

Have You Lost The Wonder Of Christmas■

by Donny Coulter

This sermon emphasizes the importance of rediscovering the wonder of Christmas and refocusing on Jesus amidst distractions like commercialism and the pursuit of a perfect holiday. Drawing parallels from the shepherds' journey to find the Savior, the message encourages a return to wonder, walking towards Christ, and engaging in worship. It challenges listeners to reflect on their priorities and to share the message of the Savior with others.

Scripture: Luke 2:8, Luke 19:45, Luke 10:38

Topics: "Rediscovering Christmas Wonder", "Prioritizing Christ in the Holiday Season"

Description

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Transcript

Transparent pastor. Sometimes it gets me in trouble. The last two weeks I've been kind of holed up at home.

The one day I actually went out to the property and cut these trees for the display. Kind of broke the rules I guess, but I didn't come in contact with anybody in the public. It was straight out to the country, eight miles south.

I certainly didn't have a problem with my integrity with that. But I did discover something. In two weeks of just kind of sitting at home, out of routine, and my prayer life got hindered.

I know it doesn't make sense, does it? You'd think that with all that time on your hands, you'd spend it praying. And I think it was probably the attitude of why I was at home that caused the discrepancy. And so, this is why I wish that we could have the church open all the time.

So that everybody could have a chance to do this. Yesterday, I came in and I found myself kneeling at the altar. Just in a sense of repentance, where I felt my own heart had wondered and strayed.

You know the old song that talks about how our heart is prone to wonder? And so I just spent some time here at the altar in repentance. And I appreciate the grace of God. Don't you? That I stood up from that place refreshed, without condemnation.

And that's a sweet place to be. And that's why I love the God that we call our Lord. And so I would say to you, if you find that you have wondered, find an altar.

It doesn't have to be here at the church. It just doesn't. Find a place where you can just cry out.

And I promise you that the God of the Bible is a God who keeps His promises. And He says He will never leave you nor forsake you. He promises.

And He keeps His promises. I'm not a typical topical sermon preacher. You know that I like to systematically walk through the Word of God.

Because I think that kind of teaching, that kind of learning gives stability. It keeps us on track. But it's Christmas.

And I don't know that I've ever done this. In all of my years of ministry, I have never stopped a sermon series. And just preached three or four sermons around the season.

But for some reason this year, I just wanted to do that. And so I had a sermon prepared this morning. And it was going to be on the names of Jesus and the Christmas story.

We talked about them a minute ago. That was Jesus, the Savior. Emmanuel, God is with us.

And the King. I was going to talk about that today. But God changed that yesterday.

So I have a question I want to ask you. Have you lost the wonder of Christmas? Do you remember? Do you remember the wonder when you were a child? Do you remember that? About Christmas? Now I know, let me digress for a moment. I know that for most of us as children, and depending on the way that we were raised.

Most of us, Christmas morning was about the new present. The new Tonka truck. That I got when I was 13.

It was the only thing that my mother could afford to get me. And she got me a Tonka truck. When I was 13.

Do you remember the wonder that you felt at Christmas? Or maybe you remember the wonder of your children at Christmas. Or maybe you're there right now. And you can't wait for that Christmas morning to come.

And watch them come down the steps, or up the steps, or into the room. With that look of wonder. Do you remember that? Do you? I remember a story in my life.

I remember my dad. I had wanted a race track. It had batteries, and it made the cars shoot around it.

A Hot Wheels track. And I wanted that so bad. And I remember going to sleep on Christmas, or not going to sleep.

Going to bed on Christmas Eve. And laying in the bed. And I could hear the commotion downstairs.

Now my dad loved Jimmy Swaggart. He loved to play himself some Jimmy Swaggart at night on the big stereo. Do you guys remember those big stereo systems that were about 6-8 feet wide? And they had the little 4 inch speakers on the side.

And the turntable in the middle. Do you remember that? Dad used to play some Jimmy Swaggart on those things. And I remember dad playing some Jimmy Swaggart.

But then it got quiet. The record ended. And I heard... My dad was downstairs playing with the race track.

And so all night, I had to wait to get up and go play with the race track. The wonder of coming down the steps and seeing that track there all set up. It wasn't in a box.

Dad had taken the time to set it up and played with it himself. To make sure it worked, I'm sure. It's that trip down the steps.

I love that part. Every year that we have children. And it looks like I'm going to have children until I'm 75.

But every year. That's the funnest part. It's for me to go down the bottom of the steps and film the children as they walk down the steps.

And to see that look. That look of wonder. Have we lost the wonder of Christmas? Not because of presents.

But because of Christ. Let's read the Christmas story. Can we do that? Nathan, I didn't... I was so excited to do this, I forgot to turn my stuff on.

So, give me a minute. Are we there? You'll find it eventually. The Christmas story.

Luke chapter 2. Luke chapter 2. I know that it becomes kind of passé. But it should never. Let's read Luke chapter 2. And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

The census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea.

To the city of David, which is called Bethlehem. Because he was of the house and the lineage of David. To be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife.

Who was with child. So it was that when they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. There it goes.

And she brought forth her firstborn son. And wrapped him in swaddling clothes. And laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields. Keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold an angel of the Lord stood before them.

And the glory of the Lord shone around them. And they were greatly afraid. And then the angel said to them, do not be afraid.

For behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be for all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior. Who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be a sign to you. You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths. Lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly hosts. Praising God and saying glory to God in the highest. And on earth peace, good will towards men.

And so it was when the angels had gone away from them into heaven. That the shepherds said to one another. Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass.

Which the Lord has made known to us. And they came with haste. And found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger.

Now when they had seen him. They made widely known the saying which was told them concerning the child. You see those three things? They made haste.

They found him. And they made it known. And all of those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept all of these things and pondered them in her heart. And then the shepherds returned. Glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen.

And it was told them. Let's pray. Father, thank you for this beautiful, wonderful story.

I pray that in the moments that we have together around your word. That you would help the wonder of Christmas to return. For those of us that may have lost it or been misdirected.

I pray Father that you would help us to wonder again. At the joy and the message of Christmas. May our hearts be soft and our ears be open.

So that we can hear and respond to your message to us. I pray these things now in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

You know, you can learn a lot from children. We can learn a lot from our kids. Learn about life.

About love. About the zest for life. About imagination.

About wonder. Inquisitive. All of those things that we can learn.

There's a writer from England. His name is G.K. Chesterton. He is a moralist philosopher.

And he said this one time. He said, I learned more from observing a nursery. Than I did in my lectures in philosophy.

You can learn a lot about life from children. This sermon today comes because I learned from a child yesterday. So the name, I usually don't title sermons.

I'll fancy and put kind of titles on them. But I couldn't help but do this one. The name of the sermon today is dump, run, wonder.

Now forgive me for a moment. You'll understand what I mean. We can learn a lot about life from kids.

Learn about that zest for life. That zeal. The imagination.

They have an imagination that's amazing. Sophie's always coming up saying. Daddy, pretend that you are the daddy.

And I'm the daughter. Well, I don't have to pretend that, darling. But she'll come up.

Her imagination is incredible. I love it. I love watching it.

And you can learn so much from that. You can learn a lot about relationships from your children too. Can't you? You know what? If they're happy with you as a parent.

Or as a grandparent. They just want to be with you. Agreed? They just want to hang out.

And they're excited to do that. They just want to be together. Children are that way.

I don't know what happens when they get older. They kind of lose that. But maybe it's our fault.

Maybe it's theirs. I don't know. But when they're children, you can see that.

They just love being with you. I love it when Stetson comes in. I haven't seen him for a long time.

And he comes running. His feet flying like Forrest Gump running. And he says, granddaddy, granddaddy.

And he jumps up and he grabs a hold of you. It's that wonder of the relationship, isn't it? So poor Sophie has been stuck in the house with me and Dana. The week before Dana got home, she was stuck with me.

And they didn't go anywhere. She actually finally went to school. And ended up getting sick the day she went to school.

With a stomach virus. But she's been kind of stuck in the house. And she chomps at every opportunity.

Now, at 3 o'clock on Thursday, I took myself out of quarantine. Because I came across the border at 3 o'clock. On Friday, 14 days before that.

And so I took myself out. And I came in here in the office a little bit. And in the evening.

But Sophie still hadn't gone anywhere. Took them shopping on, I think it was on Thursday evening. But then yesterday, I needed to make a run to the dump.

And so I told Dana that I was going to go to the dump. And Sophie says, Daddy, can I go? Can I go? Can I go with you? And she just wanted to go with her dad. And get out.

And I said, well, darling, I'm just going to the dump. But you can go. And she went, yes! Yes! Good to go to the dump with you! Yes! And I learned from that.

As I thought about Christ and Christmas. The wonder of going with her daddy to the dump. She didn't care where she was going.

As long as she was out and she was with me. She could care less. That's why I call this the dump run wonder.

Do you have that sense of wonder? When it comes to the relationship that you have with Christ. Somehow, when we get older. Things take our focus.

Things pull our wonder of Christ away. And put it on something else. See, when you get older.

I was talking with Mylon here the other day. And he was all excited about Christmas. And I said, what are you excited about? You're 18.

You ain't getting nothing. He's like, huh? Really? That's the way it works, buddy. You ain't no child no more.

You're old. Christmas is boring. And he's like, really? Yeah.

See, the presents now. The presents have no appeal. And so we have to replace that need with something else.

And often times we replace it with commercialism. The commercialism of Christmas. Or, as I like to call it.

We replace it with performing in the play of the perfect Christmas. You'll understand what I mean in a little moment. Let's look at the story that we just read.

The wonder of the shepherds. Did you know there are kind of two versions of this story that are available? Did you know that? I don't know if you've ever looked into this. And the reason why I discovered it is because as I read the story of the shepherds, I saw this thing where, you know, when Gabriel comes and says, Today was born a Savior in the city of David in Bethlehem, right? And you're going to find Him wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

That's all they got. They had no instructions. They had no address.

They had nothing. Have you ever thought about that? How did they find Him? I mean, on a normal time, Bethlehem proper would have had about a thousand people. How did they find Him so quickly? So I started going.

Well, they had two instructions. Swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And so I began to try to understand.

Those are the signs that Gabriel gave. Those are the signs. So what did it mean? And I found another version of the Christmas story.

No, not a version of the Christmas story. A version of the shepherds. Now we have the typical story of tradition that says that there was no room in the inn.

And so Mary and Joseph were placed in a stable. They were placed out back somewhere in Bethlehem in a stable because there was no room for them in the inn. It was stinky.

It was musty. It was urine-filled air. This is where animals sleep.

And this is where the first sleep of the God-man took place. Shepherds, they were cast off. They were the low of Jewish society.

They couldn't be witnesses in trials. They couldn't have official positions in the judiciary because they were considered to be lowly. And they're out in the barren sheep wilderness tending to their flocks, doing their

lowly duties.

And it's in this place and to these lowly men that the heralds showed up to announce the message of Jesus. They dropped everything. They dropped everything that they were responsible for and they head off to find the Savior.

Now that's one version. The typical traditional version. But I discovered another version.

It's called the version of the Tower of the Flock or the McDoll Eater. And it goes something like this. There was no room for them in the inn.

And so they found themselves at the Tower of the Flock, a stable which was the birthing place for a special lambs. It was a place where the sacrificial lambs were brought to to certify. It's still a stable.

But it was a special stable. And the shepherds were not just the lowly shepherds way out in the field. They were.

These shepherds were in the field watching their sheep by night. But these were special shepherds. They were not just castoffs.

They were shepherds that were chosen by the priest. And they were chosen by the priest to watch over, to shepherd, the herd of lambs and ewes that were designed to be used for the sacrificial system. They were, in a sense, priest shepherds.

They were given the charge to raise the unblemished lambs that were meant for the sacrifice that happened twice a day and for those that would be used during the Passover feast. And when Gabriel showed up, when the heralds showed up, they gave them only two signs wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying, and if you look at the Greek, the Greek is more specific than lying in a manger, it is lying in the manger. Or lying in the stable.

Right there, where the sacrificial lambs were brought in to be born, is where the Lamb who will take away the sins of the world was born. The reason why, according to this story, the reason why the priest shepherds didn't need any more instructions is when the angel said swaddling cloths and the manger, they knew exactly where to go. They went to the tower of the flock where they brought the lambs, the ewes, so that they could lamb and the sheep for sacrifice could be certified.

I'm not sure if it's theologically important which one of these versions you accept. I don't know which one is the real case. And we really have no scriptural proof of either one, we have tradition.

But these men, whether these men were priestly shepherds or lowly shepherds way out in the wilderness, they knew the promises of the Messiah. Can we agree on that? They knew that a Messiah was promised to them. And when they heard the message of the promise to Messiah, their response was one of immediacy.

We must go to Bethlehem. We have to go. And so they did.

They went. And look what it says. They made haste.

I love that. They made haste. That means that they didn't get distracted from their goal.

And what was their goal? Their goal was to find the Savior. And I have to believe that they had no doubt. I mean, I don't know that I would doubt a whole lot if a choir of angels came and started singing to me, would you? I think I'd believe what they said.

And especially if I'd been living since a child and learning all of the scriptures of a promised Messiah, I would have believed it. And so they believed it. And because they believed it, they didn't let anything distract them from their goal of finding the Savior.

They had to see Him. Let us go and see. They had to go.

And so they made haste. It means they didn't let the crowds hinder them. It means that there were no markets to deter them.

They didn't get sucked in. They went. They made haste.

Can those kind of words describe our pursuit of Christ? Can they? There are so many things that we are so distracted about right now. Vaccine. No vaccine.

Mark of the Beast. Conspiracies. Far right.

Far left. Far left. So many things that distract us.

The shepherds, when they heard the message and reminded of the promise that God made to send a Savior, they made haste. They didn't let anything else stand in the way. I'm afraid that there's many things that are standing in the way of the true worship of a Savior right now in our lives.

And we've got to stop. Don't we? But not only did they make haste. It says that they found Him.

They found Him. I love that. I don't know how they found Him, alright? Depending on which version.

I don't know how they found Him. Did they just take off? Was it the lowly shepherds out in the middle of the field and they just took off and the Spirit of the Lord gave them direction to that address and that place and they just knew that that's where Jesus was? Could happen. Or were they priestly shepherds that just knew the message that the angels had brought them and knew exactly where the manger was and so they went to the tower of the flock? I don't know which way, how they found Him.

All I know is that the Scripture says they found Him. They found Him there with His mommy and His stepdad. They found Him just as was promised wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a feed trough.

Have you ever wondered what it would be like that first night? Being the first ones to arrive on the scene having hid in your heart all of your life the promise of the Messiah and being able to kneel. Think about it for a moment. Being able to kneel there and look at this God baby.

This God man being able to kneel there. The wonder and the worship that they must have experienced on their knees there in those few moments. Or maybe a few hours.

The promise of thousands of years lay before them. The promise not only to them but to all people the angel had said. That promise we can kind of understand.

Simeon's response. Do you remember Simeon? In his priestly duties he said now in his prayer as he saw the baby. I now can depart in peace.

From my own eyes has seen salvation. How about old Anna? Just a couple of verses there about old Anna. John gives a lot of detail.

It's suspected that this lady was 105 years old. But she was in the temple day and night serving constantly. She was a workaholic.

At 105. And when she saw the baby it was an instant praise. And speaking of him.

Go back and read the story in Matthew. They found him. Will you take the time to find him during this busy crazy season of life? I can promise you he's not far away and easy to find.

And then I love this part and I can't talk about it long. Not now. But they made him widely known.

Did you get that part? They made haste to him. They found him. And when they found him and they experienced him they didn't just go back to the fields and sit on it.

What a great experience we had. They found people After they found the Savior they found people and they began to share the message the promised Savior is born. We saw him with our own eyes.

And the people began to marvel at the things that the shepherds told them and that were told to the shepherds. They began to marvel. Don't you long for? I long for a church in which we find the Savior.

We make haste to the Savior. We find him. And when we find him we trumpet the name of Christ to all that will listen.

I remember, I was telling the guys this morning in my office I remember driving up to back when I was a computer technician in Nashville and there's this place called Crystal Burgers. Anybody ever heard of Crystal Burgers? Oh yeah, they've been in the south so they've heard of Crystal Burgers. Crystal Burgers is a fast food chain and they make these little burgers that are like this big.

They're square burgers. And they're only about this big. They used to be 25 cents.

You could get a Crystal Burger for 25 cents. Sometimes they would go and sell for 10 cents. I remember growing up me and my brother and my grandfather would take us down there in Lafayette, Georgia.

He'd take us down to Crystal Burgers and my brother would try to see how many Crystal Burgers he could eat in one city because they were only 25 cents. And Paul would buy him as many as he wanted. I don't remember how many he would eat.

But Crystal Burgers. And I was working as a computer technician or not. Squirrel.

I'm telling you, I'm sorry. I'm working as a computer technician and I drive up to the drive-thru to Crystal's. A burger chain at Christmas time and there on their sign at the drive-thru, the menu at the drive-thru, it says, Crystal's is the reason for the season.

Wow. We need to be telling people about the reason for the season, don't we? Those shepherds had no problem telling others about it. We shouldn't either.

Now here's our modern challenge. Our modern challenge is we get distracted. I would like to talk about two distractions that we have and the first one is commercialism.

It is really easy to get lost in commercialism. The commercialism of Christmas. Isn't it? It happens to all of us.

We got kids. We want kids to get the things that they want. We want to see that smile as they walk down the steps and that wonder.

We want our kids to do that. We have the opportunity to do that because we live in North America. But we get stuck, caught up in the commercialism of Christmas and this commercialism begins to bring in anxiety.

How many people go through the Christmas season fraught with anxiety because there's a supply chain problem and the gift is not going to arrive in time? Real stuff, huh? Or maybe it's worry. I'm worried about not being able to afford the gift that my child wants. And then that brings another problem of commercialism and that is the financial stress.

All those horrible, wonderful things that we call credit cards. And then there's the busyness of it all. The last two weeks I had the slothfulness of it all.

But Christmas seems to bring the busyness of it all. We get so busy because it's commercialized, we get so busy in all that's going on from around us and we forget to wonder. We forget to make haste to find and to tell.

Let me turn your attention to Luke chapter 19. Then He went to the temple and began to drive those out, those who bought and sold in it, Sorry, let me start that over. Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, saying to them, It is written, My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.

And He was teaching daily in the temple, but the chief priests and the scribes and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him and were unable to do anything for all the people were very attentive to hear Him. I would love to spend a lot of time right here on this story, but I think you get the symbolism I'm trying to push towards you. These priests and merchants worked together to commercialize the house of God so that everybody could get their piece of the pie.

They had become distracted from the purpose of the house of God, which was prayer and focus on God. And they didn't even know it. And Jesus, it's near the end.

And Jesus goes in. I'm sure not the first time He had desired to do such. As a matter of fact, if you take John's version, He probably had done this once before.

But it's time. It's near the end and it's time. And He goes in and He turns over the money changer's tables and He drives them out of the house of God with a whip.

Here's my suggestion. If we have become victims of the commercialism of Christmas, maybe it is time to let Jesus come in and turn over the tables and get out the whip. Enough said.

How about this one? I call it The Play of the Perfect Christmas. Do you find yourself performing in the play of the perfect Christmas? We've got to have all the decorations just right. We've got to have the meal cooked and prepared just perfect.

And all of the place settings are right where they belong. I'm speaking from experience because I grew up with a mother who played in the perfect Christmas every year. Until her son decided to leave and go to the

mission field and it destroyed everything.

The meal has to be just right. Every decoration has to be in the right place and every light bulb has to be lit. Every present is bought with all of its meaning so the grandkids could have this and understand.

In all of this, all of this is so that somehow we can impress. Somehow we can satisfy some inner need of wonder. And so we continue to perform and then Christmas is over.

Read with me Luke chapter 10. Luke chapter 10 and verse 38. Now it happened as they went that he entered a certain village and a certain woman named Martha welcomed him in her house.

And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she approached him and said, Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me all alone to serve? Therefore, tell her to help me.

And Jesus answered and said, Oh Martha, poor darling, I'll send her right away. And Jesus answered and said to her, Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed and Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her.

You get the message. The shepherds, they wondered at the announcement. Watch this.

Listen. I'm closing. Finishing right here.

The shepherds, they wondered at the announcement. You know me, I like to enter into stories. I like to be there.

And I hear this story. And I hear the angel giving the message for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which shall be for all the people. I hear that and it creates, even in me knowing the whole story, it creates this wonder in me.

Doesn't it? The shepherds wonder, move them to walking so that they could find the Savior. And their walking moved them to worship. You hear me? Their wonder moved them to walking and their walking moved them to worship.

Here's what I'm saying. We need to be reminded of the wonder of Christ again. In this time and at this season we need to be reminded of the wonder of Christ.

And we need to be walking in the direction of Christ. And when we get there, so to speak, when we get there, we need to find ourselves in worship. So let me ask you again.

Have you lost your sense of wonder? Or maybe a second question after hearing some of this and hopefully the Spirit working in your heart. Will you find that sense of wonder about Jesus again in this season? Will you? Look unto Jesus. The Author and Finisher of your faith.

Let's pray. Father, Lord, at times in our lives we all find ourselves guilty of some part of this, I'm sure. And so, Lord Jesus, I pray that in this moment of reflection and contemplation within, and I pray that all of us are doing that.

I pray, Father, that we would see. That we'd see that we've been caught up in the commercialism or the performance. Or whatever it might be in this season.

Maybe it's caught up in our mourning. There's so many things that we could have talked about today that pull us away and distract us. I pray that You would help us not just during Christmas, but for the rest of our lives to live in wonder of Jesus.

But this is just a good opportunity to head us in that direction. I pray, Father, that Your Holy Spirit would convict us of those places where we are trying to fulfill a need within us with something else. And I pray that it would drive us back to the announcement of the Savior and help us to wonder.

Help us to grow in our wonder of who You are. And what You've done. You are the God-Man.

The Creator of the universe has become one of us. Emmanuel, I pray that we would understand that and marvel at it and wonder at it. Grant that to be true in our lives, I pray.

And Lord, I pray that as we get ourselves in the right place, I pray that we would begin to share, to trumpet that to those that are around us. I pray that we would become the heralds of the Savior. People need You.

I think people are ready. They have an opportunity to hear it. So I pray that we would give them something, someone real.

Just to give them the Gospel. We trust You with that work because that's Yours and Yours alone. We ask that You would have Your way.

Mold us and shape us into the people that You want us to be during this Christmas season. We pray these things now in the precious and powerful name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

I want to ask Eli and Chelsea if you would come back and just sing and close us out in a chorus of Go Tell It On The Mountain.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/B39iNWmMst4.mp4>

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