

Five Lessons of Christmas

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Sermon Synopsis

In this Christmas episode of *World Impact*, Dr. Billy Wilson shares a thoughtful teaching on the nativity story, drawing out five key lessons that remain deeply relevant for believers today. Speaking from Oral Roberts University, he reminds viewers that Christmas is not only a celebration of Christ's birth but also a time to reflect on the ways God works through humility, obedience, and unexpected circumstances to accomplish His purposes.

The first lesson emphasizes God's pattern of using small and overlooked things to fulfill His greatest plans. Bethlehem, a village of only a few hundred people, was chosen as the birthplace of the Messiah, reminding believers that God delights in transforming what seems insignificant into something extraordinary. Scripture is filled with similar examples—from a boy's small lunch feeding a multitude to a tiny mustard seed becoming a great tree—each pointing to God's ability to bring greatness out of what appears small.

The second lesson centers on Mary, whose humble life made her a vessel of divine favor. Though she was young and unknown, God entrusted her with a role of eternal significance. Dr. Wilson highlights that God's favor continues to rest on those who walk in humility and obedience, and that such favor often opens doors no human power can shut.

The third lesson focuses on the magi, who journeyed far from their homeland to worship the newborn King. Their long and costly pilgrimage illustrates the truth that worship is worth every effort and sacrifice. Genuine devotion often requires perseverance, but it always leads to joy in the presence of Christ.

The fourth lesson comes through the shepherds, who received the angelic announcement of Jesus' birth. As ordinary and marginalized members of society, they remind us that God's joy is

available to everyone, regardless of status. The joy they found was not tied to possessions or circumstances but rooted in encountering Jesus Himself.

The fifth and final lesson explores the mystery of the Incarnation, showing how vulnerability leads to victory. Jesus, though fully God, became a vulnerable child, embracing dependency and humility. This profound act of self-emptying opened the way for salvation and revealed the power of humility. Believers are called to follow His example, laying aside pride to experience God's transforming power in their own lives.

Dr. Wilson closes by reminding viewers that the story of Christmas is more than history or tradition—it is a living call to embrace the reality of *Immanuel, God with us*. Whether through small beginnings, humble obedience, sacrificial worship, deep joy, or a willingness to embrace vulnerability, the lessons of the nativity point us to the heart of the gospel. This message encourages believers to rediscover the wonder and transformative power of Christ's birth, not only during the Christmas season but throughout the year.

Sermon Highlights

- Small Can Be Significant: God uses small, seemingly insignificant places and things for great purposes, as seen in Bethlehem's role in the birth of Jesus (Micah 5:2).
- Favor Will Find You: When a heart is pure and obedient to God, His divine favor will pursue and bless you, just as Mary was favored by God (Luke 1:28-30, 35).
- Worship Is Worth the Walk: True worship requires effort and faith, exemplified by the Magi who traveled miles to honor Jesus, the King of kings.
- Joy Is Found in Jesus: The shepherds discovered lasting joy and peace through the birth of Christ, reminding us that true joy is rooted in Him (Luke 2:10-20).
- Vulnerability Leads to Victory: Jesus' incarnation, becoming vulnerable as a baby in a manger, is the ultimate pathway to our victory over sin and Satan (Isaiah 7:14). Humbling ourselves before God opens the door to His saving grace.

Scripture Verses

Micah 5:2

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.

Luke 1:28-30

The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God."

Luke 1:35

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

Luke 1:46-48

My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed.

Numbers 24:17

"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel."

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Luke 2:10-11

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

Luke 2:20

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Quotes

- Many times God uses small things, small situations, even small areas of the world to do great things for His glory. - Billy Wilson
- When God has given you His favor, His pleasure, His smile, He'll track you down with it. Favor will find you. - Billy Wilson
- The Gentiles saw the light of God and came to worship, and worship was worth the effort, or worth the walk. - Billy Wilson
- The shepherds discovered the source of joy: it was Jesus Christ, the Son of God. You can have real joy this Christmas, and that joy is found in Jesus. - Billy Wilson
- It's only when we're willing to become vulnerable that we can win the victory... Jesus's willingness to become vulnerable, to become human, to become a baby, started the pathway to His victory over Satan and sin. - Billy Wilson

Bible Study

Objectives

- Understand the significance of small beginnings as shown through the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.
- Recognize how God's favor finds and pursues those who are pure and obedient, exemplified by Mary.
- Appreciate the value of worship and the commitment it demands, inspired by the journey of the Magi.
- Discover true joy found in Jesus Christ, as revealed through the shepherds' experience.
- Embrace vulnerability as a path to victory, following Jesus' incarnation as Immanuel, 'God with us.'

Reading and Reflections

- Micah 5:2 – Small Bethlehem chosen to bring forth the ruler of Israel.
- Luke 1:28-30, 35 – Mary's encounter with the angel showing God's favor on the humble.
- Numbers 24:17 (referenced) – The prophecy of a star rising out of Jacob; fulfillment through the Magi's journey.
- Luke 2:8-20 – Shepherds receiving the good news and finding joy in Jesus' birth.
- Isaiah 7:14 – The prophecy of Immanuel, emphasizing God's vulnerability in becoming human.

Key Observations

- Bethlehem, though small and insignificant by worldly standards, was the backdrop for God's great plan.
- God's favor is not for the elite but reaches the humble and obedient regardless of status or location.
- Worship requires effort, sacrifice, and perseverance, as seen in the Magi's long journey.
- True, lasting joy is found only in Jesus, not in material or momentary pleasures.
- Jesus' vulnerability as a baby reveals the deep humility of God's love and the pathway to our victory.

Personal Reflections

- Reflect on 'small moments' in your life where God has worked powerfully through what seemed insignificant.
- Consider areas where God's favor has found you, especially when you have walked humbly in obedience.
- Are there acts of worship or devotion in your life that require persistence? How can you strengthen your commitment?

- Evaluate your source of joy—does it rest in Jesus or temporary circumstances?
- What does being vulnerable before God look like for you, and how might that lead to spiritual victory?

Lessons for Daily Life

- Do not despise small beginnings or small acts of faith—God multiplies them for His glory.
- Live a life open to God’s favor by cultivating purity and obedience in your heart.
- Make intentional efforts to honor God through worship, even if it demands sacrifice or discomfort.
- Anchor your joy in Christ alone, especially amid challenges or the busyness of life.
- Embrace humility and vulnerability as strengths that invite God’s power into your life.

Practical Applications

- Identify a ‘small’ or overlooked area of your life where you can surrender control to God to see His work.
- Practice daily surrender and obedience, welcoming God’s favor to track and bless your life.
- Plan a dedicated time this week to worship God without distractions—consider singing, prayer, or meditation.
- Replace fleeting sources of happiness with consistent reflection on Christ’s promises and presence.
- Confess areas of pride or fear in prayer and invite God to make your heart vulnerable to His leading.

Challenges for the Week

- Seek to notice and be thankful for ‘small’ blessings and answers to prayer throughout each day.
- Be intentional about positioning yourself in humility and openness before God, especially in difficult moments.
- Commit to worship at least once this week in a focused, uninterrupted way, even if it’s just for 10 minutes.
- Identify moments where joy seems missing and consciously invite Jesus into those times through scripture or prayer.
- Share with a trusted friend or mentor your journey toward vulnerability and invite them to pray for you.

Further Study

- Micah 5:2 – Study God’s choice of Bethlehem as a reminder that God’s greatness often springs from small places.

- Luke 1 – Deepen your understanding of Mary’s character and God’s favor toward the humble.
- Matthew 2 – Explore the full story of the Magi and the significance of their gifts and worship.
- Psalm 100 – Reflect on worship as a joyful response to God’s goodness.
- Isaiah 7:14 and John 1:14 – Meditate on the mystery and power of the Incarnation, God becoming flesh.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the incredible lessons of Christmas revealed through the humble birth of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to embrace the significance of the small places and moments where Your power is made perfect. Teach us to walk humbly in Your favor, to worship You with all our heart, and to find joy that transcends our circumstances. Lord, give us courage to be vulnerable before You, trusting that in our weakness, You show Your strength and bring victory. May this season ignite a deeper love and commitment in us to follow You. Bless us and our families as we celebrate the gift of Immanuel—God with us. In Jesus’ mighty name, Amen.

Daily Devotionals

Day 1

Scripture Verse

Micah 5:2 (NIV): "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

Reflection

As we enter into this Christmas season, the story of Bethlehem reminds us that size does not limit God's plan. Bethlehem, a small village with about 300 people, was seemingly insignificant compared to powerful cities like Rome or Jerusalem. Yet, God chose this tiny town to birth the King of Kings, Jesus Christ. This lesson of small things carrying great significance is radical for our everyday lives. It encourages us not to despise our small efforts, humble beginnings, or moments that feel insignificant. Think about times when you felt overlooked, where your contributions were dismissed as too little. Recall the story Jesus fed 5,000 with just two fish and five loaves (Matthew 14:17-21). The cloud the size of a man's hand brought mighty rain in Elijah's time (1 Kings 18:44), and a small stone brought down the giant Goliath (1 Samuel 17:49). These illustrate vividly how God delights in using small things for His glory. Consider your own life and the seemingly small moments of faithfulness, kindness, or prayer. Each act—however tiny—may be the very thing God is preparing to use for a larger purpose. Remember, the mustard seed faith Jesus speaks of in Matthew 17:20 grows into a great tree. Your small step of obedience today could be the seed that changes a season or a lifetime. Reflect now: Are you undervaluing the small moments God has placed in your life? Are you faithful in the little things? Embrace your smallness as the canvas God uses to paint His greatness. Trust that God is working through your life, even when the impact seems unseen. Today, expect a breakthrough that honors the power of small beginnings.

Prayer

Lord, help me to treasure the small things and to trust that You use the humble and the small for Your great glory. Strengthen my faith in the unseen work You are doing through me. Amen.

Day 2

Scripture Verse

Luke 1:28-30, 35 (NIV): "The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.' Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.' ... The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'"

Reflection

Mary's story is a profound lesson in the favor of God—how it finds us, even when we feel insignificant and unnoticed. Imagine being Mary: a young teenage girl from a quiet village called Nazareth, suddenly faced with an angel's visit declaring you are 'highly favored.' She was unsure, troubled even, yet she embraced God's call with humility and obedience. Favor is more than luck; it is God's pleasure resting on a humble heart willing to obey Him. Imagine the countless people in that time and place—Mary was just one. Yet God's favor sought her out because of her posture: pure, obedient, and trusting. This same favor is available to you. No matter where you are, God's favor will chase you down when your heart aligns with His will; when you walk in humility and purity of spirit. Think about real life — those seasons when doors that seemed closed suddenly opened; times when just the right opportunity or person came into your life. Those are moments of God's favor. They are not random, but purposeful. Like Mary, when we say 'yes' to God despite uncertainties or fears, favor overtakes our path and brings blessings beyond measure. Mary's song in Luke 1:46-48 praises how God looks with kindness on the humble, and through her willingness, she was blessed for all generations. Today, reflect: Are you willing to be found by God's favor? Are you living with a heart that says, 'I am ready, Lord'? When favor finds you, miracles follow. Like Mary, you may just be the answer God destined you to be to the world around you.

Prayer

Father, I ask for Your favor to find me in my quiet moments, that I might walk in obedience and humility. Teach me to receive Your blessings and glorify Your name as Mary did. Amen.

Day 3

Scripture Verse

Luke 2:10-11, 20 (NIV): "But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.' ... The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told."

Reflection

The story of the shepherds reminds us that joy is found in Jesus, even in the most unlikely and humble of circumstances. Shepherding was a tough, lonely profession—often stinky, boring, and thankless. Yet God chose shepherds to receive the first announcement of Jesus' birth. Picture a cold, silent night, with a sky suddenly alive with heavenly hosts singing, shining a light on a humble manger in Bethlehem. The shepherds' ordinary lives were forever marked by supernatural joy as they encountered the Savior. Their joy wasn't based on possessions or outward circumstances but on the presence of the Messiah. How often do we seek joy in all the wrong places—in material gifts, social events, or fleeting pleasures? Those things fade and leave us empty. The shepherds discovered an unshakable joy rooted in the reality that God had come to live among His people. This joy transformed them—they left glorifying and praising God and shared the good news. You, too, can find this joy amidst your ordinary or even challenging seasons. When Jesus becomes the center of your heart, joy no longer depends on your situation. It becomes a wellspring that fills your soul and spills over to bless those around you. Reflect today: Are you allowing Jesus to be your source of joy? How can you cultivate a worshipful heart that celebrates Him regardless of life's pressures or distractions? Let the shepherds' response inspire you to embrace worship and joy as your life's foundation.

Prayer

Jesus, fill my heart with Your joy that surpasses all understanding. Help me to find You in every moment and to worship You genuinely, as the shepherds did that night. Amen.

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