

**Series: *THE INCREDIBLE INVASION!* December 24, 2006**

**...ALL HEAVEN BROKE LOOSE!**

**Luke 2:8-15**

1. Tonight is a **very** special night for kids! They've been getting ready for this one for some time—or, should I say, getting **you** ready, if you're a parent. Every kid understands at least **one** thing about Christmas; gifts! We've been talking about **The Incredible Invasion**. Well, tonight while they sleep, they're expecting a jolly fat man in a red suit to invade the house and bring stuff. Lots of it! Sometimes, however, they get a little confused on the other details.
  - a. A little girl came home from her kid's class at church triumphantly waving a paper. "Mommy!" she said. "My teacher says I drew the **most unusual** Christmas picture she's **ever** seen!"
    - The mother studied the picture for a moment and concluded that it was in fact a **very** peculiar Christmas picture. "This is really well drawn, Honey, but why have you made all these people riding on the back of an airplane?" her Mom gently asked.
    - It's the flight into Egypt!" the little girl said, a little disappointed that the picture's meaning wasn't more obvious.
    - “Oh-h-h,” the mother said cautiously. “Well, who’s the mean-looking man at the front?”
    - “That’s **Pontius, the Pilot**,” the girl said, now getting visibly upset.
    - “Hmmm, I see. And here’s Mary, and Joseph, and the Baby,” her Mom said. Studying the picture silently for a moment, she finally got the courage to ask, “But who’s this fat man sitting behind Mary?”
    - The little girl sighed. “Can’t you **tell?** That’s **Round John Virgin!** (MacArthur, *God With Us*, pp. 13-14)”
  - b. Sometimes we get a little goofed up on the details of Christmas! Sometimes we forget that we celebrate Christmas because God, in fact, **did** show up one night, over 2000 years ago now. History split right down the middle and angels announced that from that point on, it would be a whole new deal. That night, the wind shifted and a new Kingdom was born with that king. That night, God did something profound, amazing—something that would change whole destiny of the planet—and the destiny of every single person who would believe.
    - But this invasion didn't look **anything** like what I would imagine. It's like He sneaked in the back door. You can always tell when God is going to do something massive, because He sends an angel, or messenger to prepare people. And the angels were **all over** this one! Listen to what **they** said the night it happened:

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

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 (Luke 2:8-15 TNIV)."

2. Now, if someone at work came up to you and told you that an angel had appeared to them at night and given them a message—what would you say? Probably something like, "***Oh, that's nice (boy, is he weird! He must've had pizza with pineapple and anchovies!)***" But God *did* in fact send angels to these shepherds working the night shift—probably in the same fields David had worked. Experts on that culture suspect they were in the fields that night because it was Spring, and the sheep were lambing.
  - Anyone here ever been in the dark—and been surprised? Your heart rate definitely jumps! Well, this angel suddenly shows up with a light around him brighter than the sun. God's glory carries not just brightness—but this overwhelming sense of goodness and purity and love—and awesome power. It almost sent these guys into cardiac arrest!
  - And then this message: Don't be scared—I've got ***Great News of great joy—for everyone!*** Right over there in the town of David, the Savior this dark, sad oppressed world has been looking for and waiting for all these centuries—has arrived!
  - a. Know how your mind, in a flash, can come up with a bunch of scenarios before someone even finishes a sentence? I imagine these shepherds, their minds racing ahead, thinking about where a child like the One this angel was talking about would be found. "If the ***Messiah*** shows up—well, the sign is going to be the golden crib; the silk blankets; the abundance of food; the palace; the soldiers outside guarding him with their lives." I mean, that's how kings and important people did it in their culture—and ours.
    - But that's not what the angel said. He said, "The tip-off is...a baby, born in a barn in abject poverty, wrapped in rags—and laid in a feeding trough! Born right into a tough, messy situation."

- b. When we'd do something messy or gross or dumb as kids—my Mom had an expression. Maybe your Mom did, “What’s the matter with you...were you...**born in a barn?**” Jesus was. Anyone ever been to a barn—recently? What’s it smell like?  
 -I wouldn’t lay my baby on the hay I’ve seen in any barn! And a **manger** is a fancy name for a feeding trough. Animals are not particularly neat eaters—I mean, they don’t wipe their mouths with napkins; they don’t mind if they drool a little in their food. My point is that this manger was not like a high-end product in the line of cribs. It symbolized what really poor, homeless people do. They make do with what they have.  
 -And Martha Stewart did not go through this barn and give it a good scrubbing and spray it down with Lysol. Truth is, the shepherds would’ve felt right at home here. Cause, see, shepherds hang with sheep—and they smell too!
- c. Apparently, none of this happened accidentally. This was no “plan B” moment for God. Jesus was not going to be an ordinary king. Amazing statement; “You’ll recognize that it’s Him, Son of God--because he will show up in the messiest place you can possibly imagine. A place where **no** mother, given the choice, would have her baby!”  
 -There’s almost a disconnect between this pathetic sight—and the angels who cracked the skies open—don’t you think? From the report in Luke, it appears that heaven just couldn’t contain itself—that the sky was filled with angels celebrating what God had just initiated. For a public supernatural display like this, something really, **really BIG** must’ve been going on!  
 -But this baby looked tiny, ordinary. Wrapped, like our gifts will be, but in rags. Surrounded by animals—and entrusted to this poor young couple. No power. No money. No armies, fanfare, applause.  
 -Why—why would the Creator of all do something like that? It’s because this will be Jesus’ signature. **There is no place He won’t go; no place too humiliating for Him.** There’s nothing He won’t do to bring the power and love and kindness of God to a world—and to all the messy situations in it—that need Him.  
 -That’s good—because we’re messy people. We create messes. We walk into messes. And we live in an incredibly messy world.
3. It wasn’t just the messy place Jesus **came** to. Babies are messy anyways. John Ortberg writes about an experience he and his wife Nancy had on a cross-country flight with two small children, ages 3 and 1½.  
 “We’d taken up the whole back row of our plane on this long flight because nobody wanted to be near us, and it was littered with dirty diapers, crackers, crumbs and spilled milk. It didn’t look good and it didn’t smell good.

“You know you’re in trouble when the flight attendant comes up and says, ‘Would you mind if your kids played outside?’ We were wondering why we brought these kids with us on this trip...why we had these kids in the **first** place. A guy a couple of rows in front of us turned back, surveyed the damage, and said to me, ‘Are those your two kids?’ I thought about it and I said, ‘Yeah, those are my two kids.’ He said, ‘My wife and I would give **anything** in the world to have two kids.’ I said, ‘You don’t have any kids?’ He said, ‘No, we have **five** kids; we’d give anything in the world to have **two** kids.’”

- a. It’s my guess that Jesus was just as messy as our kids are at that age. And it wasn’t like his coming **solved** problems for Mary and Joseph. It was actually pretty messy for them. I mean, this was not a safe, predictable mission God had them on—not that his missions are **ever** safe! **Or** predictable! They had a paranoid king, Herod, breathing down their necks. They had all the gossip in Nazareth about Mary being pregnant before she and Joseph were married---and whose baby was this **anyway!** They had to figure out, “What next?” Seventy miles from home, no home, no baby stuff, no Lamaze classes, no money. The only thing that seemed royal about this is that it was a king-size **mess!**
- b. Don’t you find that God is many times disguised when He shows up? We plead for help, but it seems like nothing’s happening. We speculate about this. Think, “Hmm. Maybe God doesn’t hear prayers from someone like me? Or maybe He just doesn’t care. Or maybe I’ve screwed up—and God’s just shoving my nose in it. Or...”  
-**Truth** is that He’s there; God walks right into messes. Even though we don’t see Him or feel Him there—He **is** there. Sometimes his gifts often come wrapped in plain brown paper—tied with baling twine. The **sign—the tip-off** for you will be God—right in the middle of a really messy place!

4. Tonight, I’d like you to think of a single messy situation you have in your life. I don’t know what your mess is, but most of us have one. They keep us awake at night; they affect our relationships; sometimes they have us tied in knots and leave us angry and breathless—or just feeling depleted. Empty. Maybe confused. Afraid. And the Christmas season doesn’t usually help messes—in fact, it may make them harder.

- a. I have a mess. Last Sunday when I got home from church, there was a message that my brother had called an hour earlier. I knew immediately that something was wrong. When I reached him, he was in the car on the way to my parents. He said, “Hi, Ken...and there was this long silence until he could choke out the words, “Dad’s gone.”  
-The person who had profoundly influenced my whole life was gone, leaving behind my Mom, who’s dying of lung cancer. When they retired in January, a week before my Dad’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, they moved to be close

to my sister and her husband. And they will likely be moving in March. To be honest, it's a mess.

- b. We have kind of a crude phrase to describe situations that suddenly get really messy and chaotic and confusing. "All...hell broke loose." I've thought, "What if **all Heaven broke loose?**" What if God sent several dozen large-sized—or **extra-EXTRA** large sized angels to mop this up? Better yet, what if **God** walked into this mess! What would it look like **then?!** Explosions of power, light, healing and peace?
    - That's what happened that night recorded here. **All Heaven broke loose.** And what's **strange** is that Jesus remained wrapped in rags in the manger. Mary and Joseph remained poor. Hotels with saunas and Jacuzzis didn't start springing up around them. There wasn't an army of angels camped around the stable, ready to obliterate any potential threats. The angels didn't nuke the flies, the germs or the smell—or even make the animals smile favorably on God the Son—lying in that mess.
  - c. Knowing that, I have to believe that God being with me right in the middle of my mess—and with my family—and with you in **your** messy situation--may not meet our expectations. You know, where the mess disappears, the problems are instantly solved, and all the pain vaporizes.
    - God has promised that in situations like these, we will **never** be alone and powerless—and that He is working way more profoundly than we'd ever realize. What God **hasn't** promised is that I get to write his to-do list. Tell Him what to do—and how to do it. It's **very** clear when I think about it—He's God; I'm not. His ways are **not** my ways. I can deal with that. His ways and thoughts are **higher** and **better** than my thoughts and ways. I have begrudgingly agreed that this is true.
5. So...so, if He's not going to handle my messy situation—or **yours**--the way **we** think He should, what **can** we count on? What **really** happens when **all Heaven breaks loose?**
- a. Maybe the first thing is that we don't have to invite him into the mess; He's already **there** in the middle of it. Know what I've found to be the most embarrassing part about God letting God into my messy places? I frequently **make** the mess! Some wise person once said, "If I could kick the person who's responsible for most of my problems, I wouldn't be able to sit for **weeks!**"
    - But even with all that, He doesn't shame us; humiliate us, kick us around, or stand back with His arms folded. It's important for you to know that God's not waiting for you to clean up your own mess before He comes, either. He's already there. You just have to look for Him—and let Him help you with it.

- b. The core message the angels bring to these shepherds in particular—and to everyone in general is, ***There's GOOD NEWS—in a bad news world!*** There's a reason to be filled with joy. To have a party. To celebrate. In other words, when we ***celebrate*** Christmas—or the birth of Jesus Christ—we're solidly on the right track. There's a **reason** to ring all the bells, give gifts, have a feast, make cookies and fudge, decorate your home with lights, and invite relatives over—even the ***kooky*** ones! -God is very focused—He's brought infinity to a baby in a manger—but the news is **very** broad! It's not just for those whose net worth, kids, stocks, health, and popularity is going up and to the right—or for the movers and shakers—or even for exceptionally **good** people. ***This*** good news is for **everyone**. Like people who have been stomped, crushed and taxed by Rome. Like shepherds, who were at the bottom of the food chain when it came to social status. Like a teenage couple, far from home, who are trying to care for a baby in a barn—with no help and no budget.
- c. The angel specifically said, "Do not be afraid." Now, I know he said that partly because he had just scared these guys half to death. But I think it goes **way** deeper than that. The phrase, "Do not be afraid," is used 365 times in the Bible. Hmmm. Wonder if that's a coincidence? ***Fear*** is one of our greatest enemies. Ever had someone say to you, when life is tough, "Don't worry!" We think, "That's easy for you to **say**, but ***I*** have to live in the mess, ***I*** have to face this, not you!" -I've thought about my fear—and I don't think it's a lot different from yours. Fear is about getting **bad** news like my phone call last Sunday. ***Worse*** news. I want **Good News**. I want someone in authority—a doctor, a surgeon, a school principal, police, Revenue Canada, my older brother to assure me that they will **always** give me good news. I'll bet you'd like that too! But they can't. So, the ultimate authority, God, says, "Don't be **afraid!** There's ***Good News for everybody.***"

-The core message is that a Savior had been born of a virgin in Bethlehem—precisely how and where prophets said he would be born. A lot of people come to us, send us emails, write us letters and post ads promising to save us from our computer woes, our health struggles, our bad breath, wrinkles, sagging bodies and egos, our car woes, and from the heart-break of psoriasis. Governments promise to save us from terrorists, from more taxes, from frauds, poor education, prejudice, and bad neighbors; to save our money from depreciation—to keep planes flying, roads repaired, and government expenses at a minimum.

-But it's all rather impersonal—and promises from all these self-proclaimed saviors are temporary at best. But this Savior, Jesus, has

been born **for you!** For you, and for you. For you, and you and you. And for me. And He actually do something—and it's not skin deep, or bank account deep. He can keep all his promises, because He's Lord. He's God.

6. The logical question to ask is, “Okay, so a Savior was born approximately 2000 years ago. What does that mean this morning/tonight in a vastly, **vastly** different world that struggles with terrorists, drugs, ecological disaster, quirky viruses and diseases—and people who do unthinkable things? How does that help me with my fear; with my loneliness; with my inner demons? How does that help me with broken relationships, unemployment, kids who are way off on a tangent this Christmas? How does it help when you lose your Dad?”  
-Well, I'll tell you. It's very specific, really. Jesus came to save us from our sin. And that's a **way** bigger deal than you may realize today/tonight. I'll tell you why it's a problem. Sin is **the** single greatest cause of death and hatred and sadness and fear. It separates us from others, it fills our hearts with regret, and it alienates us from God. Because of sin, all hell literally breaks loose. It creates chaos.

-When God himself showed up on this planet as that baby, born in poverty, laid in a manger, it was like a beachhead from which He would work throughout history—overcoming evil with good; overcoming hatred with love; overcoming racism and prejudice with acceptance—and specifically, over coming punishment with grace. And, for me—for my mess—overcoming death with life.

-Let me get painfully specific. Jesus—Savior--didn't come to make life easy and comfortable for Israel for 100 years or so. And He didn't come to give us a **La-Z-Boy** life; make our lives a little more convenient before we get old and die. He came to save the whole human race from death. The cross is driven like a stake through the point where history was forever divided into BC and AD.

- a. On that cross—He paid for my sins. The chaos and messes I've created with my life. The people I've hurt; the way I've damaged life on this planet. I had to **own** my sin—not dismiss it and pretend I'm better than I am. And when I did, He forgave me and came to live in me where He's hard at work, repairing damage, replacing old habits, and making me alive. And one day, when I'm the one lying in a coffin surrounded by flowers, don't say something dumb like, “Wow! He looks like himself!” because I'll look **very** dead and gray. But I'll actually be **truly** alive. See, our lives are kind of a mini-version of what happened with Jesus' life. Born helpless and weak into a mess, but raised in power and glory.

-He intersects our history, our lives—and kind of establishes a beach-head for the invasion of good, of peace, of joy—and, especially, of hope. Today—tonight could be that defining moment for you. **All Heaven could break loose!** You're just a prayer away from it.

-How does that change my mess? Well, I'll tell you how. I hurt. I wonder what the future holds—particularly for my Mom's situation. And sometimes I get worried and absorbed by it. And when that happens, He somehow assures me from the inside of my soul, "It's okay, Ken. I care about this situation, this problem **more** than you. Do what you can—and leave the rest to me. I'm at work."

-And I suddenly remember how, when **God's** with you in the middle of a mess, He changes everything. A baby born into poverty, born in a barn, becomes an event we sing carols about as a thing of beauty. I remember how He takes a cross, the cruelest form of execution humans have been able to invent—and turns it into a symbol of power and hope. -And I find that **His** strength is made perfect in **my** weakness. In short, He fills me with what I really want most. **Peace.** Right in the middle of the chaos and the storm, all Heaven breaks loose, and there's peace. And that's why the angels celebrated.

- b. Let me put it like this. **When God and us are at peace with each other, then peace finally has a chance in all the other areas of our lives.** Anyone here ever think about your past and feel bad about stuff—except me? Of course you do.
- In fact, I'll bet some of you have memories and pain from the past that ruins almost every Christmas. Jesus, Savior, can bring peace and healing because, from the core of your life, He has access to your pain, and to your memories.
- c. Another place of chaos where all Heaven could break loose is in yours and my relational worlds. Relational stuff grinds me up. Does it do the same for you? This is God's specialty! In fact, that's what Christmas is all about, really. God didn't just take the first step, He walked right up to us. He offers forgiveness and grace as a gift—at the cost of His Son.
- Some of you have relational pain that's gotten infected with bitterness—and turned into a grudge. And right now, this anger is cooking you from the inside out. And you could be free. Just like He forgave those who hurt him, Jesus—Savior--gives us His humility and grace to forgive those who have hurt us—even if they never ask us to. And we find peace. Now, **that** would be a gift worth giving, don't you think?
- d. I don't know why my future holds. If you're not sure where your life will ultimately end up—and you're not sure about what's next after this life—

you need to know that this **Savior, Jesus**, came so we could be at peace with our future. That kind of peace is called **hope**. You can make it through **anything** if you've got hope! The Bible says that this little Baby who came to our world now holds all things in his hands.

7. I say all this because the angels final promise is a promise of peace. Peace to the people God loved enough to send His son to. **"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."**
- You don't have to watch a lot of news before you realize that the gift **everyone** wants most today/tonight is peace. I mean, we'll settle for stuff. Stuff does give us a brief jolt, but I'll bet we'd trade a lot of the stuff under our trees for genuine, lasting peace.
  - It's what most of the people in Iraq want—both soldiers and civilians. It's what every person in a broken relationship wants. Peace. It's what every person in every mess wants. Peace. It's what every person wants in their workplace, their school, their home, their neighborhood—and in their heart. And, tonight, it's available to **everyone, everywhere**.
  - You need to understand, thought, that Jesus **alone** is the **Prince of Peace**. And it could be yours today/tonight. Simply for the asking. So, **will you ask?** Will you **believe?** Will you put your hope in the **right** place? In this Savior who was born?
  - There is no place Jesus won't go. No thing He won't do. No depth he will not in humility descend to so **all Heaven can break loose** and bring peace to our chaos.