

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

I Wonder

PART

2

TITLE

I Wonder, How Long Must I Wander
Before I Feel Wonder?

SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:8-20



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If you have a Bible, I would love for you to look with me at Luke chapter two. If you do not, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you, and if you don't have one at home, take that home as a gift.

We're going to work ... The second message of the series that we're doing is called, I Wonder. We all wonder about a great many things. We all wonder about our past. We wonder about our future. We wonder about our kids. We wonder about our kids' future. We also wonder things that maybe aren't so significant, things like how some people pass the state driver's test, or why this is a good time to apply your makeup when you're merging in front of me. There's all kinds of things when we're navigating our way through a broken world where there's a lot of people, and everyone has freewill, and a lot of people are making decisions that we wouldn't necessarily make that we're wondering things. We wonder. All of us wonder.

When it comes to holidays, when it comes to these moments when we have tons of anticipation of what it's going to be like, we wonder why sometimes anticipation is a little sweeter than reality. We wonder why what we thought was going to take place at Thanksgiving when everyone came home and we were all together and why that dinner fell apart. We wonder. We wonder why. Look at this picture. We look at pictures. We look at other people's lives and simply by comparison, it seems like that everybody's life is so riveting, and so exciting, and so adventurous, and we wonder why ours sometimes seems so dull.

This week I went online and just typed in aimlessness just to see where it would take me, and I eventually landed at a little blog where different people from different places of life were writing in their experience and what they felt in their own heart is the confusion of what's the purpose of life and why am I here. And so I wrote down a few of them. There was a young professional about 10 years out of college and this is what he wrote. He goes, "I have a great job and I have accumulated really cool stuff, but I'm so lonely and it all seems so empty." Some of you, you wonder why you ... why that is a reflection of something that maybe you are thinking right now.

There was a young mother. She wrote, "Why do I wake up sad? Sad to a life, and to kids, and to family that I always wanted, knowing that I'm going to work all day, only to see the house still destroyed, seeing such blessing around me and yet feeling such burden." There was a retiree, and he wrote, "I'm tired of trying to fill my days with meaningless activity."

What everyone's asking in these statements, what everyone's wondering is how long am I going to have to wander, seemingly aimlessly wander, before I feel this deep sense of wonder. What we find within Luke two and what we find within scripture is that everything that we've ever wondered, someone else has wondered. Someone else has been there. All the characters of Christmas, if you go look at their story, and you look at what's written, and you look about their life and what they had to deal with, we know that they wondered about some of the same things, and I believe that the shepherds wondered that question. How long must I wander in these fields before I feel a sense of wonder?

So before we read their story, let me pray for us. Father, I pray for those who are here who just heard their story. Maybe they've never put it in those words, but that's what they feel. I pray, God, that you would do a work of grace in each of our lives, that you would speak through weakness, that you would speak through your perfect Word, that you would pierce through all the distractions that we brought into this room in our own personal lives, and that you would help us to see where hope, where wonder would actually come from when we feel like we're just spending our time wandering. And so I ask, God, that you would speak to those who know you as Savior and Lord, and I prayed that this would be the morning for those that don't, when they would trust Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. And we pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

Starting in verse eight, Luke two writes this. He says, "In the same region, there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, 'Fear not. For behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.'"

"When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.' And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child, and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart and the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them."

So my question that I want to seek to answer within our text is, what has Christ done in order to rescue us from a life of wandering? The first thing I want you to see here is that Jesus came to a real city on a real day to bring us joy. There's a historical component to this. There's historical credibility that I want to show you here. He came to a real city on a real day, and it says that he did so in order to bring us joy.

Now shepherds, they're part of the whole Christmas story. We can't have them ... We can't have the story without them, really. In fact, if you've set up over here, if you set up this little scene and we had Mary and Joseph, and we had the manger, we had some animals and we had some wise men, and we didn't have the shepherds, you would send emails. That's what happens. You'd say, "Hey, what gives? What happened to the shepherds around here? We need shepherds." We cannot imagine a nativity scene without shepherds, nor should we.

But I want you to know that for a Jewish population in the first century, to invite shepherds to the birth of a baby was just as unthinkable. You see, shepherds were an interesting people. They didn't take a career assessment, land on shepherding, and said, "that's my path." Shepherds were outcasts. Shepherds were disdained by the various society who gladly received their services. This is actually one of the things we talked about last week that splashes up in the brokenness of humanity, and that is that when we do not see the image of God planted down, stamped down upon people, what happens in our sinfulness and our selfishness is we start a class system where we look at other people and say, "I'm above that, but you're not above that, and so maybe you should do what I need."

This is what was happening here. You see, in between two little places, one big, one little, one was Bethlehem and six miles away there was a city called Jerusalem, and every year there was a Passover. Every year, there was times to where the sin of the nation needed to be a tone for, and so they needed lambs. Well, nobody wanted to keep the lambs. It was the outcasts who kept the lambs. It was a dirty work. It was a lonely work. It was an uneducated work.

And so what we find is a people who are in need of a service, and this is what happens in class systems. We still do this in America today. We say, "You know what? I'm above that kind of work, but maybe I can get someone else who is, and then we despise them socially, even though they have the ability and the willingness to do what we need."

This was the shepherds in the story. Shepherds were disdained by the very people who needed and received their services. Shepherds were poor. Shepherd smelled like camping because they lived in the fields. They smelled like campfire and sheep and grass. They were uneducated, but that doesn't mean that they weren't smart. In fact, for those of you who are in the room, you go to school and because you're not succeeding in school like the way that everybody else is, you may conclude that you're not smart, but I want you to know that's not true. You're smart in a way God made you to be smart.

You see these people, they didn't choose this. They were given this, whether it was a family thing or whether it was, "I have nothing else to do. I've made bad choices, and so this is was less for me," or we don't know why they're there. We just know that they were outcast in culture. Everyone treated them as though they were the uneducated people in the culture, but they were all smart. They may not have been great in certain things in school, but you know what? Some of them were have been amazingly smart when it comes to leadership. Out there, they know that there's these cities and there's all these people, and they have this amazing ability to speak. They have amazing ability to draw people with vision in order to accomplish something great, and yet here they are and they feel untapped.

You had people out there that were naturally gifted inventors. Every night at the campfire, maybe somebody's building something else and say, "You know, that'd be great. You ought to bring that to the people." "Well, the people probably wouldn't want it for me." You had people who were skilled in the arts. You had painters out there just naturally gifted. Maybe they would draw in the dirt at night. Naturally gifted at carving things or music. They had maybe engineers, and they thought about building bridges, and they could see mathematics working together in order to improve society. And yet there they were stuck in the field with sheep.

They had to feel untapped. In fact, the text says that they kept watch over their flock, and we think when we read that, we think it means, oh, they guarded the sheep. Oh, they did guard the sheep, but it actually needs more than that. The Greek words actually translated is this. They were watching watches over their flock at night. There were watches of the night. There were spans of time. There were blocks of their life, and this is what it says. It says that these shepherds, while they were watching over sheep for the good of other people that would be used to make atonement for their sin is that they were watching spans of time of their own life evaporate while they're hanging out watching over everyone else's sheep.

And this is where some of us feel right now. You're just watching watches of your life, spans of time, decades, years, months of your life and you're thinking, "I'm not noticed. I'm not significant. I'm not being tapped. I have more to give than what culture and life right now is allowing me to give."

Maybe they felt stuck in the wrong lane. We've all been in traffic jam like this where you're stuck in the wrong lane and it seems like that lane right over there is moving so much faster than my lane. So what do we do? Well, we merge, right? We apply lipstick and then we merge. We merge. Then we get there, and what happens once we get into the right lane? Well, the lane we just left, now all of a sudden they pick up. We're like, "Oh, no." All the people who were behind us who watched us merge, they're like waving at us like, "Hey, here we go."

Some of you feel like that with your career, with your relationships. You're in one lane. You think, "That lane over there looks so much faster, and sweeter, and better, and more satisfying. I need to get in that lane." You get over in that lane, all of a sudden you're like, "Wait a minute. Actually my previous lane was the better lane."

This was the shepherds wandering in the field, watching watches of their life pass. But when Jesus was born, God invited the shepherds first. Isn't that beautiful that the Lamb of God who came into the world chose people who knew how to care for lambs to be the very first people to be able to celebrate his birth? It says that suddenly an angel appeared. This angel said just what all angels do. Like I could write the first line of every angel scripts in the history of the world. It's just like, "Don't die. That'd be bad for the story. Fear not. Just don't be afraid." They're terrified. Then he says, "I bring you good news of great joy." Now, how many of you have heard that before? "I bring you good news of great joy." You've heard that before, right? I mean, you've seen Charlie Brown. You've heard it before.

A word we don't know and what we miss so frequently is the word that he uses there is one that we use frequently in English and we don't translate it this way. We don't imagine with angels they're actually saying to them right now. The words, "I bring you good news," is actually the word evangelizo in Greek. It's where we get the word evangelism. In other words, what the angel says is, "I am evangelizing you with great joy. I've come to tell you something that is so significant that it's going to leave you. There's going to be a residue that's left over that washes over you that's going to bring you joy and great joy."

We talk about evangelism, sharing the gospel with other people, and we don't think about an angel, but this is what the angel was sharing. Just imagine the angel coming to the shepherds and saying, "Look, we don't need a chalkboard. I can do it in the dirt." And he draws one circle and he says, "You know what? God has created the world, and he has this amazing design for life. That's why water tastes good. It's why we love to love. It's why we don't like loneliness. He's created things beautiful. It's for we ate for justice. It's why we all look at beauty and go, 'That's beautiful.' We're all driven to glory. All these things, God created this beautiful world."

Then he looks at these shepherds and he says, "But you know what? There's brokenness in the world because of sin. Sin came into the world. In fact, the very reason that you have an occupation is because of sin. All these animals, they're going to be sacrificed to make atonement for sin of people, including your sin. And yet it's all a dead end, everything you try. This is why there's class systems in the world. This is why they're inside the city and you're outside the city. It's because things are broken. It's because of sin, and we you guys can't fix it." Just imagine the angel. "You can't fix it, so you know what God's doing? That's what I've come to announce right now is something called the gospel." The word gospel, good news. "I bring you good news of great joy. I bring you the gospel. I'm evangelizing you so that you're going to have joy, that you can't save yourself, but God Almighty is sending his son into this Earth. Born unto you this day is a Savior who is Christ the Lord."

Christ is the promised one. He's the one who's always been promised since sin entered the world. God is saying it is time. It's now. He's come. The fulfillment of all of God's promises in the Old Testament have now been realized, and that little baby is right over there, and you simply need to go, and you need to see, you need to believe. And if you'll believe that God will allow you to be able to experience a joy and a peace within your heart that was designed from the beginning, that you can be restored into a relationship with God.

I want you to notice the historical credibility of all of this. He says, "To you is born this day." A day. When God created the sun and the moon, he said, "Let them be for days and for years." You know that life is lived out in a number of days, and what takes place in those days makes those days memorable or not.

Some of us this last year, you can't remember most of your days, but this last year, if something really sweet happened on a particular day, you remember that day. Some of you were engaged on a day. Some of you were married on a day. Some of you had a baby on a day. Some of you lost a baby on a day. You remember that day.

There's a historical marker that happens on days. The Son of God took on flesh on a day, a real day. He wasn't in flesh, he was in flesh on a day. There's credibility to this I want to show you.

Not only was he born on a day, he was also born in a city, and it wasn't a make believe city. It wasn't Wonderland. It wasn't Narnia. It wasn't Middle Earth. It was Bethlehem, six miles from Jerusalem, 10,560 yards from city gate to city gate. Now, what's the point of all of this? It's to give us comfort. Let me encourage you to take comfort that Jesus came as he promised.

Why should it give us comfort that he came as he promised? Well, two reasons. First is because our faith is built on actual events. Even skeptical scholars recognize and agree on Jesus' existence. The place of Jesus' birth is not disputed. The time of Jesus' birth has become the very basis of our calendaring system, our dating system. You've heard the letters BC and AD, 200 BC, 280 AD. BC, Before Christ; AD, Anno Domini. It means in the year of the Lord.

In other words, that the world recognized that the Son of God was born in time and space on this Earth in a city on a day, and we began to say because that was so significant, from now on we will chart time on the basis of how long it's been since the day of the Lord. 2019 years since the day of the Lord. That's where you're at right now. The world recognizes the significance of this man being born in time and space, and this is significant for us and it gives comfort for us because we're building our life upon a man that we've never seen with our eyes, and yet our faith is built on historical, credible, actual events.

The second reason this gives us comfort is because he keeps his promises. He said that he would be born in Bethlehem, and then he was born in Bethlehem. This is so important, because there's so many promises in the Bible that are still unfulfilled, and the reason that you and I know for certain when God makes a promise, the ones that he hasn't yet fulfilled, that they will be fulfilled, it's because when he made promises about Jesus Christ, he fulfilled them all.

And so let me encourage you. He came to a real city on a real day to bring us joy. If you're wandering today in your life, I want you to know that the answer to that actually is based exclusively around this man being born at this time.

The second thing I want you to see is that what Jesus did in order to alleviate the sense of aimless wandering in our life is Jesus took on a real human body to bring us peace. To bring us peace. You see, if you have ever sinned, and the Bible says we all have, then we need a savior. You see, sin severs our relationship with God. And the thing is, is God only offers a stay close to home kind of peace.

I want you to think about this, okay? God does not offer us a rebel as you will kind of peace. You have peace within your heart that he talks about, peace among men with whom he is pleased. It only happens by staying close to him, staying close to God. And yet the Bible says that you and I, we are in a place ... He says before Christ, we're in a place, he simply calls it lost. It's where we lost our reference point to light and we don't know which way to go.

Now most of us have been lost at some point in our life and then we were found, so when we even hear the word lost, it's like, "It's not that bad. I'll be found. I'll find my way out eventually. I've been lost before, and I made my way, and so I'll probably do it again."

Let me give you a different illustration that talks about ... the reality of the Bible talks about when he says that you're lost, when you need a rescuer. Just imagine that you're on a cruise ship, and nobody knows but you fall off the back of it. Nobody knows. There you are, you are swimming at night in the ocean, and you are able through remarkable strength to tread water until you can actually see, and when you can actually see, this is your lens, right? Everywhere around you, you simply see ocean. You know that there is a point when you're going to give out of strength. You know that there's dangers under you. You know that there are storms that will eventually approach every part of the ocean, including the one that you're in. You look around, you see no land whatsoever, so there's no use in swimming anywhere. You know that it is so unlikely that is going to find you, because nobody even knows you're there.

This is the reality that the Bible talks about when it says that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We are in absolutely terrifying peril, and not just for a life, but for eternity. That's why he says that Jesus, his name means savior, to be a rescuer. We have real need for a rescue. That's why it says that God knew that we simply could not swim home, so he sent Christ to bring us home. That's why it says, "Unto you is born this day."

Which if you've never trusted Christ, there is no other rescue ship coming. One and only, trust him or drown forever. That is the message of the Bible, that he loves you so much that he would take his only begotten son and said, "Into the water. You've got to bring them home."

Do you remember what he did, this Jesus? Philippians says that he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant. What a remarkable thing, that Jesus would leave the adoration of heaven and he would take on a human body. Think about that human body. This is God we're talking about, the creator of the ends of the Earth, and he arrived on Earth with baby fingers. You've seen a baby. They can't even control their arms. I've got a little, little great niece and she just raises her hand and just moves them around. This is the Son of God, little baby fingers, a soft spot on the top of his head. Skull hasn't totally grown over yet. His parents had to protect him. This is somebody who needed a blanket, and who needed food, who needed a diaper. Son of God descended for us.

He grew into a man. Oh, and what a man he was. He was so strong, and so wise, and so loving. He was such a leader. The Bible says that he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. This cradle of Christmas, it leads to the cross. Jesus was bound and he was condemned as a criminal. He was crucified to a cross, and he did all of these things in our place. It should have been us, and yet it was him.

He died. He was put in a grave. But three days later, he rose from the dead, because the Son of God has authority over all things. What did God do? God says, "Therefore, God highly exalted him and bestowed upon him the name that is above every name, so at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Every knee, every tongue. That includes yours and mine. Friends, one day your knee is going to bow to him and your tongue is going to confess him. The question is, will it be in time?

The text says that one angel was sufficient to announce this good news, that we could receive peace because this baby had come to rescue us. But one wasn't enough to respond to it, so a multitude of angels came and there they were singing and they were glorifying God, and you see the outcome. Do you see the outcome of Jesus coming? Two things, glory to God, peace to men. The glory of God is sung among the lips of men, and the peace of God is placed within the heart of men. This is Christmas. God's glory, man's peace. Your peace.

Is it for all men? No, it's not for all men. He doesn't say it's for all men. He says it's for those with whom he is pleased. Well then, how do we please him? Some people look around and say, "Oh, I'm going to please him by being a really good and by coming to church. I'm going to come to two Christmas Eve services this year."

Hebrews chapter 11 verse six, it says, "Without faith it is impossible to please him." Faith. Not works. Not heritage. Faith. Why? Because we only experience peace when we keep together what the angels put together. Glory to God. Peace to men. So God says, "If you earn it, then you get peace and you get the glory." He says, "No." He said, "It'll be yours. This peace will be yours if you place your faith in Jesus Christ."

You see, when we put our faith in Jesus, he forgives us and he gives us his righteousness. Romans 5:1 says that, "Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The sad reality is there will be billions of people that will wake up on Christmas morning without any peace whatsoever, even though an army of angels showed up and said, "It's available to those who trust."

You can wake up with peace not only on Christmas morning, but tomorrow morning. So let me encourage you this morning to commit your life to Christ, to commit your life to Christ, to bow your knee today and confess him Lord today. You see, there is no other rescue boat going coming for you.

I want you to think about this for a second. If you're in the water and there's a rescue boat, how do you get in that rescue boat? The first thing you have to do is you have to admit that you need a rescue boat. Some people in the world, they look at Jesus and they say, "No, I'm good. I like swimming." You need to admit that you have a moral need before God and look up and say, "Thank you for the rescue boat."

Second is we have to believe. We have to believe in the credibility and the ability of the rescuer. We don't want to get in the boat and the boat sink, and so we want to have a rescue that's worthwhile, that's strong, that's buoyant, that's going to keep us at hold us. We look at Jesus and we see his death on a cross and his resurrection, and we say, "Now, there's strength, there's authority. I can trust him."

Third, the Bible says the tongue that would confess him as Lord. What does this mean? The Lord is master. It means recognizing his authority over our life. Yet, there's all kinds of people, they get in the water, Jesus comes up, he's presented to them and says, "Here's your rescue boat," and they're like, "One boat? I want choices here. Send me 10 boats. I'll pick the one I like the most." We should thank God there's a boat. There is one. He came for you.

John 1:12 says, "To all who receive him who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." Have you received him? Would you receive him now? You pray. You don't need anybody. You pray to him. You say, "God, I recognize I'm in the water and I'm wandering. I admit my need and I place my faith in your son Jesus Christ and confess him Lord of my life, and I ask that you would save me." The Bible says he will.

For those of us who have trusted Christ, let me give you one more application here. Let's move towards Jesus when we feel empty. It's true that so many of us, even as Christians, this is what takes place is life gets so interrupted with all kinds of different things that even though we know Christ, sometimes we wake up and we feel empty, and we will chase the world over except to go to the one place where hope and peace is given. It's Jesus. And so I urge you today, if you feel empty, it is Jesus. If you know him, it is Jesus. If you don't know him, it's to trust him as your Savior, but it's Jesus.

The last thing I want you to see is this, is that Jesus gave us a real commission to share his joy. It says in verse 10, "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." I don't know if you've ever noticed, but if you've ever found joy in something, your joy is not completed until you get to share it with somebody else, unless you get to talk about it, sing about it, or show somebody. Which is why if you go to a football game and you see a great touchdown, you turn next to the person right next to you who just watched the same play and you go, "Did you see that? Wasn't that amazing?" Why don't we do that? They saw it. They were right next to you. It's because your joy is not complete until you get to talk about it.

So these shepherds, they saw Jesus Christ and what did they feel? They felt joy. And then what did they have to do? They had to go tell people. And so these shepherds, these nobodies became the first missionaries in the world of Jesus Christ.

Then they returned. They returned to the field. This is amazing. It says that they returned to the field glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard. In other words, they went back to the same fields, but they were changed forever. You may trust Christ this morning and go back to the same job tomorrow, but you'll be changed forever. Now you have a commission to be able to make disciples and tell other people about Jesus. And so in closing, let me urge you, church family, let's seek to make him known. Keep your eyes open.

Yesterday I went out running. I wasn't thinking about anything other than running and trying to finish running. I got back to the house, almost back to the house, and there's a neighbor and he's outside. I'm walking back just the last few steps to the house, and he comes out and he says, "Hey, I've never asked you to do something like this, but I've got a big decision this week and I would just love to know somebody is praying for me. And so when you do your thing, would you just pray?" And so I said, "Well, let's pray right now." "Like now?" He didn't know what to do. And I said, "Yeah, let's just pray," and so I prayed for him. It was amazing. It was such a ... I said, "Let me ask you something." I said, "Do you and your family do anything for the holidays, Christmas? I'd love to invite you."

We've been encouraging, and you've heard this, right, to look for people. Look for opportunities to be praying for someone specifically and to look to bless them. Share your story with them. Invite them to something. But let's increase our joy by sharing it with others, okay? Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we love you and we need you. I pray now, God, that you would help us to sing with a full heart as we sing about you being all we need and that you, Christ, are our treasure forever. Would you help us to sing now as though we have found a treasure, and would you help us to give faithfully so that more people around the world would be able to hear this good news of great joy? We pray all of this in the strong and perfect name of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.



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