

## Christmas Resolutions: Seek-Share-Serve, or Know-Share-Exalt

By Bob Young

### Introduction

Christmas resolutions—novel idea! Resolution signifies change. How? Where is the power for transformation?

Here's what I believe after 55+ years of preaching Good News, sharing faith, encouraging spiritual lives, walking with Jesus. Jesus can change everything. Encounter with Jesus changes everything.

The Incarnation, told in what is often called the Christmas story, is about changed lives. This year, as 2020 draws to a close, I have been studying Luke's account of Jesus' birth. I see changed lives.

- The transformation of Zechariah after seeing an angel (Luke 1:11ff)
- Gabriel appearing to Mary and her subsequent praise song (Luke 1: 26ff)
- The babe leaping in Elizabeth's womb (Luke 1:41)
- The angel appearing to the shepherds in the field (Luke 2:8ff)

These stories are etched into our minds. God intervened in history and changed people. Christianity is about transformation, how people are being molded into Christ's disciples.

In the Bible, encountering Jesus precedes and encourages understanding. We mostly get it backward today. Churches are filled with people of faith seeking understanding, rather than people of understanding seeking deeper faith. Churches are filled with believers who do not know the basis for their belief, faith without understanding. We must explore, understand, apply Scripture. From our understanding, faith is deepened, strengthened, made more firm. Study leads to faith more than faith leads to study.

Transformation, newness. Something of why I like Christmas! I enjoy the season; I enjoy the festivity. I enjoy the opportunity to revisit an important part of the storyline of Scripture.

The Christmas season is misunderstood by many, diminished, even demeaned. Christmas is much larger than the story of baby Jesus. For many people in the world today, Christmas is only a secular holiday. Some churches and religious groups reject Christmas. Other churches and religious groups attach so much ritual to the season that they forget to tell the story, they never explain its importance. For many years, the Christmas season was largely ignored in my religious heritage. In more recent years, many of my tribe have swerved to the opposite side, celebrating the Christmas season with traditional religious trappings. In both cases, we were and continue to be largely silent about the biblical message that is so needed in our world today.

In the narrative of the shepherds in Luke 2, I see three questions, followed by three "Christmas resolutions."

**Who is Jesus, who is He?** (ANSWER: "In the city of David, is born a Savior, Christ the Lord.") I want to understand; I want to know him. I seek to understand.

**How will you react, do next?** (ANSWER: "Let us go see and verify what we have been told. And they spread the word.") After seeing for myself, I will share the good news of Jesus.

**How will your life be changed?** (ANSWER: "And they returned glorifying and praising God.") I will exalt him.

Luke was a historian, his account has a long list of those who reacted to and participated with the Jesus story in various ways – Zechariah, Elizabeth, John the Baptist in the womb, Mary and Joseph, Quirinius, the shepherds, Simeon, Anna. Adding Matthew's account, one would add Gabriel, Herod, the Magi, and others.

Three resolutions—to know Him, share Him, exalt Him. A life-changing set of resolutions, for the next two weeks, for the coming year, for life! May God bless you as you resolve to understand the transformative power of the season!

**Scripture reading: Luke 2:1-20.** I want to hear the story afresh, to see beyond the birth of a baby, to see the dynamics of the story, often overlooked and unseen. Let us look at the three questions and three resolutions.

### First question: who is Jesus?

The question of Luke 2, "Who Is Jesus?" Luke 1-4 is an identity passage (parallel to Matthew 1-4:16, Mark 1:1ff, John 1:1-17). The gospels open with identity narratives, think through the early chapters of Luke.

- Events leading to his birth, Zechariah/Elizabeth, John the Baptist still in the womb, Quirinius, shepherds in fields.
- His birth, identity as lineage of David, Savior, Christ, Lord. Jewish shepherds understood.
- Temple story, at age 12
- Baptism
- Temptation
- Initiation of ministry

The beginning is necessary, to lead us to the transfiguration, triumphal entry, death, and resurrection

I want to know; who Jesus is. Do you know my Jesus? A resolution for this season: To know who Jesus is, remember who Jesus is, be reminded of who Jesus is. Can you hear anew a story that is old? Can you escape the familiarity? Will you try to hear the Bible, not to celebrate, not to say that the timing is not correct, but to understand who Jesus is?

**Christmas Resolution #1: I will seek him. I want to understand and grow my faith, I want to know.**

The shepherds responded to the news of Jesus' birth by resolving to go see for themselves, to go and seek him. For most of us, Christmas is a rather tame holiday. This is not to make light of the activities that are often part of the holiday season. Only a simple observation that many people limit their Christmas thinking and fail to see Jesus clearly.

We are viewing God in the flesh, God with us, Savior, and King. Failing to see Jesus explains why some people pay attention to Jesus at Christmas and pay little attention to him the rest of the year. If you do not seek, you will not find. Do you really know who Jesus is? The answer is foundational to faith, explains perseverance.

**One you know who Jesus is, what will you do next? What will be your response, reaction?**

**Christmas Resolution #2: I will share him, spreading the Good News**

When the shepherds arrived in Bethlehem and saw the child lying in the manger (stone feed trough), "they spread the word concerning what had been told about this child".

Christmas is a time for telling. Christianity is a belief that demands sharing.

One cannot keep quiet about the story—not only at Christmas but throughout the year.

Many churches slow down evangelistically, at the precise time when people are thinking about Jesus?

The messages of this season must demand response!

What will you do with the Jesus story? Look at the persons mentioned in Luke's gospel, what would we have done? What will we do?

- Zechariah/Elizabeth, representing Jewishness at its best.
- John the Baptist, yet in the womb.
- Joseph/Mary
- Quirinius
- Innkeeper
- Bethlehem residents
- Shepherds
- Add the magi-wise men, Herod, of Matthew's account

Our challenge, 2000 years later, is to respond to the story thoughtfully, with greater awareness.

These may have been unknowing; we can know. We see the "so what," the impact and results.

What will we do with the Jesus story? How will we respond, react? How will your life be changed? Christmas is a good time to resolve that question.

**Will you let the Christmas story transform you, change your life? How will you be changed?**

**Christmas Resolution #3: I will serve him, worship and praise Him**

The shepherds were overwhelmed at the angel's announcement. They experienced what some have called "holy wonder." The message was and is incredibly unbelievable: Good tidings of great joy, another birth but not just any birth, the fulfillment of the promise of a coming Lord and Savior. Many people miss the importance of Jesus because they want a Savior without first honoring and recognizing him as Lord.

The shepherds' story raises a third question: **What will you do about Jesus?** It is parallel to the question Pilate asked. What shall we do with Jesus? Indeed, that is the question today.

Some will go to church on a special occasion, a special night. Some churches will have special events.

Some will try to experience him in the once-a-year format.

That is not why God sent his son into the world. He did not send him for a couple of annual celebrations.

The shepherds were filled with awe and worshiped, praised, and glorified him.

For what they had been told, for what they had seen, for the exactness of the story.

**Conclusion**

Will you seek him, share him, serve him?

Will you commit to these simple Christmas resolutions?

Make this a season of power and praise? Make this a time of spiritual growth and sensitivity?

Seek him by hearing, believing, obeying in baptism.

Seek him by returning to the fold of the Good Shepherd.

Share the good news with your neighbor.

Serve him faithfully.

*[For those of you reading the written copy, take a few minutes to enjoy the list of biblical descriptions of Jesus. I have included the list on one page to make it easier to photocopy or print.]*

**Here is the grand truth about Jesus-----**

Almighty (Rev. 1:8; Mt. 28:18)

Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8; 22:13)

Amen (Rev. 3:14)

Author and Perfecter of our Faith (Heb. 12:2)

Beginning and End (Rev. 22:13)

Bread of Life (John 6:35; 6:48)

Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4)

Christ (1 John 2:22)

The child who is born

Creator (John 1:3)

Deliverer (Rom. 11:26)

Eternal Life

Everlasting Father

Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11)

First and Last (Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13)

God

Good Shepherd (John 10:11,14)

Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14)

Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23)

Heir of all things (Heb. 1:2)

High Priest (Heb. 2:17)

Holy and True (Rev. 3:7)

Hope of Glory (Col. 1:27)

I Am (John 8:58)

Image of God (2 Cor. 4:4)

Immanuel (Mt. 1:23)

Jesus

King Eternal (1 Tim. 1:17)

King of Israel (John 1:49)

King of the Jews (Mt. 27:11)

King of kings (1 Tim 6:15; Rev. 19:16)

King of the Ages (Rev. 15:3)

Lamb of God (John 1:29)

Life, Light of the World

Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5)

Living One (Rev. 1:18)

Lord (2 Pet. 2:20)

Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16)

Master (Lk. 5:5; 8:24; 9:33)

Mighty God (Isa. 9:6)

Morning Star (Rev. 22:16)

Only Begotten Son of God (John 1:18; 1 John 4:9)

Our Holiness, Protection, Redemption, Righteousness

Power of God (1 Cor. 1:24)

Prophet, Priest (Acts 3:22)

Rabbi (Mt. 26:25)

Resurrection and Life (John 11:25)

Righteous Branch (Jer. 23:5)

Rock, Root, Ruler

Savior

Son of David, of God, of Man, of the Most High God

Suffering Servant

True Bread, Light, Vine

Truth (John 1:14; 14:6)

Vine

Way (John 14:6)

Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24)

Word (John 1:1)