

Luke 2:8-20

Dec. 24, 2018

WHAT WILL THIS CHILD BECOME?

From Control To Creativity.

Some believe Him to be the most important person who ever walked this earth. Others think He has no place in our day and age. Yet there is no denying that He has impacted all recorded history, transformed cultures and nations, and influenced the lives of billions of people.

On the night of His birth angels appeared to shepherds in the hills, with astounding news that a Savior had been born. They went into to town to see and to report what they had heard. **... all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart, Luke 2:17-19.** Mary knew who the baby Jesus would become ... the Messiah, yes... but what kind of savior? How would He save the people and what kind of person would He be?

When a child is born, the possibilities seem unlimited – a baby is full of potential and promise. Like Mary we ponder the future of our child. What will become of this new life? How will this baby's destiny unfold? As adults, if we think about it, **we may look at ourselves and ask, "What am I becoming?"** How we answer that question determines whether or not we have a beautiful and satisfying life or not. And our answer to the question impacts the lives of all we know and many we don't.

Life Is A Gift

Each newborn child is a marvelous, unique gift of our all-wise, all-loving, all-powerful God. Each made in God's image with freedom to choose how to live that life. The Savior was not born a robot. He made choices in His life to fulfill God's plan and His destiny. You and I are not Jesus, but **our lives are also God's gift to the world and we are not robots.** We have choices to make to fulfill all the best God so desires for each of us. Most people they are masters of their own destiny try to control circumstances and relationships to reach their imagined destiny. Yet there are so many variables that can throw us off course: accident, disease, mistakes, etc. Meanwhile, the future – with all its unknowns - keeps on arriving, one second at a time.

If life has such uncertainties, and we're hemmed in by time, how can we ever find peace in this life? **God has provided a way for you to move from simply trying to control your life to living creatively.** Though divine, the babe born in Bethlehem was fully human, and all the possibilities and choices of life were His, just like they are ours. He chose to live them for God and bids us follow Him ... to move from a controlling life to a creative life. How you may ask.

Jesus As Example

We all know that the baby born in Bethlehem grew into a man ... what kind of man?

Dependence: Jesus lived in divine dependence. *...man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD, Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4. So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me, John 8:28.* The unique life of Jesus was God's gift to us and He embraced God's narrative for His life. Jesus turned to His heavenly Father for wisdom, guidance, and strength to make the choices He needed to make.

Each of us have the life we have and not another. Each of us was born who we are and not someone else. Our lives are marvelous and unique gifts of our all-wise, all-loving, all-powerful God even when life feels more like a burden than a blessing. Leaning on the One who gives life can transform burdens into blessings. That happens when we enter a personal relationship with Him.

Identity: Jesus knew who He was ... *Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."* Mark 14:61-62. He alone lived that life and fulfilled that mission. He didn't waste time wishing He were someone else.

There is no one exactly like you on this earth. Accepting the truth of who you are is the beginning of creating and living a beautiful life. Let me say right here, that I know that I am a creature made by God in His image, though that image has been broken by sin. When I recognize my sin and brokenness Jesus is able to heal it and bring me to my true identity: a new creation in Christ Jesus destined for goodness and beauty in God's family. God does not force me. I can choose to create that beautiful life, with all its unique features. You have the same opportunity. Your life matters. Remember Jesus' words: *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full,"* John 10:10.

Purpose: Knowing His identity, He knew His purpose. His God-given purpose shaped His life and motivated the man He became and the legacy He left. His purpose was to give His life as a ransom for many, as atonement for all the sins of humanity. *... Jesus ... looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. John 17:4. He chose to fulfill this purpose. "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father,"* John 10:17-18.

Some people deny that God has a purpose for their life. "Not even God can tell me what to live for." Others believe they were created with a purpose, but

haven't a clue where to find it. Too many look for it in all the wrong places. Where have you been looking? Others embrace their God-given purpose within the limitations of their lives and find meaning right where they are. Walking with God they creatively live out their mission where they are planted. Our heavenly Father does not hand us a paint-by-number picture for our lives. **We are given life as a palette to paint on.**

Some lament or complain that their palette isn't very good or is unfair. True enough. Jesus wasn't born in a palace, you know, not even a decent house. Some of you had a rough start in life, others born with great challenges. Yet you still have you, and you can choose what you do with yourself. And if God has you, if you can just give yourself to God, I mean in a conscious, real way ... then I am confident that **"...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus," Phil. 1:6.** I am confident He will give you all the artistic freedom necessary to create a masterpiece *for Him*. Have you done that ... I mean really given yourself to God? Have you actually prayed, "Lord I know I've made some messes already, forgive me, and please take my life and let it be lived for You?"

Creating For The Future

Angels brought the astounding heralds of her son's birth, and ... *Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.* Will it come true, what has been foretold of him? What will this child become? Your family may have wondered the same thing about you. Maybe you wonder yourself. Perhaps you lament that your best opportunities have already passed you by. Maybe some of you think you've messed up your life so much that nothing beautiful will ever come of it. Or you think that your unique life isn't so special after all. Some think if there is a God, He doesn't really care. Others just go aimlessly through life without ever reflecting on who they are and who they are becoming.

Christmas tells us that each life is precious in His sight, including yours. So precious that **God Himself came in person.** And **He came looking for you:** **"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost," Luke 19:10.** Looking for you, not to punish, but to offer you a new lease on life. Some people go to church, attend Christmas Eve services, and yet never allow themselves to be found by this Savior whose birth we celebrate tonight. What will it be for you?

Every choice we make today nudges us toward our future and ripples through time. We may never know the full effect of our decisions, but every one matters. In spite of our limitations there is still room to create a beautiful life. It is a choice we all have.

This child whose birth we celebrate tonight was God Himself, offering to walk with you through your unique life, with all its brokenness and messes. And with Him you can create a life that is more loving, more generous, more creative, and more resilient.

What will this child be? We might ask ourselves the same. What kind of person are you becoming? And your children, what are they becoming? What kind of example are you setting for them? Can you allow this awesome God to take you on a lifelong journey that transforms you more and more into the image of the One we welcome at Christmas?

In Jesus... “The timeless has entered into time, for the purpose of transforming time, so that the chasm between the great beauty of the eternal and the brokenness of the human condition might be overcome.”¹ In Jesus I can enter into creative living.

Christmas, the birth of our Savior, is still good news. He makes possible the life you are destined for. Will you choose to live it?

***“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full,”*
John 10:10.**

¹Erling Duus, *The Tragic Sacred Ground*, 1988.