than he was while he walked on earth. He's living inside of us through the Holy Spirit. God's great plan of Christmas was for Jesus to come from heaven, to a manger, to a cross, to a tomb, and after the resurrection and ascension, into every heart that will accept him.**

- **JESUS LIVES IN ORDINARY PEOPLE AND GOES WITH THEM IN THEIR ORDINARY DAYS AND CIRCUMSTANCES BUT OVER TIME DOES EXTRAORDINARY THINGS IN THEM AND THROUGH THEM.** It is Jesus intention to make himself known to us in our everyday lives as we wake, work, and play. To be with us when we laugh and when we cry. To be with us when we wash dishes and when we sit in meetings. As we learn to meet with him every day and every moment, he promises to transform us slowly over the days, months, and years to become more like him. He also wants to invite others to know and be transformed by Jesus as we take him with us into our homes, our neighborhoods, and our networks of relationships. The question is how do we experience Jesus with us? That's not a simple question, and there's no one way. We can't force God to show up how we want him to. But we can place

ourselves in a certain place where God has a history of showing up and making himself known. **I think God enjoyed showing up to the shepherds because they were used to being quiet, listening and watching.** Often when we create space in our lives where the noise is gone and we're in a place where we say God, I'm here and I'm listening, speak. Then we open his word and listen for a word or phrase, God seems to speak subtly, quietly, and exactly what we need to hear from within our hearts through his Holy Spirit and scripture. And we're not rushing, we're patiently waiting and attentive, God has a history of speaking and making himself known. So, we're going to do that today at the end of the service. I know some of you may be at home with kids and silence and listening will be hard so I'd encourage you to come back to this part of the service later in the week and engage in it.

- **So as we close this morning in song, in communion, and in meditation, we celebrate that God is with us, right here, right now, in our midst, in our hearts, he is living in ordinary people, in ordinary places as we sit either in our pajamas, or as we are driving.**
 - **Let's Pray! Thank you God that you come to us right where we are, as we are. Thank you Jesus for coming from heaven to the manger, to the cross, and rising again and now you live in our hearts. Thank you Spirit for making us like Jesus and making his presence known to us personally. Glory to God the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen! Let's sing together.**

(PRACTICE) LISTENING AND WAITING

[25] Christians all over the world will hear the words that God spoke through Isaiah. As I read this passage this morning the first time simply listen to it. See if there is a word or phrase that sticks out. Don't analyze it, simply sit with that phrase and repeat it in your mind and focus on it.

Holy Spirit, speak. We're listening.

[25-27]

1-7 The Spirit of God, the Master, is on me because God anointed me. He sent me to preach good news to the poor, heal the heartbroken, Announce freedom to all captives, pardon all prisoners.

God sent me to announce the year of his grace—

a celebration of God's destruction of our enemies—

and to comfort all who mourn,

To care for the needs of all who mourn in Zion,

give them bouquets of roses instead of ashes,
Messages of joy instead of news of doom,
a praising heart instead of a languid spirit.
Rename them “Oaks of Righteousness”
planted by God to display his glory.
They’ll rebuild the old ruins,
raise a new city out of the wreckage.
They’ll start over on the ruined cities,
take the rubble left behind and make it new.

(1 minute of silence)

[28-30]

As I read this a second time, simply ask God, why did this word stick out to me? What are you wanting to say to me? How is this part of my life now or how has this been something that applied to me in the past.

(read again)

Now simply sit with God. Even if you didn’t hear from him today, he is here. He loves and adores you. Sit quietly and enjoy that truth.

Amen.