

**December** 25th 2020 - Christmas Day      Luke 2:8-20

Back to work, back to normal?

And they went back to work.

The fate of the world had changed. They had seen God the Creator born as a human to live among us. They had seen the heavens open and hundreds of angels singing and what did they do? They went back to work. Of course, what else would one do after such a mystical miraculous experience?

Everything had changed and nothing.

The Shepherds were still poor and outcasts; despised by society and shamed with dark gossip. Their job was still hard and there was no sign that the injustice in the world had disappeared somewhere else. So, of course, they went back to work. They wanted to live, they had to work. Nothing had changed.

And everything had changed. While society was still against them and their economic situation did not change at all, they knew now that this was not Divine fate predestined for them. God was on their side. God had chosen them to be witnesses to God's own birth.

Nothing had changed, and everything. The question is how did they incorporate this wonderful knowledge into their world that seemed not to have changed?

What did they do with it, with Christmas?

What will we do with it? For us, too, everything has changed and nothing at Christmas. You can live after Christmas in the same way you lived before Christmas.

What will we do with it?

*Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart* (Lk 2:19). That is one way. You can ponder Christmas in your heart. To be fair, Mary had already played her part in this story, so she has all the right to “just” ponder. Joseph, who must have felt quite passive in this whole affair, his role became the safety of this young and vulnerable family so that the story of this child could continue and find its blossom in the ministry of Jesus.

But what will we do with this knowledge that God is here among us, looking at us face to face?

To what can this warm embrace of God move us, encourage us, empower us?

God did not choose to be born into this world because it is or was a perfect world that would welcome their Creator in all ceremony and luxury. God chose to become human in this world because a lot is neither right nor good in this world and God wanted to make it clear for all times: wherever there is suffering in this world or injustice, it is not because God has turned the back on the people. No, wherever there is suffering in this world, like in a stable in the poor town of Bethlehem where a poor mother gives birth, God is present in the most wonderful ways. The places of war, think of Syria that continued to be ravaged by war in 2020, the places of suppression and dictatorships, the places and institutions where racism, discrimination and injustice harm people, people like George Floyd, or people who have been natives to the land for ever, residential schools and Churches, the places of poverty, Palestine, Somalia, Downtown Vancouver, these places and people have all not been abandoned by God, but by their fellow people, often by their fellow Christians.

Wherever there is suffering in the world it is not because God does not care but because humans do not care.

In the circumstances of this birth lies already a call to action, a call to respond to God being born in poverty. Who came to give the couple company in their loneliness? The poor shepherds and later wise men from far, but not the local rich or powerful, not even the local religious. The people who could have helped this young couple did not come but the poor gave what they could: company and shared happiness.

Everything had changed and nothing.

The shepherds went back to work. Their world had not changed, but they had and they have acted as witnesses of this moment and messengers of this message of hope ever since.

What has changed for us and what will we change?

Will we simply go back to work or will we be living witnesses and active parts of the world-changing movement that took its beginning in that one holy night that wasn't that silent at all?