



Message Discussion Guide Week of November 26, 2023

Message: Christmas: The Real Story, Part 1: A Big God for Little People

Key Scriptures: Luke 2:1-5

Preachers: Pastor Tom Parkinson

Message Highlights:

In the Charlie Brown Christmas special, Charlie Brown struggles to find the meaning of Christmas amid the commercialization of the holiday. Then, his friend Linus shows him the meaning by simply reading the Christmas story in Luke 2.

- The classic cartoon still resonates today, as the increasing demands of the holidays can cause us to lose focus on the “reason for the season.”
- Rather than lament the commercialization of Christmas, we are choosing to do something about it by slowly walking through the Christmas story in Luke 2.

The Christmas story begins with a reference to Caesar Augustus and his issuance of a census of the entire Roman world. But who is Augustus, and why is the census important?

- Augustus (whose real name is Gaius Octavian) is the adopted son of Julius Caesar. He came to power in Rome about 25 years before Jesus was born. He was called “son of God,” “savior of the world,” and “the Lord” – all titles that would be given to Jesus.
- The census was used to determine and collect taxes, conscript men into military service, and pressure oaths of allegiance to Rome. For Jews, the census was a somber reminder of Roman rule and a compromising of their faith.

Unbeknownst to him, Augustus’ census decree set in motion God’s plan for saving the world. Micah prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, and it was the census that prompted Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem.

Augustus was the most powerful man in the world, but God chose to save the world not through him, but through humble peasants from a rural Jewish village. The true savior of the world is not the Roman emperor, but the baby lying in a manger. We serve a big God, who does amazing things, often through “little” people.

Discussion Questions:

- 1.) [Watch this clip from the Charlie Brown Christmas special \(1965\):](#)
 - a. What memories, thoughts, emotions, and reactions does this clip create for you?
 - b. Have you ever felt like Charlie Brown, frustrated by the inability to find the true meaning of Christmas amid all the “extras” the culture attaches to it?
 - c. Why do you think Linus’ simple telling of the Christmas story is so famous? Why does it resonate with so many people?
- 2.) Do you ever lament the commercialization of Christmas? Why is it so easy for us to become distracted by other things and lose sight of the biblical story?
- 3.) [Read Luke 2:1-5](#)
 - a. Why does Luke feel the need to locate the birth of Jesus within the context of the wider world event of the census?
 - b. How do you think Mary and Joseph felt about needing to go and be counted for the census?
 - c. What did you learn in the sermon about Caesar Augustus and the census that help us see the meaning of Jesus’ birth?
- 4.) Joseph and Mary were humble peasants from a rural Jewish village, and yet God places them on stage with Augustus, the most powerful man in the world.
 - a. When you consider the vastness of God’s world, do you ever feel small and insignificant?
 - b. Why does God continually choose to work through the humble and meek?
 - c. What does it mean that God chose for Jesus to be born in a manger instead of in a palace?
- 5.) What is your primary takeaway from this message?

Abundant Life Tip: God’s preference is to do big things through little people. When we humble ourselves before the Lord, God will lift us up to do mighty things.