

Advent 2020

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Week 4 – God will move in ways you don’t expect.

Production Notes:

- Green highlights go on the screen.

Opening:

It’s about 10 BC.

The Roman Road, Roman civility, and even Roman peace was built on brutality, slavery and ultimately fear. Rome would torture and publicly kill those that broke their law.

Imagine if we took those that broke the speed limit, stripped them down nude, placed them on a pole and lit them on fire. Other drivers would pass them as they screamed in pain while dying. I guarantee speeding would decrease!

One of the people groups that has suffered greatly at the hand of Roman “peace” was the Hebrew people. Like many through history they have a long history of being victims of slavery and racism.

Oh, they fought back but it always ended in awful bloodshed.

They wanted to be free. Finally, to be free. At a minimum they wanted to be seen as equals and have the same rights as their Roman captors. What they really wanted was to rebuild their own culture away from Rome.

In this awkward tension nearly all of them were praying that a messiah would come and help them achieve this freedom.

The problem is they had so predefined what the work of God would be they wouldn’t be able to see it when it happened.

God had to send someone to help prepare their hearts.

We have a very unique perspective on the Bible. We see the whole story. None of the people living in those time had this.

When you look through the Bible you realize that God almost always works in ways the people didn’t expect, gives them what they weren’t asking for, and often takes away what they think they need.

Let that settle in... He almost always moves in ways you won’t expect, gives you what you need and not what you were asking for and simply says, “Trust me.” Or in the New Testament, “Follow me.”

From their perspective the coming of Jesus would have been very upside down from their perspective.¹

The only way you will be okay with this is with a “prepared heart.” What is a “prepared heart?”

¹ Luke-Acts, The Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/gospel-luke-1/>, Last accessed December 17, 2020

Scripture:

Luke 1:26-30

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."²

- God first moves in the womb of a nobody from nowhere with no money and no influence. He doesn't move her into a castle, give her wealth and make her a powerful civil leader. He simply says, I find "favor" in you. He doesn't move her into "worth," he tells her of the real worth she already has.
- We also see in Mary's song³ that God is deconstructing hierarchy of worth. We as humans love hierarchy. We love to create ways to measure how worthy a human life is. Jesus is going to bring about salvation by turning our world order upside down. Not reordering but removing the order.
- Think of all the countless scholars or zealots that were "sold out" radical followers of God that had predefined what a move of God would look like. God moved in neither of their groups. He moved in humility. The radically smart and radically passionate in that day and age missed it. It was handed to the humble, someone neither group had much time for.

Let me ask a few questions:

- Back to the beginning – does God ever move in a way we expect?
- We always think, "I'm ready for God to move." Are we?
- When God moves it is almost always preceded by something being removed, reworked or revived. Those that get it are humble and trust in Him.
- When Jesus comes he doesn't say, "Follow the scholars, they were right." He doesn't say, "Follow the zealots, they were right." Nope, he simply says, "Follow me."⁴

Final Thoughts:

A revival of God won't be a building of your kingdom, it will be a breaking down. The ones that accept revival are the humble in heart.

Don't sit in your chair and think, "Yep, there are people out there that need this." I am certain that's exactly what the Pharisees thought about the Zealots and the Zealots about the Pharisees. This isn't for the group you disagree with, it's for you alone.

2 The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 1:26–30.

3 The Magnificat, Luke 1:46-55

4 The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bible, 2016, Matthew 4:19

I fully believe if Jesus was to come tomorrow He wouldn't look at America (or any other kingdom), the university professors, or even a specific branch of Christianity and say, "Yep, I am just coming to say they were right." No, it will be a leveling of all human kingdoms when the *real* King comes. Who will make the change? The humble.

Pray:

Father, help us to put our trust not in our wisdom, not in our personalities, not in our preferences. I pray for humility. I pray these people would simply follow you.

Next Steps Cards:

Is there a pride or sin that you know is holding you back from moving deeper into God's family?