

2. Read “the rest of the story” below. What do you think the shepherds would have learned about God from being chosen in this way and seeing the newborn **king** lying in a manger?

Luke 2: ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 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.

3. What’s one way you can take what you’ve learned (or been reminded of) and apply it in your life this Christmas season and beyond?

Christmas 2023

“God’s Desires **for** You”

Luke 2:8-14

It’s not ultimately about God’s demands on you but about God’s desires for you.

Knowing and believing that God has desires **for** you, desires for **your** good, is a mindset shift that will completely alter your spiritual journey with God or give you a reason to begin a journey toward God.

Luke 2: 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.

God’s Desires for You

1. God wants you to know him.

God is an intensely personal Being who craves an intimate relationship with those who matter to him, with those he created. Why else would God become flesh, live among us, and die for us?

John 1: ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ...¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

God wants to include us in his family.

John 1: ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become **children of God...**

God wants us to experience a new, spiritual birth.

John 1: ¹³ ...children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but **born of God**.

Where is God leading you with your BLESS list this week?



2. God wants to forgive you.

"If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer. But our greatest need was for forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior." (Roy Lessin)

The door to forgiveness was opened when the baby Jesus grew up and died on the cross to pay the penalty for sin—the penalty that you and I should have paid.

Romans 3: ²⁴ ...he freed us from the penalty for our sins. ²⁵ For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. ²⁶...God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just. (NLT)

3. God wants to spend eternity with you.

"Is everything sad going to come untrue?" (J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings)

If you were to ask that question, God's answer might be, "Yes, if by your question you mean, 'Will evil be defeated?' 'Will joy overcome all sorrow?' 'Will peace outlast war?' Or, 'Will the memory of despair and past hardship fade away or seem like a distant dream?' If that's what you mean, yes, everything sad will become untrue."

In the new creation, our transformation into the image of Christ will be complete, and sin won't tempt us because every sin will sound like an unimaginable horror. As the apostle Paul says in one of his epistles, "he who began a good work in you will carry it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6)

Mark the Moment

Knowing and believing that God has desires **for** you, desires for **your** good, is a mindset shift that will completely alter your spiritual journey with God or give you a reason to begin a journey toward God.

On your Connect Card you can mark the moment:

Write "A" - You want to mark **an important spiritual moment** in your life, recognizing in a fresh way that God is for you and loves you better than you could ever imagine.

Write "B" - You want to believe that God is for you and that Jesus came to make things right between you and God, but **you're just not sure and want some direction** in investigating this.

Write "C" - You want to declare that **today** you've come to a point in your spiritual journey where, **for the first time, you are receiving God's invitation** to become his child by putting your faith in him alone. You now realize and believe that Jesus has died for your sins and risen to give you new life and purpose in this world. **For the first time, you are saying yes to his offer of forgiveness and asking him to call the shots in your life.**

Or you can write one of the letters ("A," "B," or "C") in the subject line of an email to Office@fiveoakschurch.org.

Questions for Reflection

1. In your own words, how does the message to the shepherds demonstrate that it's not ultimately about God's demands on you but about God's desires for you?

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