



Stewarding the Christmas Story

By Scott Jacob

"In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria." Luke 2:1-2 (NRSV)

These are familiar words for us who are Christians. They are the beginning of Luke's telling the story of Jesus birth. They are part of the appointed readings in our lectionary for our Christmas Eve and Christmas Day worship. And when we hear or read these words we begin to mentally fill in all of the rest of the details -- Mary and Joseph traveling from Nazareth to Bethlehem, no room in the Inn, shepherds, flocks and angels, and Good News of Great Joy!

So, how do you hear this story this year? As you find yourself waiting in anticipation of celebrating the birth of the Messiah, how does this Word come to you? Are you buried in your unfinished (and possibly growing) list of things to do before Christmas Eve can be celebrated? Are you filled with frustration and anxiety over not being able to find the "perfect gifts" for those on your Christmas list? Or have you completed all your preparations, and are you able to spend this time enjoying these days of anticipation and preparation, truly engaged in this season of Advent?

It's probable that you may be somewhere in between in these final days of Advent as we make ready for celebrating the birth of our Savior. And as Christians we live in these days of Advent (as we also do in Lent) in a sense of "both -- and." We celebrate Christmas as an event that took place 2000 years ago that also takes place again, here and now, in our lives today. We hear once again this Good News of Great Joy -- that to us is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

For most of us when we hear the word "stewardship" we think of our money, our possessions, our time, or our particular talents. And all of that is certainly true. But I want to suggest to you that as Christians, as Disciples of Jesus, our "stewardship" also includes how we steward this Good News of Great Joy. Our stewardship is also about how we both receive and share the message of the Gospel.

Frankly we are no different from the writers of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We too are blessed with the Good News of the Gospel, and we are called in our discipleship to "steward" this Good News and to share it with the world around us. Just as we steward, just as we take care of, manage, and share the blessings and resources we have received, so too are we entrusted to steward this Good News of Great Joy!

I am very aware that in the midst of all the things on our lists to do this Christmas season -- the shopping and wrapping, the baking and cooking, all the gatherings and events that make up our holiday traditions -- it is easy to overlook this area of our stewardship. We are busy -- often too busy -- to even hear the angel's message to the shepherds in that field outside of Bethlehem. So my prayer for you is that you can make the space in all of the busy-ness, to receive this blessing of Good News -- and to steward this gift -- for you and for all the people -- "that to us is born in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

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