

And Suddenly...: Glory!

A Christmas sermon (Luke 2:1-20)

Three widening circles

- I. The basic circle. The basic event.
 1. A straight forward event. Place, time, occasion, set the setting.
 2. A very normal, **ordinary** birth story, but we tend to embellish it. It is not a drama, a trauma, an emergency.
 - a. She was expecting, therefore they went in plenty of time.
 - b. Joseph was of the house and lineage of David in Bethlehem. He was related, and so they stayed with relatives. The “inn” was the home of one of Joseph’s relatives.
 - c. Bethlehem was small, on a side road, not a trading road, and probably did not have a public inn.
 - d. The guest room was occupied. (See also Luke 22:11; Mk 14:14, the same word is used, not a room in a public inn but a guestroom.)
 - e. The normal house, as even recently in peasant houses in Europe, had several levels. A guest room was on an upper level. The family lived on the main floor slightly above the animals. The manger was a warm place for a baby and swaddling cloths were usual. A normal, **ordinary** event.
- II. The second circle. Luke 2:8-12. The widening, the big picture. What this event is all about. What it means.
 1. Shepherds. No sheep dogs. Night, dark, danger lurks. Out of nowhere, like lightning, the shepherds are terrified and “the glory of the Lord shone,” (Lk 2:9), a “holy light.” They were sore afraid, “filled with fear.”
 2. “Great joy” to everyone. The meaning of this verse, Luke 2:10 is creedal: A “great joy,” the gospel.
- III. The third circle. Luke 2:13-20. The ultimate widening, the big picture.
 1. “And suddenly” God suddenly: David kills Goliath with a sling shot; Jesus is alive again. God’s “suddenlies” are not arbitrary. They seem out of nowhere. In fact they are outside of us, in spite of us.
 2. The multitude of angels. In cities today one does not see the night sky, but in the great plains and places away from cities, the night sky can be bright with stars. Rev 5:11: “the voice of many angels numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands...”
 3. The angels. They see what ultimately this is all about: This is how our Lord is solving the problem of sin, death, and the devil, by going himself to die on the cross and rise again.
- IV. Singing glory and peace.
 1. We rejoice with great joy in the gospel of Luke 2:10-11.
 2. Our hearts are lifted up as in Luke 2:14: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!” Handel echoes in our ears with the singing of Luke 2:14 and the sevenfold acclamation in Rev 5:12: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” And fourfold acclamation in 5:13 and his great Amen of 5:14 echoes in our ears.
 3. There’s a wideness in God’s mercy. (LBW 290).