

Healthy in Spirit, Mind and Body

Magnolia UMC – Weekly Guide – December 18, 2011
(Taken from GPS from The Church of the Resurrection)

Sermon: The Journey: From Nazareth to Bethlehem

The Journey to Bethlehem

Scripture References: Luke 2:1-7

Things I'd like to remember from the sermon:

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK
Lord Jesus, "Christmas" has come to mean so many things. There's last minute shopping, and cooking, and wrapping. There's decorating, and guests to greet, and trips to take. In the hustle and bustle of this season, remind me that you are seeking room in my heart. Remind me that your gift of yourself outshines all of the other gifts I can get or give this season. Amen.

From "The Journey" by Adam Hamilton

MONDAY 12.19.11 Ruth 4:1-22

Bethlehem, though fairly small, was famous in Israel's history (unlike Nazareth, an unknown village). Matthew 1:5 listed Ruth among Jesus' ancestors. She was from Moab, the widow of an Israelite from Bethlehem. Boaz, a kinsman of her dead husband, "redeemed" her (along with her husband's property). They married and were King David's great-grandparents.

- Deuteronomy 23:3 said no Moabite could ever enter "the assembly of the Lord." But Deuteronomy 25:5-10 said if a man died childless (as Ruth's husband did), his nearest relative should marry the widow and have an heir for the family. How do you think Boaz chose which command to follow? How did his love toward Ruth, even though she was a Moabite, show Jesus' principle that "people are more important than rules"?

- Ruth and Naomi's society gave unmarried women no legal rights and few ways to support themselves. A "redeemer" changed their lives. In what ways did their story foreshadow the redeeming work of Jesus, Ruth's descendant, for all humanity?

TUESDAY 12.20.11 1 Samuel 16:1-13

In Luke's Christmas story, on the night of Jesus' birth the angel said, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior." Today we read about David and his city. God sent Samuel, the prophet, to Bethlehem to find one of Jesse's sons and anoint him as Israel's ruler. Little could Samuel (or David) envision how far into the future that story would reach.

- In verses 6-7, Samuel looked at Jesse's oldest son and thought, "This must be the one." But God said, "The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." What factors do you look at when choosing friends, a place to work, a church to attend, or even a mission project to support? What would it mean for you to base your choices on "the heart"?

- Jesse, told to bring "his sons" to meet the prophet, left David home, and seemed hesitant to call him even when Samuel asked. Have you ever been an outcast, as David seemed to be here? How can God turn even unfair experiences to good purposes?

WEDNESDAY 12.21.11

Micah 5:1-4

Micah was a prophet in Jerusalem about 700 years before Christ. (Jeremiah 26:8 mentions him) As the armies of the mighty Assyrian Empire threatened Jerusalem, Micah looked beyond immediate danger. God would send a deliverer, he said. This divine ruler would be born in Bethlehem, but his greatness would “reach to the ends of the earth.”

• Okay, Bethlehem we know, but what’s this “Ephrathah”? It means “fruitful,” and was the name of the district around Bethlehem. Like the gospel writers centuries later, Micah stressed God’s ability to do big things in people and settings that seemed insignificant. When have you seen God do something big through something “little”?

• Micah said the coming ruler would “shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD...And they will live securely.” Early Christians, even when the Roman Empire imprisoned or killed them, still saw Jesus in this prophecy. How were they “living securely”? In what ways does security in Christ differ from the ways we usually define “security”?

THURSDAY 12.22.11

Luke 2:1-7

Caesar Augustus’ purpose was to collect more taxes for his far-flung empire. God “bent” Caesar’s decree to divine purposes, using it to bring Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, a hard trip for pregnant Mary. There the baby Jesus was born, as Micah prophesied. Honor the birth of the baby who would renew our world—and us.

• The Christmas story shows God’s Great Reversal. Augustus, a human who thought he was a God, forced Mary and Joseph to make a hard trip with just a decree. Jesus, God become human, spent his first night on earth in an animal shelter. Where do you see God’s power in the Christmas story? How does that redefine “power” for us?

• “That there was no room in the inn was symbolic of what was to happen to Jesus...He sought an entry to the over-crowded hearts of men; he could not find it...His search—and his rejection— go on.” (William Barclay) Does your heart have room for Jesus?

LIFTING UP OUR CHURCH FAMILY IN PRAYER

Health & Healing:

- Larry and Skip Folk
- Carolyn Hissett
- Rev. Capri
- Evelyn Dye
- Carson Kraft – Noll’s grandson – cancer
- Jean – shingles,
- Marisol Holliman – heart
- Jeannine Kana
- Sylvia Lucas
- Michele Fenley - healing

Thanksgiving and Praise:

Everyone who helped with the parade.
Fun of giving gifts

Share a prayer request by submitting a Prayer Request Card located in the chair back pockets in the Sanctuary or use the online form at www.magnoliaumc.org

FRIDAY 12.23.11

Luke 2:8-20

We're used to the shepherds in manger scenes, Christmas pageants and paintings. Yet when Jesus was born, no one looked for shepherds. They were obscure (like Mary). Most priests shunned them because, caring for flocks, they couldn't keep the rituals "holiness" required. But God loved them. When Jesus grew up, he said, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11).

- The angel gave the child born in Bethlehem three titles. A "Savior" rescued people from danger. "Messiah" (a Hebrew term) meant "anointed ruler." "Lord" was a word Greek-speaking Hebrews used to refer to God. How did each of these words capture some of the many facets of who Jesus was and what he did for us?

- Jerusalem was only a few miles from Bethlehem. Was God biased against the people of power and influence at that time? Why didn't the "herald angels" sing in the Temple courts, or at the high priest's luxurious house in Jerusalem? How can you keep your heart and your home open to God's presence this Christmas?

SATURDAY 12.24.11

John 7:37-52

This isn't a usual Christmas Day reading. But Christmas is tucked away in it, almost as unseen as the first Christmas itself. Jesus' enemies were arguing that he couldn't possibly be God's Messiah. They used his growing up in Galilee as proof: "Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David's descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?" (verse 42) And, of course, he did—if they had only paid attention.

- Pastor Roger Frederickson captured John's skill in telling this story: "In their ignorance about the origin of Jesus, these people unknowingly speak the truth. John is a master of so arranging his material that mistakes or ignorance become a subtle means of underlining the truth." Has a claim of which you felt sure ever crumbled in the light of fuller information? Jesus, born in Bethlehem ("house of bread") was the bread of life, the source of living water. How will you allow him to nourish your soul this Christmas?

Family Activity:

Read Luke 2:1-7.

Use a computer to find out how many miles Mary and Joseph had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

Imagine their journey

- What do you think they took with them?
- What do you think they talked about?
- How many days did it take them?
- How do you think they each felt?

Talk as a family about what a trip would be like if you traveled that far now.

- What would you take with you?
- How long would it take you?
- What would you discuss along the way?

Compare and contrast their journey with yours. Thank God for Mary and Joseph who were faithful to God in taking the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

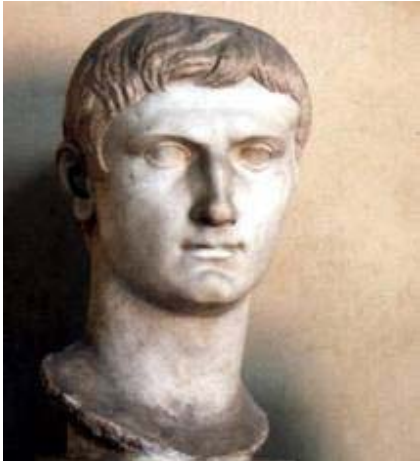
David – future King



Ruth & Boaz



Cesar Augustus



Ancient Bethlehem

