

# Christmas 2025 - Jesus Transforms

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[0:00] We're going to not study 52 verses, verse by verse, this morning. We are going to step through most of Luke chapter 2.

And I found myself, as I prayed over the verses, Lord, what is the message from this chapter? And I landed on this. The number of lives that are transformed or impacted by this birth the lives that are impacted by the coming of Jesus.

And so that was my focus. That will be our focus for today. And that will take, well, I say it's the focus. It will probably take just over half our time. Because I also wanted to say a little bit about the actual birth narrative itself.

So last week we did read all of Luke chapter 1. And we saw how the angel Gabriel met Mary and told her to expect this miraculous baby.

You're going to call him Jesus, which means the Lord saves or the Lord is salvation. And then she hurried off to the hill country in Judea to see Elizabeth, her elderly relative, who had also become miraculously pregnant, in her case because of her advanced age.

[1:17] And she would ultimately give birth to John the Baptist. And we saw the birth of John. And we saw, and we read the prophecies over him. But our focus was looking at Mary's magnificat, as it's called, or her just, as she overflows with praise.

When she, I mean, we know that she believed. We know that she believed. So it isn't that she was overcome with the realization, but it was more just, I think, the presence of the Spirit. The Spirit was upon Elizabeth.

And it was just this, ha, praise the Lord. And so we looked at her magnificat. My soul magnifies the Lord. And we saw how, somewhat paradoxically, she put so much in the past tense.

And we discussed how that's the eyes of faith see the promises of God as if they are already completed. So that was last week's message. And it's online if you want to catch up.

So today, again, the coming of Jesus is transformational. When Jesus comes, there is change.

[2:24] There is an impact, a permanent impact. In our story, in our chapter today, there were some who were expecting him. And then there were those like the shepherds who just plainly were not.

And they were just getting on with their day jobs, or night jobs. All of these people are impacted.

We're going to see the shepherds. No clue. Probably no messianic expectation above maybe some sort of folk myth knowledge from the tavern, let's say.

But what we'll see them do when they have this revelation is they leave their livelihood behind.

Leaving their flocks drawn high with lowly fear. They leave behind their livelihood, their jobs.

They're like, I'm done.

It's like a model of the disciples. And then they're transformed into the first evangelists. They spread abroad and they tell everybody in Bethlehem.

We'll look at Simeon, whom we will read as looking for the consolation or the comfort of Israel. And he has had this supernatural revelation, you're going to see the Lord's Christ.

[3:30] And how he had that, I don't know. But then he has another revelation, it's this child when he sees this pauper family coming in with this little basket of two doves because they can't afford a sheep.

He's the one. We'll look at Anna, this aged widow. He's had a very, very tragic life. A life that has been completely given over to grief and loss and urgent prayer and fasting.

And her ministry is transformed into one of joy when Christ comes. And then we'll talk as well, we'll see the teachers who are amazed at the boy Jesus, his understanding and his answers.

And they end up being taught by Jesus. A big, big impact, a big disruption to their expectations. And a true revelation or a true encounter with Jesus should be transformative.

It should be transformative. And the more that we grow in our understanding of who he is and what he's done and what he's yet to do, it changes us. This verse from 2 Corinthians 3 says, But we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

[4:51] And that transformation is what I pray we will all experience and we will all have as we learn more and more about Jesus. So Luke 2, and I do want you to appreciate all these amazing slides I found.

The birth of Christ. So I just wanted to make a few expositional comments on this narrative. So we've seen, we've read it already, there is an empire-wide census.

As I understand it, this was a somewhat regular occurrence and they took years and years to complete. And so, and then by the time they'd finished the last one, it was probably time for the next. So this is, as we read, the first one under a guy by the name of Quirinius.

It could also be that the Greek says before Quirinius. There is somewhat of a controversy around that, which I wrote a whole load about and then deleted in the interest of time. But you can always ask me about it later if you like.

I did wonder though. So we know that the census is the reason why Mary and Joseph end up in Bethlehem. We know this. But we also discussed last week how Mary and Joseph devour a devout and righteous family.

[6:05] And I wonder if they knew, you know, we're going to have this baby. And Micah 5.2 says it's going to be in Bethlehem. And here we are up in Nazareth. I wonder how we're going to end up in Bethlehem.

There's a census. Ah, that'll be it. You can just imagine it, can't you? I don't know. I don't know. I thought that was amusing to speculate on. And maybe all their bags are packed and ready to go because there's going to be something that will drive us down there, I promise you.

Anyway, off they go. And the baby is born while they are there. But we should note that there is no indication that there is some mad scramble. There's no indication that it happens on the day they arrive.

And we don't know how long they were there either. Actually, there is a whole bunch of things that's in our traditional narrative that is just simply not there. There is no innkeeper. Grumpy or otherwise. Actually, there isn't even an inn. I know you do see the word inn in most Bibles, and that is for tradition's reason. The word appears twice in the Bible, here and when describing the upper room in which the Last Supper was held.

[7:15] And I don't think that was an inn. We know that that was an upper room. Actually, the word kataluma means a guest or a lodging space. So it's not an inn. And actually, a small village the size of Bethlehem most likely didn't have an inn at all.

Stable? Not there. Sorry. Sorry. Note the lack of stable in my wonderful artwork. Actually, I chose that picture because it shows more likely that it was in fact a cave.

But we'll get on to that. And I say that because actually, the early tradition, Justin Martyr, Origen, and Eusebius, they all said it was a cave near to Bethlehem.

Also missing ox and donkey. In fact, there's no animal mentioned at all. But there probably were, to be fair. It is interesting that recent archaeology, archaeology within the last 70 years has uncovered a whole series of caves beneath the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and has shown that a lot of the ancient homes would have been over a cave.

Some of the other ones would look like this. This one isn't over a cave. But you can see how you've got a living area and then a lower place where the animals would live. This is another example where you've actually got two floors.

[8:33] So in this case, you'd have the normal accommodation at the top and then maybe a guest area at the bottom. And then even lower down than that, you've got where the animals would be. So those are just artists' impressions.

We don't really know other than it wasn't as stable. That's a later tradition. Sorry if that breaks anyone's heart. So bearing in mind, they have come to Joseph's hometown.

Most likely, they would have stayed with relatives. They were, as a community, very, very minded to be accommodating. Very much accommodation-minded.

They would have wanted to welcome them in. But there was no room because it was full of lots of other people. So Luke includes that data about Caesar Augustus.

There's a census. He includes Quirinius. Because I think he intends for us to be able to work out when this happens. He intends for us to be able to determine when it was born.

[9:37] And in fact, our calendar, as I'm sure you will know, is based around B.C., before Christ, and A.D., which is Anno Domini, or Year of Our Lord. And if it shows nothing else, it shows Luke is presenting real history.

He isn't writing myth or fable. He wrote having eyewitnesses that he had interviewed. He put everything together in order. And he wrote at such a time that if he got it all wrong, it would have been easily discredited.

But what can we say about the date? Well, I don't want to say too much because it gets boring. But if you look at most commentaries or articles today, they will probably say, well, we know that he was born before King Herod died.

Right? We know that from the last chapter. And they will say, and we also know that King Herod died in 4 B.C. Therefore, he was born before that, maybe 6 or 5 B.C. And it sounds fine until you learn that all of the early church fathers said consistently it was 2 B.C.

Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Hippolytus of Rome, and others. They all said 2 B.C. All of them. And yet now, modern scholarship, quotes, says earlier than 4 B.C.

[10:58] So naturally, I spent some time on this because I love a good puzzle. Who doesn't, right? Everyone loves a good puzzle. So the question that I was trying to puzzle through is, why does everyone say Herod died in 4 B.C.?

Because if he did, obviously it can't have been after that. And it turns out that it's all hanging on an eclipse that's mentioned in Josephus. And I love Josephus. I cannot do a sermon for you guys without mentioning Josephus somewhere.

You know this by now. And so I read Josephus, and I read the relevant bits, and it said, a bunch of stuff happened, and there was an eclipse, and then a bunch more stuff happened, and then Herod died. Okay, cool.

When was the eclipse? It turns out there's a great website for finding out when eclipses were. Yes? Fantastic. It doesn't just tell you when they were. It tells you what time. It tells you the magnitude of it.

Oh, one thing I didn't say. It's a lunar eclipse. And that's relevant because a lunar eclipse happens everywhere. Unlike a solar eclipse where you've got that band that it's only there. A lunar eclipse is visible anywhere it's nighttime, especially if it's a full moon.

[12:00] And it turns out that there was a very, very striking... Well, there was an eclipse in March 4 BC. And there was also a much more striking solar eclipse in my mind, January 1 BC.

Imagine that. Imagine that. And actually it was later. It was a full moon. It was later. It was about... A local time would have been about one in the morning. And the... Oh, that was the peak of it.

And it would have been three and a half hours in total. So basically the whole of that night, no moon. Or a blood-red moon. Very, very striking. Enough for a historian like Josephus to go, huh, that was a pretty cool full moon.

Or a lunar eclipse. More striking, I believe, than the one in 4 BC. Anyway, I share that because I puzzled it through and I thought, that's really interesting. I'm going to share it with my friends at church.

Does it prove just 2 BC? No, it doesn't. It doesn't prove it. It does, however, in my mind, make me believe or makes me tend to agree with those early church fathers who said it was 2 BC that Jesus was born.

[13:07] There are a couple of other reasons why I think that's more likely. It seems to me the only reason people stick with 4 BC is it's just become a bit of an echo chamber. Everyone says it's 4 BC, but now we all know it's 4 BC.

And everyone knows that that was when Herod died and that's because we all know that's when Herod died. But if you dig into it just a little bit with the help of clever websites that tell you about lunar eclipses, then anyway, I'm going to move on.

What about the 25th of December? Well, again, you'll hear the view. In fact, I think even our... What was it called now? Not the National Trust. English Heritage.

They got into a bit of hot water recently because they proudly said on Twitter or X or whatever it is that Christianity had taken the 25th of December from pagans, Saturnalia, whatever it was, and that was all thanks to Constantine.

Wrong! And they had to recant that if he did follow that. Wrong. It's very convenient for the enemies of Christ to try and claim that Christianity stole from the pagans.

[14:12] Love to do that. Turns out, it's not true. It doesn't mean that the 25th of December is correct, by the way. It just... It's... We... The tradition of 25th December predates Constantine by at least 100 years.

Hippolytus of Rome, who wrote around 200 AD, said that the birth was on the 25th of December.

So does a guy called Julius Africanus, again, up 200 AD.

Clement and Alexandria is in Egypt, obviously. And he said it was in April or May, to be fair. But all of these guys were before Constantine.

So there's no reason... In fact, actually, you can discredit the idea that 25th December came from him trying to convert festivals. So where does it come from?

Well, it turns out it comes from some sort of... It seems to come from a theological desire to make Jesus have a perfect number of years on Earth. If they believe that Jesus was crucified 25th of March, then he would have been conceived 25th of March, plus nine months for the pregnancy, equals 25th December.

[15:27] That's it. I don't know if there's a more stronger reason than that. I didn't find it very compelling. Sorry. I thought that wasn't particularly convincing to me.

I don't see any reason to assert that Jesus lived a perfect number of years. And if he did, it probably wouldn't have been aligned to our Julian calendar anyway. So forget that.

Luke doesn't give us enough information. In actual fact, if you look back at verse 1, he says, in those days. Which day is that? Well, it was in those days. It was around about that time.

Which means, I don't think Luke knew. So I don't think we can figure it out either. Probably not winter. Why?

Not because it's too cold, although you will hear that. Again, look on a website. What are the typical climate conditions in the hill country of Judea in winter? Turns out it doesn't go below freezing.

[16:26] Not even the 95th percentile goes below freezing. It averages, in fact, yesterday, you may be interested to know it was seven degrees Celsius. But it rains. It's the rainy season.

It rains a lot. So you wouldn't find them doing that very much. No, thank you. They would be in. So probably not winter. But it was in those days.

But it occurred to me, how do I sum up this brain dump I've just done? Well, it occurs to me, again, Luke, once you and me to accept and believe this is real history at a real time, we can not know the day or the hour, but we can know the season.

I thought, huh, that sounds like the second coming to me. I thought, that's how I shall summarize the first coming as well. We don't know the day or the hour but we do know the season anyway.

All right, that was my preamble. Let's get into the shepherds. The shepherds are the first people whom we will read about being transformed, being impacted.

[17:28] Shepherds in the same region. And you might think with such illustrious names as Abraham and Moses and David that the shepherds would be lauded as a very worthy and noble vocation.

No, it turns out that they aren't. Because of their, because of the nature of their work, living much of their time outdoors, away from the synagogue life, generally not fulfilling the ritual purity laws.

Those unwashed, unkempt shepherds probably couldn't read. They were not really considered to be the pious type. And again, they probably didn't know a lot about messianic promises other than whatever folk myths they had heard down the tavern.

So God sends to them an angelos in Greek, which just means messenger, by the way. We have this word angel, which comes from angelos, which specifically means in our understanding a golden person.

But angelos just means a messenger. And we have this mix, don't we? So we have this message of good news and great joy followed swiftly by the glory of God and a multitude of the heavenly host, which I think our understanding of what that means has probably been colored by children's drawings and Christmas carols.

[18:59] That means the army of God. That means the military army of God. When we read the Lord of hosts in the Old Testament or Yahweh of hosts, Yahweh of armies, that's these.

The army of God. Did they appear in the sky? Did they appear on the horizon? Doesn't say where they appeared. It doesn't say they were singing. They were much more likely to have weapons in their hands than hearts.

Scary. But it's good news of great joy. It's good news of great joy. And here's the army of God. I thought that was a really contrasting thing.

I just thought it was an incredible sight. And the shepherds are like, what is this? And so they get up and they leave their livelihood. They are overcome and they are terrified but the message of peace is given and off they go.

I want to see this sign. And the sign isn't an army before them. The sign is you'll find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths in a manger.

[20:02] I think that the shepherds serve for us as a picture of those to whom Christ comes and says follow me and they leave everything and they follow.

Very little knowledge at the time of who Jesus is but they've had a revelation from God enough to say I'm going to go and see you and check it out. And I thought that's most people today.

Little knowledge really of who Jesus Christ is and really zero desire to find out anymore. They're just content to bumble their way through lives and not really think about what happens at the end. They're just doing their job out with their mates on the hill. Don't care about the things of God. Don't care about what happens after this. I just want to do my job and get paid until God breaks in with something that can only be understood and explained that God broke in and did this.

There's no other explanation. God has come. And unlike Mary to whom Gabriel came looking just like a man here we see the glory of the Lord shining around them terrifying and yet compelling.

[21:12] And it made me think actually when I thought about that of Moses in the burning bush another shepherd to whom the glory of God came shining and he was like what? Wow. And it's like that.

It's like what? Anyway. And Moses must turn aside. He was compelled and he did just like the shepherds. So the shepherds they go from zero understanding to evangelists.

If you look at verse 15 they say let's go to Bethlehem and see that which the Lord has made known to us. Let's go see it. And then verse 17 they made known the statement.

And you think oh well they made known the statement to Mary and to Joseph. But then verse 18 says all who heard wondered they marveled. And so we see that the shepherds are indeed evangelists.

They are making known what they have been told to all who will listen. The shepherds transformed by Jesus. So next we have the presentation of Jesus in the temple.

[22:17] And it's interesting actually that your NASB Bible will have a heading that says Jesus is presented at the temple and then immediately goes on to talk about the circumcision which would not happen at the temple.

The circumcision happens normally at home by the father after eight days. This happens around 40 days. Circumcision then we should talk about that. Circumcision is the symbol of the Abrahamic covenant.

It is the cutting off of the flesh which as scripture later reveals it symbolizes the cutting off of the flesh of the heart to become a spiritual person.

You can check Genesis 17 for the early background. Time would fail us to get too much into that but that's a separate study really. We talk then about the day of purification in our text.

Again the background for that is Leviticus 12. When a mother gives birth to a male child there are 40 days required for the purification and after that there's an offering brought.

[23:21] The offering should be a lamb and a dove. They bring two doves and the reason is there is an exception in the law for a family who cannot afford a sheep.

The family who cannot afford to bring a lamb are permitted to bring two doves instead. It shows for us that they are a pauper family. Now verse 23 we have a quote from Exodus 13 and this is speaking about the redemption.

Separate to the purification this is the redemption. What is that? Again you might read Exodus 13 if you want to. For the interest of time we'll move on because this is a side point.

The background here is that God says following the Passover where God slew every firstborn male unless the Passover lamb was there as a substitute following on from that God says every firstborn male is mine.

Every firstborn male is mine. Animal or human I should add. Now in Numbers 3 God says I take the Levites in place.

[24:34] There is a whole thing there where there isn't quite enough at the time. The extra ones had to be redeemed with money. That then becomes the ordinance.

In Numbers 18 you can read it verse 15 and 16 the firstborn male is the Lord's but he would be bought back redeemed back from God at one month old for five shekels.

Again we could say a tonne of this about all these ritualistic things if we wanted to but I just wanted to say this Galatians 4 verses 4 to 5 says that when the fullness of time came God sent forth his son born of a woman born under the law so that he might redeem those who were under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons and the point is Jesus fulfilled all of the law's obligations and requirements and Luke takes care even though actually his audience are Gentiles he takes care in his narrative to show that it was all done correctly perfectly as you would expect from a devout couple such as Mary and Joseph even though they were poor but it is crucial to know that it is crucial for the sake of redeeming!

those under the law he had to be born under the law so that we might receive the adoption as sons so we all so that is important and I thought it was worth covering that off next I wanted to talk about Simeon the blessing of Simeon from verse 25 so Simeon's name he his namesake is the second son of Jacob actually and according to my wonderful dictionary of Bible names Simeon means hearkening or hearing with acceptance so hark the herald angel saying hark it means hear and accept hear and obey and that's what Simeon's name means hear hearing and obeying and he had a revelation somewhere in his life he had a revelation from the Holy Spirit we read that he would see the

Lord's Christ Christ means Messiah Messiah means anointed one anointed one means king actually he will see the promised Messiah so his name as one who hears and accepts is rather apropos I thought for one who hears that message!

[27:13] we don't read how that revelation was made to him actually which probably means Luke didn't know which probably means that Luke didn't get opportunity to interview him which probably means he was dead which probably means he was indeed an old man although we don't know his age the scriptures don't say they just say that he had had this revelation but what's also missing from the text is how did he know that this pauper family who came in with their little basket of doves and you can see it there in the bottom actually which I thought was a cute detail they come in with this little basket of doves for the offering how did Simeon know and the only answer can be he had another revelation from God this is the child this is the one you have been waiting for and then we read of two distinct blessings and this is blessing in the sense of praised or spoke a good word about there's a few different words for praised in

Greek so he spoke a good word about God he spoke a good word about Mary and Joseph and the child so verse 28 he blessed God and said that my life's work is now complete I'm ready to go I'm ready to go it's interesting the way to translate the Greek is the closest would be Lord now you are causing me to depart it's not now let me as a wish or now I'm ready to it is now you are causing me

to depart in peace it's second person active so he's done and then he says God has prepared salvation in the presence of all people and the child is a light for revelation to Gentiles and for glory to Israel and of course he is indeed the light of the world and then also verse 34 this was the blessing of the couple and he says to Mary that he is placed for the rise and fall or the fall and rise or resurrection same word of many and a sign being spoken against and we talked a bit about this last week that

Mary would suffer incredibly as a result of being called to bear the Messiah and yet she is a woman most blessed and it really challenges our perspective of what it means to have a blessed life but Simeon Simeon serves for us as an example of incredible patience and the simple reward of faith so he's been waiting for the consolation of Israel the consolation is an interesting word it's the same word it's paraclete if you know from the Holy Spirit being described as the comforter it's the same word paracletos and so he's looking for that comfort from God and in Christ it is revealed to him that's where the comfort is that's where the consolation is that is where all things that you and your nation hope for are found and I thought he stands in place then he's like a model of how Israel should have been a model of how Israel should have been as a collection they should have been waiting for this one and here he is the light for all people and so he's ready to depart in peace because the prince of peace has come and I did want to say one other thing on that because as we read a text like this and we read Luke commending these people and using words like righteous and devout they are still sinners they are still sinners and so he says so Simeon says my eyes have seen your salvation my eyes have seen the one who saves because he knew we needed saving even though he was there as a faithful man he needed saving just like everybody else he had sinned and so he rejoices that his patience has finally paid off so Simeon he is transformed by the coming of

Messiah in a way I believe that Israel should have been collectively transformed by his coming next Anna the Hebrew name is Hannah means grace and Anna's life would have looked like an absolute tragedy to anyone looking outside anyone outside observing Anna if she got married at let's say 17 widowed at 24 and has lived a widow for 60 years and that is unless we understand the Greek slightly differently and say no no she's been a widow for 84 years in that case she would probably be over 100 years old hard to say which but either way she has been a widow for a long long long time and she serves in the temple courts night and day with fastings and prayers and again there's several different words for prayer in Greek and this word emphasizes a specific urgent heartfelt plea and combined with the fasting what you have is a woman who has had decades of grief and unanswered prayer tears prayers pleadings but she has chosen devotion rather than wallowing for all of those years she has been devoted to the

[33:03] Lord praying and fasting to him even as she bears her own grief and we haven't read that she had any kind of revelation of how that would be rewarded or even that there would be a reward specifically probably she knew Simeon based on the fact that they both frequented the temple right and she probably did know Simeon and so perhaps when she saw him cradling an infant with tears in his eyes she knew so she comes up and she begins to give thanks and giving thanks was a super long Greek word that only appears here and it means to acknowledge and celebrate fully with praise and thanksgiving and that's almost as many letters as the Greek word acknowledge and celebrate fully with praise and thanksgiving so she is transformed from a woman who has had decades of grief and heartbreak and prayers into a woman who is celebrating God's goodness speaking about Jesus to all who will listen all who are looking for the redemption of Jerusalem she is now transformed by the coming of Jesus and so in Anna then we are challenged to consider how we face our own trials and tragedies we're challenged to consider do we devote ourselves to patient prayer and we bring to God our tragedies we bring to God our griefs and we say

Lord intervene that is what she did but there is always hope that Jesus will come and impact and the day will come when Jesus returns and all of our griefs are transformed into that celebrate fully with praise and thanksgiving so she is transformed from grief into celebration now one thing as we move forward one thing that is missing in the narrative interestingly is the flight to Egypt that

Matthew covers we don't we don't see that Luke doesn't cover that in his orderly account don't know why Luke just says and after this everything was done they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee then we come to Jesus as a youth and we see this one anecdote from the life of Jesus we have one and I could imagine Luke interviewing Mary and saying so give me some stories give me some stories about the life of Jesus as a youth and he is inspired however many

Mary had he is inspired to just give us this one this one anecdote from the life of Jesus the family are attending the feast of Passover Passover being the biggest of the three feasts that required pilgrimage but actually only Joseph only the males were required to go Mary was not obliged to go Jesus was not yet 13 he wasn't obliged to go but they all go and Luke I think highlights that detail to show their devotion and piety and we have an event then that is very very significant primarily for well possibly not primarily for the parents Mary and Joseph and for the teachers at the temple he's 12 the significance of that is that at age 13 that was when a child was reckoned as beginning to take on covenant responsibility obedience to the Torah so 12 is his last Passover before adulthood and this by the way this predates by many centuries the concept of Bar Mitzvah although I guess it would be the foundation of it so this 12 year old boy to some extent he would have been instructed in the law we know from the

Old Testament the Tanakh says that fathers are to instruct their sons and we know Joseph and Mary are devout they would certainly have taken that seriously but he's a tradesman he is a tradesman he's not a scribe he's not an intellectual he is a tradesman and so he did what he could in the north there in Galilee and so hence the amazement when he Jesus comes to the courts and he amazes everyone if you look at the text it says how he is both asking questions and giving answers and this was the typical way that they would instruct in rabbinical mode the mode of teaching was asking questions the teachers would ask the students questions the students would ask the teachers questions and that is how they would converse and certainly they would not have expected a 12 year old tradesman's son to be able to have that level of wisdom and understanding and you can imagine them saying whose son is this and I thought well he's in his father's house right now that's whose son he is this is the son of God but notice

Mary she says to him what have you done so they've gone away and they've gone a day's journey away and then they're like where is he a day's journey back and they spend another day trying to find him and they find him at last in the temple overcome with grief we've lost God I can't imagine what that would do in your mind because on the one hand you know it's God the son you know this is Messiah there's no way and yet we've lost him we have one job so I don't know anyway your father and I have been anxious looking for you and he says I'm in my father's house correcting I think Mary Mary has now had 12 years with this youth maybe she's sort of it's become normal to call him Joseph's son he isn't he is the son of God he is in his father's house and I think this episode serves for Mary as a reminder of who

[39:19] Jesus is and a reminder of why he has come and I think that may well be why Jesus did what he did now we read in the text that Mary doesn't understand it fully she treasures these things up but Jesus chose to be subject to them but I think for Mary this was transformative in that she had this reminder of who Jesus is don't we all need that sometimes a reminder of who Jesus is he is the son of God the son of righteousness the heaven born prince of peace so teachers Mary all of whom are impacted so I wanted to sum this up again so we stand back and we look at these lives we have the shepherds ignorant of Jesus called by God to know him and so they go and they are transformed into evangelists you've got Simeon the picture of how Israel should have been who serves as this example of long term faith and he believes unwavering until the end that Jesus is coming he will see Jesus and his faith is rewarded and he sees him

Anna the grieving woman who nevertheless clings firm to faith even as she prays and weeps and fasts with tears and I thought yeah she had decades of grief and sorrow but her joy that joy I mentioned it's still going on today nearly 2000 years later and I thought man isn't that the hope that we have we could have a life that is fully given over to grief but when we've been there 10,000 years we've got no less days to sing his praise and that helps to put it in perspective I think we've got the teachers struck by Jesus Christ and the wisdom of God in their midst embodied in a 12 year

old boy and Mary who stands as a reminder to us all who Jesus Christ really is well who is he I love this picture because it shows the cross behind the manger and it reminds us of who he is according to the gospel of John in the beginning was the word and the word was

God was with God and the word was God he is God and you could turn to a bunch of verses to show this Titus 2 13 he is our great God and saviour Jesus Christ and he came to do something that only God has the authority to do early in his ministry Jesus encountered a paralytic man who was brought to him by his friends and he Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic son your sins are forgiven and lest we should miss the significance of this those scribes are standing by to help us out some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts why does this man speak that way he is blaspheming who can forgive sins but God alone Jesus doesn't claim to be speaking for God like a prophet he says he doesn't say thus says the Lord he says your sins are forgiven on my authority what authority the authority of God because he is

God and how can he forgive sins because they have good news of great joy as the angel said to the shepherd good news gospel of great joy a savior is born today one who saves us from our sins as Simeon said my eyes have seen your salvation God in Romans 5 verse 8 and on we read that God demonstrates his own love towards us in that while we were still while we were yet sinners Christ died for us much more than having now been justified by his blood we shall be saved from the wrath of God through him for if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his son much more having been reconciled we shall be saved by his life Jesus is the salvation of Jews he is the salvation of us Gentiles too he came and he was born to die in order to complete that ministry the ministry of salvation he shed his blood that God has declared is required for forgiveness the blood that is shed satisfies justice sin is judged and a price is paid when Christ died on that cross he shed his own blood

I was going to do a reading from Hebrews 9 I encourage you to read it it shows how the Passover sacrifice to which he went as a boy it was a placeholder only the Passover was a placeholder the blood of Jesus is superior and that alone purchases eternal redemption and I'm blessed that we'll celebrate that as we take communion together presently so Luke presents the child Jesus for us and we've seen that as a child even he has a transformative impact on lives but of course the gospels read on and we could read Luke 3 and 4 and 5 and all the way through and see how indeed that child grew up and taught clearly and plainly that he is the only way for salvation the only way for sins to be forgiven and lives to be truly transformed and not and not everyone has a sudden transformational encounter with Jesus you do get some like the shepherds who have this moment of glorious revelation and are instantly changed but then there are those who are more like Mary who hear and they don't yet understand but they treasure it up in their hearts and it takes time and it takes patience and takes the prayers of friends and family for that word that is sown to bear fruit that's exactly how it was with me by the way for some are transformed instantly others it takes time but in any case knowing

[45:55] Jesus is transformational amen praise you Lord for your word praise you Lord that at this time we remember that you came as God incarnate we praise you for the realization and the revelation that you are God made flesh and that you came not to make us feel better or to teach us some good things you came as God the son to die on our behalf we bless you Lord and we pray that you would for each and every one of us give us a deeper and deeper revelation of who you are Lord we pray again for those whom we know who do not yet know you fully Lord we pray Lord we long for their transformation we long Lord God to see your Holy Spirit impact lives and reveal Christ reveal Christ Lord to our unsaved friends and families I pray Lord we thank you for what we've read we thank you that you are at work even in these days we bless we bless you in Jesus name Amen Amen

Amen Amen