



President Robert Bugbee

Come and See... Go and Tell

This Christmas may turn out to be a disappointment for you. It has happened to others before. It may have happened to you in the past. People imagine a picture of what a “good Christmas” ought to be. If it doesn’t end up looking or feeling that way, the season may leave you behind deflated, or even a little disgusted. It can happen if your notion of a “good Christmas” means you have to re-create Christmases you had at some earlier time... when friends and loved ones lived close by... when you were healthier or more worry-free than now... when a special someone was still alive to celebrate the holiday with you.

The Gospel stories in the Bible don’t worry too much about re-staging Christmas memories from your earlier life. The Bible opens the door instead for you to come close to Christ, the Lord Who ought to stand front and centre in everybody’s Christmas. Look at those rough-cut shepherds outside Bethlehem. Aside from Mary and Joseph, they were the first human beings to celebrate the very first Christmas. There was no snowy Canadian winter, no fruitcakes, no decorated pine tree, no elaborate family dinner, no carols, no holiday lights on Main Street, no bonus cheques from an employer... not even any memories of Christmases gone by, since they had never experienced this before. There was this Child, tucked away in a dark corner of town, tended to by humble parents, laid on straw in a feeding-trough, because it was the best they could manage far from home.

An angel-preacher announced what was happening. This Child was God’s Christ, the long-promised

Saviour. He had come as an ordinary-looking human being. He came to live here with us, to experience in His own life all the pulls and disappointments you have tasted, though without giving in to any sin that would have grieved His Father in heaven. He came to load onto His own back the burden of your disobedience and my wrongdoing. He came to die and thus to give His life as a ransom-payment for many people. He came to offer Himself as God’s ultimate Gift to you personally... in the hope that you would come close, embrace Him, and give Him the trust of your heart.

When Jesus comes in His Word and draws you close to Him, you really couldn’t ask for a finer Christmas than that! That is true even if you cannot manage to re-create all memories of holidays gone by.

The infant Jesus laid hold of the shepherds’ hearts in a big way. “When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child” (Luke 2:17). These guys were not educated, let alone trained preachers. Many people didn’t take shepherds seriously at all and were tempted to write off whatever they said. That didn’t hold the shepherds back. They just told people what God had said and shown to them. Maybe their words were crude and stumbling. We have no record that everybody who heard them immediately accepted their witness. They simply tried to pass on the treasure they got from the God of grace, and let the chips fall where they may.

Some have observed that early believers celebrated Christmas in late December because it falls

in the darkest part of the year in our northern hemisphere. For us Canadians, it’s both the darkest and the coldest. But with the coming of Jesus to our world, “the true light is already shining,” as the Bible puts it (1 John 2:8).

Despite the early Christian heritage of our country, the world around us is dark and cold in a deeper way. Jesus is not well known by many of our neighbours, even if they have heard His Name and think they already understand Him. Moreover, many men and women, boys and girls in our society are lonely... or hurting... or don’t know how to find meaning in their lives. That is not only true among the poor and others standing at the margins. It can also apply to prosperous, settled individuals who appear to be doing quite well.

God has placed you, dear friend, into a particular corner of the world and surrounded you with a special set of people—loved ones, co-workers and friends—that nobody else has quite the way you do. Don’t fret over it that you’ve had no preacher-training. Don’t worry if it’s clear you’ve got your weaknesses and think people might not take you seriously for that reason. Don’t keep silent because others won’t automatically believe you. Find your simple way of telling someone what the Lord has told you of His Christ, much as the shepherds did. Pray that God would create an open door. Walk through it as the Lord enables you.

Coming to Jesus. Speaking of Jesus. There is scarcely a stronger way to avoid “Christmas disappointment” than that!