

Christmas Message Series: Journey to Bethlehem

Theme verse: "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen His star in the east, and we have come to worship Him." -Matthew 2:2

Sermon #2: "Going Straight There"

Scripture: Luke 2:8-20

Blurb: Imagine, as Joseph leads Mary (who was "great with child" as the King James version of the Bible says) into Bethlehem, she is in labor! They are on a journey, but they don't have time to sight-see the area. The birth of her baby is imminent! They stay very focused! Christmas is a time for us to focus on the birth of Jesus. There are many distractions and many options for us to do to celebrate Christmas. This Sunday, however, we're "going straight there!"

Opening Song: *How Many Kings*

Welcome: -Pastor David

Merry Christmas! and welcome to Forest Hills Church, where we Love God and others, Grow in our relationship with Jesus, and Serve others powered and led by the Holy Spirit!

My name is David Werner, and I'm the pastor here.

A special welcome to those here for the first time!

We hope you experience God's love and the care of His family here at Forest Hills.

Please stop by the welcome center and get a mug as our gift to you.

We hope your cup runs over with praise and blessings!

We invite kids to stay in worship, as our whole service is intended for all ages.

There is the nursery available, as well as kids' activity bags, and craft table.

Grow Moment:

I also want to ask you to join one of our new small groups starting in January.

-New adventure, following HCI

-All groups will be doing the same thing, following the Sunday messages.

-Way to grow spiritually.

-One of our 3 HCI legs of our Jubilee year: Worship, Fellowship, and Nurture.

-Meet weekly for six weeks. Lots of options - see signups!

-Furthermore, in the new year, you may feel you really, really, REALLY need this!...

Small Group Video

-Sign up sheets are out in the lobby. Sign up for one today! Lots of options!

Memory Verse

Our take-away verse today comes from the middle of the Christmas story. It's about taking a journey at Christmas to go meet Jesus. Christmas is about a journey! Let's try it together:

Memory Verse: -Pastor David

"Let's go to Bethlehem and see this what God has revealed to us." Luke 2:15b

Worship Set: - Sanctify*Joy to the World**On This Day Earth Shall Ring**I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*

Worship prayer - Andrew

Seek: -David

Today we are on a journey to Bethlehem.

Anyone ever been on a road trip before? When you are on a journey, things don't always go well. Sometimes you get turned around and confused. Here's a clip from a movie you may recognized about two happy fellows going the wrong way!

Movie Clip#1: Video Clip: Plains, Trains, and Automobiles, (Going the Wrong Way)<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= akwHYMdbmM>**Advent Candle 3** -David

Remember. Rejoice. Renew. Resound!

Focus: -David

I want to show you another movie clip about someone else on a journey. This time, the person gets a bit distracted...and you won't believe what happens! Anyone like Mr. Bean?

Movie Clip#2: Video Clip: *Mr. Bean* (Car Squashed by tank)<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nifdpFOY1FQ>**Christmas for Kids** - Andrew**Listen:** -David

We're journeying to Bethlehem to meet Jesus. It's important to follow the right directions!

Here's a clip of a couple of ladies who listened to very bad directions. Hang on to your seat!

Movie Clip #3: Video Clip: Rat Race (We tried to tell you (without the skeleton))https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SY_7CpFI7M&pbjreload=10**Serve Moment:** Christmas Offering - Andrew

Community Helping Hand Rental Assistance Program

Offering: *Where Is the One?* -Sanctify**Bumper Video****Message:** "Going Straight There"**PP#1:** Journey to Bethlehem

Going Straight There

"Let's go to Bethlehem and see this what God has revealed to us." Luke 2:15b

Journey to Bethlehem. Going Straight There. Luke 2:15b "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this what God has revealed to us."

PP#2: *Image of the shepherds in the hills of Bethlehem*

The scene hasn't changed for millennia. Shepherds have always tended sheep on the hills around the little village of Bethlehem. They still do! This past April when our group toured the Holy Land, we went to Bethlehem, and we went to the Shepherds Fields nearby, and we saw shepherds tending sheep. The only difference, it seemed to me, was that they were wearing pants, and had cell phones!

Well, a thousand years before the first Christmas, shepherds were there, too. In fact, a very important shepherd: he was only a boy, but when the prophet Samuel came to Bethlehem, he anointed the shepherd boy to be the one-day greatest king of Israel, King David.

So, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, it was no coincidence that the shepherds were invited! Jesus, born to be Savior and our Good Shepherd, was born in the lineage of King David, also a shepherd-king.

And there's another really amazing part about the shepherds in the Christmas story. Shepherds, after all, weren't really accepted by normal people. They stayed with the sheep for days on end, and looked—and smelled—like the field, and smelly animals. They really weren't invited around important company.

PP#3: *Image of shepherds worshipping at the manger*

So, when God shows up on earth to begin rolling His eternal plan of salvation for all humankind, He uses an unknown couple, in eyebrow-raising circumstances, in an obscure place, in a far-off corner of the Western world, and is born into homelessness, His parents taking up temporary lodging in an animal stable. The Almighty God who created the entire universe is born as a baby, and wrapped in rags, and laid in hay in a feeding trough. And then, the only dignitaries, the only ambassadors, the only holy people, the only who's-who who are invited, are the smelly shepherds from the hillside. This Christmas birth—how Jesus was born—itself shows what He came to do! Those forgotten by the world, they are invited in. This is God. This is why Jesus came! That we, who are outsiders, are invited into the work of God's salvation!

We are shepherds! We are included! We are invited in!

PP#4: *Image of Mary & Joseph on their way to Bethlehem.*

And this Christmas, I want to invite you on a Christmas journey like the shepherds.

Last week we tried to get our heads around Mary and Joseph, who that first Christmas had to take a hectic journey when Mary was nine months pregnant! As we tried to imagine such craziness, we realized that Christmas was not about coming home, but about leaving home! God, Mary, Joseph, all leave home for Christmas. Christmas still calls us away from home, away from our comfort, away from our pleasures, away from our preferences, and calls us to be ready, to what is truly important, and to God's purpose! This is our journey to Bethlehem!

The shepherds also leave—and travel—on that first Christmas. When Jesus is born, they receive a very special, angelic invitation. They have a decision to make. Do they stay there, or do they go. What do they do? Put yourself as a shepherd in the story when you hear it again. Remember, you are like the shepherds.

PP#5: Luke 2:8-20 (CEB)

8 Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. 9 The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

10 The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. 11 Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. 12 This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, 14 "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."

Luke 2, starting with verse eight: "Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said, 'Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger.' Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, 'Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.'"

PP#6: Luke 2:8-20 (CEB)

15 When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." 16 They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. 18 Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19 Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. 20 The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

"When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, 'Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us.' They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told."

PP#7: Journey to Bethlehem: Going Straight There

1. Seek

When the shepherds heard the news of Jesus' birth, they had a decision. Will they stay where they are for Christmas, or will they journey to Bethlehem? If they stay, they only hear about Jesus. If they go seek Him out, they encounter, they experience, they worship the Savior, Christ, the Lord.

They have to choose to seek out the one born. He was given to them, to all of us. But they had to decide to seek Him.

This Christmas Eve, I want to invite you on a journey to Bethlehem. Tonight we celebrate and remember Jesus' birth. And you have a choice. Will you stay where you are right now, with things just the way they are, or will you seek out the Christ and make Him your Savior and Lord?

You can choose any path for your life. You can head any direction. But I want to urge you to choose Christmas! I invite you to choose the right way. In the video, when the happy-go-lucky pair was going the wrong way, it was all fine and no problem, until they encountered the trucks. Then they realized how dangerous their direction was. Don't wait until you face a head-on collision! Choose the right direction. Seek the Jesus of Christmas in your life!

PP#8: Journey to Bethlehem: Going Straight There

1. Seek
2. Focus

But you need to know that Christmas is not just a one-time decision! It's not a once-a-year holiday. Choosing to journey to Bethlehem is a life-long journey. It continues, until we reach glory, where we live with Jesus for eternity. Christmas is about everyday life!

It means we stay focused on our mission in life. There are many sweet temptations and distractions. Mr. Bean was side-tracked by the chocolate cupcake! For you, it may be sweet enticements of comfort, or success, or wealth, or unique experiences, or following your feelings, or doing things your way. But your Christmas journey requires your focus, every day, all along the way. It's a single-mindedness, a conviction to choose God's way, every day. It's an everyday part of the journey. The shepherds had a clear focus going into Bethlehem, and they found what they were looking for!

PP#9: Journey to Bethlehem: Going Straight There

1. Seek
2. Focus
3. Listen

So, how do you keep your focus? By choosing what—and who—you listen to. There are many voices telling you to go this way, or that way, or to take the shortcut back to the interstate! But God has provided the directions you need to navigate every day, every situation. You need to listen to the right directions, the right guidance, the Holy Spirit's directing. And most often, the Holy Spirit speaks and directs through Scripture. If you want to know where to go and what to do, spend daily time in the Bible. The Shepherds followed the instructions God gave them, and they were focused, and they went seeking. The Journey to Bethlehem requires us to listen! Listen! Hush the clamoring voices, the hectic urgency. Listen.

I want you to see one more video clip about people on a journey. It's about a family on a road trip. Before too long, they see a billboard for a Barbie Museum. Take a look at what ensues!

Movie Clip #4 - Devote: Rat Race (Going to the Barbie Museum (without the museum))

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJMPom6-xmA>

PP#10: Journey to Bethlehem: Going Straight There

1. Seek
2. Focus
3. Listen
4. Devote

A Barbie Museum? Ooo...that looked so good! Can we stop? Everyone chimes in. Let's make this our new goal. Let's substitute the plan for this new destination. Let's choose this instead!

Well, in the movie, it ends up being a terrible museum! What they thought would be wonderful ended up not so much!

When the shepherds got to Bethlehem, they went to Jesus. And they were changed! They gave Him their worship, their praise, and their hearts. It says that when they returned home glorifying and praising God for all they had seen. They devoted themselves to Jesus, and it changed everything.

Christmas is not a one-day experience. It is an ongoing journey. It is an everyday thing. It is the way we live as we follow Jesus: Seek, focus, listen, devote. Go straight there!

PP#11: A Prayer Journey to Bethlehem

1. Seek
2. Focus
3. Listen
4. Devote

Today, this Christmas Eve, I want to invite you on a journey to Bethlehem. And I want to give you the chance to act out this journey during our prayer time. So, for our prayer time, we're going to go on a prayer journey to Bethlehem. It will have four parts. It begins in your seats. Then, you're invited to get up, and go on a journey. You will first travel to the back of the sanctuary, to one of the four Focus prayer stations. When you get there, take a prayer card, and do the prayer on the card. Then, when you are done, move to one of the Listen stations along the outside walls. Again, follow the prayer instructions. Then, you end your prayer journey at the manger up here in front, before returning to your seat.

So, let's go to prayer, and start on the prayer journey. The first prayer station is you in your seat. Follow the instructions on the screen. Let's pray.

PP#12: You are invited on a Prayer Journey to Bethlehem, to the manger!

Seek!

Pray a silent prayer committing to seek Jesus more in your life.

Then continue your journey of prayer by going to any of the Focus prayer stations in the back of the sanctuary.

(Take a pen or pencil from the pew with you!)

Prayers: Prayer Journey to Bethlehem

Closing Song: *Angels from the Realms of Glory* - Sanctify

Announcements: Xmas Eve Candlelight 11:30
Monday, Office closed
Wed. No M&M

Memory Verse: -Pastor David

"Let's go to Bethlehem and see this what God has revealed to us." Luke 2:15b

Benediction: -David