

The Christmas Promise – Ordinary People – Bible Study Helps

Title: Ordinary People in God's Extraordinary Plan: The Christmas Promise

Sermon Summary: This sermon explores how God chose ordinary, humble people to fulfill His extraordinary plan of bringing Jesus Christ into the world. After 400 years of prophetic silence, God broke through with angelic messengers to common people—a poor virgin (Mary), a humble carpenter (Joseph), and lowly shepherds—rather than royalty, priests, scholars, or political leaders. The message emphasizes that God delights in using available, humble people who trust Him without needing all the answers. Through examining the responses of Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, we learn that submission to God begins with trusting His word, spiritual leadership starts with simple obedience, and joy in Christ produces faithful witness. This Christmas season presents a grand opportunity for ordinary believers to boldly share the gospel with everyone they encounter.

Key Points:

- God chose ordinary, common people (not royalty, priests, or scholars) to participate in bringing the Messiah into the world
- Mary demonstrated remarkable trust by submitting to God's plan with limited information, saying "Be it unto me according to thy word"
- Joseph showed Christ-like mercy and obedience by abandoning his own plans to follow God's direction given through a dream
- The shepherds, socially despised and considered lower class, received the first public announcement of Christ's birth and immediately became witnesses
- Availability and humility are more important than exceptional talent or skill in God's service
- Trusting God often means surrendering our own plans and accepting unknowns without having all the details worked out
- Obedience to God may be costly and require giving up things important to us
- New believers' excitement about sharing the gospel should inspire seasoned Christians to renew their witness
- Christmas provides an annual opportunity to boldly share the gospel through cards, conversations, and intentional witness

Scripture Reference:

- Isaiah 7:14 (Primary opening text about the virgin birth prophecy)
- Luke 1:26-38 (The angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary)
- Matthew 1:18-25 (Joseph's dream and obedience)
- Luke 2:8-20 (The shepherds and the angelic announcement)
- Psalm 25:8-14 (God guides the meek and teaches those who fear Him)
- Proverbs 3:1-6 (Trust in the Lord with all your heart)
- James 1:19-25 (Be doers of the word, not hearers only)
- Acts 4:18-22 (Peter and John as common people who couldn't help but speak)
- John 1:46 (Nathaniel's question about Nazareth)

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Stories:

- The historical account of Mary receiving the angelic announcement and her immediate submission to God's will despite the life-altering implications
- Joseph's crisis of discovering Mary's pregnancy, his plan to divorce her privately, and his obedience after receiving God's message in a dream
- The shepherds receiving the angelic announcement on the hillside and immediately going to find the baby Jesus, then spreading the news everywhere
- Personal illustration about bringing home the first child in a small car seat, relating to Joseph's responsibility of caring for God in human form
- The experience of working on a deck one board at a time, illustrating how God reveals His plan progressively
- Discussion about Christmas cards from family and church that included gospel verses, including the challenging decision to include John 3:36 about God's wrath on unbelievers
- Reference to the practice of reading the Christmas story from Scripture before opening presents to keep Christmas biblical

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Discipleship Questions

Mary trusted God with very limited information about how her life would unfold. What areas of your life is God calling you to trust Him without having all the details worked out?

Joseph had to abandon his own carefully thought-out plans when God revealed a different direction. When has God redirected your plans, and how did you respond?

The shepherds were considered socially despised and couldn't even testify in court, yet God chose them for the first public announcement of Christ's birth. What does this reveal about who God values and uses in His kingdom?

The sermon emphasizes that God delights in using ordinary, humble people rather than royalty, priests, or scholars. Why do you think God operates this way, and what does it teach us about His character?

Mary's response was simply 'be it unto me according to thy word' without lengthy questions or negotiations. How does our tendency to need extensive explanations before obeying God compare to Mary's immediate surrender?

Joseph chose mercy over justice when he could have publicly shamed Mary, even before he knew the full truth. How does showing grace to others—even when we feel wronged—reflect Christ-like character?

The sermon mentions that new believers often share the Gospel everywhere with excitement, but older believers can become less enthusiastic. What causes this shift, and how can we recapture that initial joy and boldness?

The Christmas story reminds us that God's greatest works often begin in humble places with humble people surrendered to His will. What humble circumstances in your life might God want to use for His extraordinary purposes?

The shepherds 'came with haste' and then 'made known abroad' what they had seen and heard about Christ. What would it look like for you to respond with similar urgency and enthusiasm in sharing the Gospel this Christmas season?

Both Mary and Joseph had to face potential ridicule, misunderstanding, and costly consequences for obeying God. What might obedience to God cost you, and are you willing to pay that price?

Small Group Guide: Ordinary People in God's Extraordinary Plan

Based on Isaiah 7:14 and Luke 1-2

Opening Prayer

Begin by thanking God for bringing your group together and asking Him to open hearts and minds to His Word and His plans for each person present.

Ice Breaker (5-10 minutes)

Question: Share about a time when you felt completely unprepared or unqualified for something God asked you to do. What happened?

Sermon Summary

God chose ordinary, humble people—not royalty, priests, scholars, or political leaders—to be part of the greatest story ever told: the birth of Jesus Christ. Through Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, we see that God delights in using common people who trust Him, obey Him, and testify of Him.

Key Takeaways

1. **God delights in using humble, available people** - not necessarily the most talented or skilled
2. **Trusting God means obeying without having all the answers** - like Mary saying "yes" with limited information
3. **Obedience to God may be costly** - Joseph faced potential shame and life disruption
4. **God uses the unexpected** - shepherds were the first to hear the public announcement
5. **Joy in Christ produces faithful witness** - excitement about Jesus should compel us to share

Discussion Questions

About Mary (Luke 1:26-38)

1. **What stands out to you most about Mary's response to the angel?** How would you have responded in her situation?
2. **Mary had very limited information but tremendous trust.** What areas of your life require you to trust God without having all the details worked out?
3. **Read Psalm 25:8-14.** How does this passage connect to Mary's story? What does it mean to be "meek" before God?
4. **Mary was young and would face misunderstanding and ridicule.** Have you ever had to obey God knowing others might not understand? How did you handle it?

About Joseph (Matthew 1:18-25)

5. **Joseph had to abandon his own plans when God intervened.** When has God redirected your plans? How did you respond?
6. **Joseph chose mercy before he even knew the full truth.** How does his example challenge the way you handle situations where you feel wronged?
7. **Read Proverbs 3:5-6.** Joseph had to "lean not on his own understanding." What does this look like practically in your life right now?

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8. **The sermon mentioned that "spiritual leadership begins with simple obedience."** For the men: How does Joseph's example inspire you in your role as a spiritual leader (in your family, workplace, or community)?

About the Shepherds (Luke 2:8-20)

9. **Why do you think God chose shepherds—socially despised, uneducated common people—for the first public announcement?** What does this tell us about God's values?
10. **The shepherds' response was immediate ("with haste") and evangelistic ("made known abroad").** Compare this to your own response when God does something amazing in your life. What's different?
11. **Read Acts 4:18-20.** Peter and John said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Why do you think new believers often have this enthusiasm while longtime believers sometimes lose it?

Personal Application

12. **What excuses do you make for not being available to God?** (Too busy, not qualified, not educated enough, wrong background, etc.)
 13. **The sermon mentioned that at Christmas, "we have a grand opportunity to preach Jesus Christ."** What specific opportunities do you have in the next two weeks to share the Gospel?
 14. **Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds were all "ordinary people" who became part of God's extraordinary plan.** Do you truly believe God can use you in significant ways? Why or why not?
 15. **Which of these three examples (Mary, Joseph, or the shepherds) resonates most with where you are in your faith journey right now? Why?**
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Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose **at least one** of the following to put into practice:

Option 1: Trust Without All the Answers

- Identify one area where you've been waiting for complete clarity before obeying God
- Take one step of obedience this week, trusting God with the unknowns
- Journal about the experience

Option 2: Share the Gospel

- Give out at least one Gospel tract this week
- Include Scripture and the Gospel message in your Christmas cards
- Invite someone to church for a Christmas service
- Share your testimony with a family member or coworker

Option 3: Renewed Excitement

- Read the Christmas story (Luke 2:1-20) with fresh eyes, as if for the first time
- Write down what amazes you about God becoming a man
- Share this excitement with at least one person

Option 4: Available to God

- Pray specifically: "Lord, I'm available. Use me however You want."
- Pay attention to divine appointments and opportunities God brings your way
- Say "yes" to something you'd normally make excuses about

Memory Verse

Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths."

Prayer Focus

Pray together as a group for:

1. **Humble availability** - that each person would be willing to be used by God without needing all the answers
 2. **Boldness to witness** - especially during this Christmas season when people are more open to spiritual conversations
 3. **Fresh excitement** - for longtime believers to rediscover the joy and wonder of the Gospel
 4. **Specific people** - have each person name someone they want to reach with the Gospel this Christmas season
 5. **Trust in God's plan** - for those facing situations where they need to obey without understanding all the details
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Closing Thought

"God's greatest works often begin in humble places with humble people surrendered to His will. This Christmas, will you be available?"

For Next Week

- Continue reading the Christmas accounts in Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2
 - Come prepared to share how God used you this week
 - Bring a testimony of trusting God with something difficult
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Leader Notes

- Be prepared to share your own examples of trusting God without all the answers
- Have Gospel tracts available for group members who want them
- Consider having the group write Christmas cards together with Gospel messages
- Create a safe space for people to admit their struggles with availability and obedience

5-Day Advent Devotional: Ordinary People, Extraordinary God

Day 1: The Humility of Availability

Reading: Luke 1:26-38

Devotional: Mary's response to Gabriel's announcement wasn't rooted in understanding every detail—it was anchored in trust. "Be it unto me according to thy word" reveals a heart surrendered without reservation. She didn't demand a complete blueprint or ask for time to reconsider. How often do we withhold our "yes" to God until we have all the answers? Mary teaches us that submission to God begins with trusting His word, even when life is about to change dramatically. Her humility and availability made her a vessel for the miraculous. Today, consider what God might be asking of you. Are you available? Can you trust Him with the unknowns? Remember, God delights in using humble people who simply say, "Yes, Lord."

Day 2: Choosing Mercy Over Justice

Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

Devotional: Joseph faced a crisis that would have justified anger and public divorce. Yet Scripture calls him "a just man" who chose mercy. Before God's dream-revelation, Joseph was already planning to protect Mary's dignity. This reveals a heart shaped by grace before clarity arrived. How often do we demand all the facts before extending mercy? Joseph shows us that spiritual leadership begins with simple obedience—even when it costs us our plans. When God redirected his path, Joseph didn't argue or delay. He woke up and obeyed. Today, ask yourself: Am I quick to judge or swift to show grace? Is there someone in your life who needs mercy rather than your verdict? Trust God's plan even when it dismantles yours.

Day 3: When God Rewrites Your Plans

Reading: Proverbs 3:1-6

Devotional: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding." Joseph had a plan—probably options A and B carefully thought through. Then God showed up with option C, something Joseph never imagined. We're wired to make plans, and God gave us minds to use them. But true faith means holding our plans with open hands. Joseph's story challenges us: What happens when God says "no" to our best-laid strategies? Do we trust Him anyway? This Christmas season, you may have plans for ministry, family, or personal goals. Are you willing to let God rewrite them? The most beautiful stories often begin when we surrender our blueprints and say, "Your way, Lord, not mine."

Day 4: The Unexpected Messengers

Reading: Luke 2:8-20

Devotional: God announced the birth of His Son not to kings, priests, or scholars, but to shepherds—the socially despised, uneducated outcasts who couldn't even testify in court. Yet these "nobodies" became the first evangelists of the Gospel. They couldn't help but tell everyone what they'd seen and heard. God uses the unexpected. He chooses the humble. He delights in confounding the wise with the simple. Perhaps you feel unqualified, uneducated, or overlooked. The shepherds' story declares: God can use you! Your testimony matters. Your witness counts. This Christmas, don't let excuses silence your voice. Like those shepherds who went "with haste," share the good news with joy. Someone needs to hear about Jesus from you—yes, you.

Day 5: Fresh Eyes for an Old Story

Reading: Acts 4:13-20

Devotional: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Peter and John were recognized as "unlearned and ignorant men," yet their encounter with Jesus made them unstoppable witnesses. The shepherds experienced this same compulsion—they had to tell everyone. When was the last time you felt that urgency about the Gospel? If Christmas has become routine, ask God for fresh eyes. Read the nativity story as if for the first time. Let the wonder return: God became a baby. The Creator entered His creation. Emmanuel—God with us! This Christmas season is your opportunity to be like those shepherds, going everywhere with the good news. Write that Gospel-filled Christmas card. Share your testimony. Give that tract. Trust Him, obey Him, and testify of Him. You're ordinary—and that's exactly who God uses.

Reflection Question for the Week: In what area of your life is God asking you to trust Him without having all the answers? How will you make yourself available to His extraordinary plan this Christmas season?