



#1 In the “Go Tell” Series
The Word Became Flesh
Forest Park Church
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John 1:14

We are drawn to stories.

We read novels, binge shows, watch Christmas movies—not just for entertainment, but because somewhere deep down we’re all asking the same questions:

Where is my story going? Does any of this make sense? Is anyone writing this with me—or am I on my own?

The Bible doesn’t just give us rules or religious ideas; it gives us a God who steps into the story.

John says it in one breathtaking sentence:

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14)

That’s the whole story in one line.

The eternal God doesn’t stay safely at a distance. He doesn’t send advice from heaven or instructions from far away. He writes Himself into the story—into *our* story.

And when Luke tells the Christmas story in chapter 2, he doesn’t start with fairy-tale language. He starts with real names, real places, real governments, real pressure:

“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree...”

Right in the middle of taxes and travel, crowded towns and overfull rooms, exhaustion and uncertainty—right there—

a baby is born in a manger, and heaven announces:

“Today... a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.”

This time of year is not just about a baby in a nativity scene;

it's about God entering our story—our mess, our limits, our fears, our longings—and ending the distance between heaven and earth.

Today as we listen again to John 1 and Luke 2, I want us to see two things clearly:

1. Christ was born into our story – He steps into the pages we wish we could hide.
2. Christ gathers an unexpected cast – He brings together people who would never stand on the same stage, and He can do the same with us.

Let's hear the story again with that in mind, and then we'll talk about what it means that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

Luke 2:1–20

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while ^[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the

town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

*¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”*

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

I. Born into our Story

Christ’s Coming Ends the Distance

Imagine your life as a book.

Most of us hope our story will read like a clean, polished novel—well-written, well-organized, free of mistakes. But if we’re honest, when we open the pages, we discover things we’d rather not see.

*For many of us, our story reads more like a journal with **torn pages**, **crossed-out lines**, and **chapters we wish we could rewrite**:*

- *a chapter of loss,*
- *a chapter of regret,*
- *a chapter of mistakes,*
- *a chapter of wounds someone else caused,*
- *a chapter we never wanted to live through.*

*Some pages feel messy.
Some feel unfinished.
Some feel too painful to read aloud.*

*And here's the temptation:
We think God only wants the neat, edited version.
We imagine He prefers the polished manuscript, not the raw draft.*

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

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A. God Enters Our Reality, Not an Ideal World

When Luke 2 unfolds, it is not a polished moment.

- Mary is exhausted.
- Joseph is overwhelmed.
- The world is under Roman occupation.
- The nursery is a stable.

And *this* is where God chooses to arrive.

That fact alone tells us something profound:

God is not allergic to our mess.

He steps toward it.

He steps into it.

He steps into us.

The angels' announcement to the shepherds wasn't merely heavenly news—

It was heaven breaking open onto earth.

"I bring you good news of great joy... today a Savior has been born to you."

—Luke 2:10–11

The distance between God and humanity collapsed in a moment.
Heaven touched dirt.
God became present, near, and knowable.

B. “The Word Became Flesh and Dwelt Among Us” (John 1:14)

John uses a powerful word: **dwelt**—literally, “pitched His tent among us.”
Jesus didn’t commute from heaven. He moved into the neighborhood.

He shared our air, our time, our limitations, our emotions.

- He laughed.
- He cried.
- He felt tired.
- He experienced human relationships.
- He lived the human story from the inside.

God didn’t send a message.....He sent Himself.

This is the heart of Emmanuel—God *with* us, not just *over* us.

C. If His Presence Matters, Our Presence Matters Too

The Incarnation not only changes how we see Jesus—it changes how we see one another.

His nearness becomes the model for *our* nearness.

Because God came close to us:

1. We move toward people, not away from them.

God didn’t wait for us to improve before He came.
We don’t wait for perfect conditions either.

2. Unity isn't built on convenience; it's built on closeness.

Unity is formed by:

- shared life,
- shared burdens,
- compassion expressed,
- time spent,
- presence offered.

Jesus shows us that **redemption happens in proximity**.

3. Presence becomes ministry.

Sometimes the most Christ-like thing we can offer is simple presence:

- showing up,
- listening,
- walking alongside someone in their story.

When God drew near, He demonstrated that love requires nearness.

Jesus didn't wait until humanity had its story cleaned up.

He stepped into *our* story—**as it was**, not as we wished it to be.

He entered the broken chapters, the dark paragraphs, the places we'd rather hide.

The Incarnation is God saying,
“I’m not afraid of your story.
I’m coming into it.”

1. Just like the shepherds' stories included poverty, fear, and insignificance...
2. Just like Mary and Joseph's stories included scandal, confusion, and uncertainty...
3. Just like the magi's stories included searching, questions, and distance...

God stepped into every one of their stories—and He steps into yours.

II. An Unexpected Cast

Imagine you're planning a big Christmas dinner.

You carefully choose the guest list—
people who know each other,
people who get along,
people who fit together.

No one intentionally invites people who have nothing in common.

No one says,

- “Let’s put the CEO next to the farmhand.”
- “Let’s seat the billionaire beside the teenager working minimum wage.”
- “Let’s invite strangers from across the world and place them next to our quiet relatives.”

That would feel awkward.

Uncomfortable.

Unexpected.

But if *God* planned the guest list?

The table would look very different.

Because that’s exactly what happens in the birth of Christ.

The Birth of Christ Unites People Who Would Never Stand on the Same Stage

The birth of Christ is filled with beauty and wonder, but one of its most overlooked miracles is the **cast of characters** God brings together. No earthly director would assemble this group. No casting agent would put these people in the same frame. Yet in God’s story, they all converge at the same manger.

A. Shepherds — the Unseen and Unimportant

Shepherds were the working poor of ancient Israel—people who lived on the margins.

- They worked all night.
- They smelled like the field.
- They were considered unreliable in court.
- Culture dismissed them as uneducated and unimportant.

Yet the first birth announcement in history goes **not** to kings or priests, but to them.

God reveals His glory first to the people the world ignores.

B. Angels — the Holy and the Glorious

From heaven's throne come the angels—radiant, powerful, sinless beings who live in the presence of God Himself.

Their appearance terrifies the shepherds, and rightly so.

These messengers represent heaven in all its purity and majesty.

Heaven and earth collide at the manger.

The holy and the humble stand side-by-side.

C. Mary and Joseph — the Faithful but Ordinary

Mary and Joseph are ordinary Jewish villagers—poor, young, unknown.

They are not royalty.

They are not famous.

They are not positioned for influence.

But they are faithful.

And God chooses their humility as the doorway for His glory.

D. The Magi — Wealthy, Learned, and Foreign

Sometime later, magi from the East—likely scholars or astronomers—travel hundreds of miles.

- They are wealthy.
- They are educated.
- They are Gentiles—outsiders to the covenant of Israel.

Yet they sense in Jesus something worth crossing deserts for.
They kneel next to the poor and the humble.

It is an astonishing scene.

Shepherds and kings.
Villagers and foreigners.
Heavenly messengers and earthly laborers.
All gathered around the same Child.

E. Jesus Brings Together Those Who Would Never Meet

In any other story, these characters would never cross paths.
Their worlds are too different.
Their lives are too far apart.
Their social status, education, and backgrounds have nothing in common.

But **around Jesus, social lines fade.**

- Dividing walls crumble.
- Pride melts.
- The ground becomes level.
- The poor stand beside the wealthy.
- The uneducated stand beside the scholarly.
- The outsider stands beside the insider.

The cradle becomes the first picture of the church.

F. This Is the Beauty of Emmanuel — **God WITH Us**

The name itself tells the story: **God with us.**
Not “God with some of us.”
Not “God with the best of us.”
Not “God with the righteous, the impressive, or the religious.”

God with us—in all our differences, personalities, backgrounds, and stories.

Jesus is born into a world divided by

- class,

- power,
- privilege,
- and culture...
- and His arrival begins to heal the fractures.

G. If Jesus Brings Shepherds and Kings Together...

...then He can bring *us* together too.

- He can reconcile broken relationships.
- He can bridge cultural or generational gaps.
- He can unify a church family into a single body.
- He can gather people who have nothing in common except Him—and make them one.

Conclusion:

The manger becomes the first Christmas table, and seated around it are people no human host would have invited together:

- **Shepherds** — the overlooked, the working poor.
- **Angels** — radiant beings from the throne of God.
- **Mary and Joseph** — humble, unknown villagers.
- **Magi** — wealthy, educated foreigners.

It's a table no director would stage.
 A scene no screenwriter would dream up.
 A gathering no human planner would design.

And yet **God** brings them all together—close enough to see the same miracle, hear the same story, and bow before the same Savior.

Why?

The birth of Jesus is a reminder that **God delights in bringing together people who would normally never cross paths.**

At His table:

- the poor stand beside the wealthy,
- the unknown beside the powerful,

- the local beside the foreigner,
- The humble beside the heavenly.

If you saw this group walk into a restaurant today, you might whisper, “How did *that* group end up together?”

It wouldn’t make sense—unless you knew who was at the center.

Jesus is the One who makes the mismatched make sense.

He is the reason strangers become family.

He is the only Person who can unite shepherds and kings at the same table.

And here’s the beauty:

If God can bring *them* together,

He can bring *us* together.

Your friend group, your family, your church—

even the people you think you have nothing in common with.

Before Jesus came, humanity lived with a sense of separation—a God who felt high, holy, far away.

But in Bethlehem, the gap was shattered.

- Not only can God be known—
- He *wants* to be known.
- He chooses to be known.

The manager is a declaration:

The distance is over.

God has come for us.

God has come to us.

God has come among us.

Everything Is Different Now

- Our relationship with God: restored.
- Our identity: redeemed.
- Our purpose: renewed.
- Our future: secured.