

LUKE 2:8 - 20
"THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRISTMAS"

DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR FIRST CHRISTMAS? I REMEMBER DECORATING A SIMPLE TREE - LIGHTS - ORNAMENTS - BULBS - TINSEL - ICICLES & PRESENTS. USUALLY THERE WAS CHRISTMAS MUSIC ON THE LARGE FLOOR RADIO IN OUR LIVING ROOM. ALSO, THE PRESENTS WERE NEEDED ITEMS LIKE A SHIRT - SHOES & OVERALLS, MAYBE A SIMPLE TOY OR TWO.

CHRISTMAS IN AMERICA TODAY HAS ESCALATED - IT HAS BECOME A HIGH SPENDING SPREE - HECTIC SHOPPING - SEARCHING THE INTERNET - NEWSPAPERS - ADS - AND BLACK FRIDAY 2 - 3 - 4 AM STAMPEDING THE DEPARTMENT STORES - FINDING THAT RIGHT GIFT - ELECTRONIC I- PODS - LARGE SCREEN TV - LAPTOP COMPUTER - PARTYING & LIVING IT UP. EVENTUALLY THE EVENING NEWS WILL INFORM US OF CHRISTMAS SALES THAT ARE SAGGING BECAUSE OF A DISTRAUGHT ECONOMY - OR ON THE INCREASE OF PEOPLE SHOPPING - BOOSTING SALES TO AN ALL TIME HIGH.

BY THE TIME CHRISTMAS NEARS - EVERYONE IS BEATEN - DRAGGING AND EXHAUSTED. THE CHARGE CARDS ARE SO FULL THERE'S NO ROOM FOR ANOTHER DOLLAR TO BE SPENT. ROOMS ARE FULL OF GIFTS. DECORATIONS ARE PLACED ON TABLES. WALLS - PORCHES - AND IN THE YARDS.

THEN THE BIG DAY CHRISTMAS ARRIVES. WRAPPINGS ARE SHREDDED FROM THE GIFTS AND PICTURES ARE TAKEN. THE FLOOR FILLS WITH ALL THE PAPERS AS THE ITEMS ARE OPENED. SOME WILL FIT AND SOME WON'T - SOME ARE THE RIGHT COLOR - SOME NOT. SOME ARE NOT JUST THE RIGHT THING.

* * * A FAR CRY FROM "THE VERY FIRST CHRISTMAS" THE ONLY PREPARATION WAS - THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE TO MARY & JOSEPH - AND LOCATING A PLACE TO STAY IN BETHLEHEM FOR THE NIGHT. THERE WAS NO DECORATING - NO SHOPPING AND RUNNING UP A CHARGE CARD AND GOING IN DEBT. NO PARTYING - NO NEGATIVE TV AND RADIO REPORTS OF THE ECONOMY.

JUST MARY - JOSEPH - A FEW ANIMALS - AND A SMALL BABY - IN A MOONLIT STABLE.

THEN LATE INTO THE NIGHT A FEW SHEPHERDS ARRIVED FROM THE HILLSIDE OUTSIDE OF TOWN. THEY TOLD OF AN AWESOME LIGHT FROM THE SKY - AN ANGEL AND HIS MESSAGE OF A BABY BORN THERE IN BETHLEHEM - A SAVIOR - THEN THEY

SAID, "THERE WAS A GREAT HOST OF HEAVENLY BEINGS SINGING AND PRAISING GOD."

2 WORDS STAND OUT FROM THIS MESSAGE AND THIS NIGHT, "GOOD NEWS"

THIS FIRST CHRISTMAS NIGHT - THERE WAS - "NO BAD NEWS"
NO TRAFFIC JAMS - NO RUSH - NO SHOPPING - NO BILLS - NO DEBT - NO BAD
ECONOMY REPORTS - TOTALLY "ALL GOOD NEWS"

WHAT WAS THE GOOD NEWS?

LK 2:11 TODAY IN THE TOWN OF DAVID (A SAVIOR) HAS BEEN BORN TO YOU; HE IS CHRIST THE LORD."

JESUS HAS MANY TITLES, BUT THIS ONE IS PRIMARY - "SAVIOR."

EARLIER THE ANGEL HAD TOLD MARY - "DO NOT BE AFRAID, MARY, YOU HAVE FOUND FAVOR WITH GOD. LUKE 1:31 YOU WILL BE WITH CHILD AND GIVE BIRTH TO A SON, AND YOU ARE TO GIVE HIM THE NAME JESUS."

JESUS IS FROM THE HEBREW JOSHUA - YAHWEH SAVES - SAVIOR.

WE KNOW HIM AS (JESUS CHRIST). JESUS IS HIS NAME SAVIOR,
CHRIST IS HIS TITLE, ANOINTED - MESSIAH.

THE ANGEL HAD TOLD JOSEPH

MT 1:21 "SHE WILL GIVE BIRTH TO A SON, AND YOU ARE TO GIVE HIM THE NAME JESUS, BECAUSE HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS."

WHEN GOD CREATED EVERYTHING IN THE BEGINNING HE SAID, "IT IS GOOD." EVEN "VERY GOOD!" SIN CAME - BAD NEWS TOOK OVER AND HAS BEEN WITH US EVER SINCE.

(SIN) IS THE ROOT CAUSE OF ALL BAD NEWS

BUT THERE'S ONE GOOD TRUTH CONCERNING SIN - JESUS CAME TO DIE FOR ALL SIN AND WILL FORGIVE AND CLEANSE US FROM ALL SIN.

LK 2:10 BUT THE ANGEL SAID TO THEM, "DO NOT BE AFRAID. I BRING YOU "GOOD NEWS" OF GREAT JOY THAT WILL BE FOR ALL THE PEOPLE."

WHEN THE ANGEL LEFT, THE SHEPHERDS RAN INTO TOWN - FOUND THE BABY AS HE HAD SAID.

HERE ARE SOME RESPONSES TO JUST HOW GOOD OF NEWS IT WAS,

A- AS THE ANGEL SPOKE OF THE "GOOD NEWS" -
LK 2:13 "SUDDENLY A GREAT COMPANY OF THE HEAVENLY HOST APPEARED WITH THE ANGEL, PRAISING GOD AND SAYING, "GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH PEACE TO MEN ON WHOM HIS FAVOR RESTS."

TODAY HEAVEN IS STILL ERUPTING WITH PRAISE "GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST"

B- LK 2:17 "WHEN THEY HAD SEEN HIM, THEY SPREAD THE WORD CONCERNING WHAT HAD BEEN TOLD THEM ABOUT THIS CHILD."

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU SHARED THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST?

C- LK 2:20 "THE SHEPHERDS RETURNED, GLORIFYING AND PRAISING GOD FOR ALL THE THINGS THEY HAD HEARD AND SEEN, WHICH WERE JUST AS THEY HAD BEEN TOLD."

THAT HILLSIDE WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN!!! - THAT JOB WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME JOB.

FOR US TODAY, WE NEED TO BE PEOPLE OF "GOOD NEWS."

DON'T BE A BEARER OF BAD NEWS.

DON'T COMPLAIN ABOUT THAT OTHER PERSON - DON'T GRUMBLE ABOUT HER - DON'T MURMUR ABOUT THAT SITUATION.

BE STRICTLY A "GOOD NEWS" BROADCASTER.

AS GOD'S CHILDREN - AS GOD'S CHURCH - WE NEED TO COME BACK TO THAT.