

“Belief on Display”

- Introduction - Advent, Series: “Down to Earth”
 - Advent
 - 1st week= Hope
 - 2nd week= Peace
 - This week= Joy
 - 1st week: Love on Display
 - God loved us and sent Jesus
 - 2 greatest commandments
 - This Advent season= go beyond “check writing”
 - Last week: Humility on Display
 - Humility of Joseph, Jesus’ earthly father
 - Scrapped his plans for God’s plan
 - Jesus ultimate example
 - Pride opposite of
 - Peace that surpasses understanding when submitted to God’s plan

Tension: We talk about faith a lot and usually we talk as if it’s a non tangible quality, like an intellectual property. Faith is actually a tangible characteristic of the Kingdom of God and in the story of the shepherds at the birth of Jesus we see how they put their faith into action.

Luke 2:8-20 NIV

- Shepherds
 - Unlikely characters for the announcement of the Messiah
 - Heard from the angels
- Faith
 - What is it
 - Hebrews 11:1 the substance of things hoped for and evidence of things unseen
 - Clear as mud
 - Begins as a thought/belief, but it is ‘substance’ and ‘evidence’
 - Required action
- Unredeemed Gift Cards
 - How many of you have gift cards unused at your house? Not me, most gift cards are to restaurants and I LOVE to eat!
 - In the U.S. there has been 44 billion, with a b, dollars of unredeemed gift cards since 2008
- Faith, unused, is like an unredeemed gift card
 - We have failed to redeem what has been paid for with a price!
 - Believing but not DOING
 - Doers of the word, works and faith, apostle James
 - Material evidence/ something to show for it
- Do we exercise our faith
 - How are you using your faith?
 - We say we believe in Jesus, or that we believe that Jesus heals, forgives, redeems, sets free
 - Spend the gift card
 - How often?
 - I love to eat and I LOVE Jesus!
 - Why not
 - Fear
 - Afraid to be the Jesus freak

- Afraid to offend someone
 - Jesus was an offense to those who didn't believe
- Don't actually have it (balance on the card is \$0)
- Balance on the faith gift card is limitless
 - If this was actual money/currency, how often would we use it?
 - Would we ever not take it with us?
 - Would we ever be embarrassed to pull it out and use it?
- What do we do when faith is low (balance on the card is low)?
 - Spot each other - Not just when your friend "forgets" his wallet
 - Illustration - Pastor friend in Maryland funeral this week (most challenging to do a funeral of a child or young person); lean on others faith in times of loss, hardship, grief...
 - Remind each other of promises, like **Romans 8:28; Jeremiah 29:11**
- Another way to reload faith gift card
 - Read the Bible
 - Study done by the Center for Bible Engagement 2008
 - Power of 4, engaging scripture 4 times a week, not intense Bible Study just reading or listening to it minimally at least 4 times
 - 1-3 times the same effect as 0 basically
 - 4 times= spikes not a gradual incline
 - Feeling lonely drops 30%, Anger Issues drop 32%, Bitterness in Relationships drop 40%, Alcoholism drops 57%, Feeling spiritually stagnant drops 60%, viewing pornography drops 61%, Gambling 74%, Sex outside marriage drops 68%
 - Sharing faith increases 228%, Discipling others increases 231%, Memorizing scripture increases 407%
 - Plan to start= 15 minutes, Gospels first-over and over, then rest of NT minus Revelation over and over, eventually want to read OT then read the whole Bible beginning to end in order including Revelation.
- Greatest gift or service we can do anytime, not just this season of giving
 - "This means that Advent is one of our best opportunities to perform the greatest act of service that anyone could ever commit: introducing another person into a life-giving and life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ." -Mike Slaughter, *Down to Earth*
 - Friends don't let friends miss out on the Kingdom
 - Best present= Relationship with Jesus, the Gift Card of Faith (in Jesus) has a greater value than ANYTHING

Closing