

Luke 2:15-24

Sermon: **God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong**

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written by: Danijel Dragaš



THE TESTIMONY OF THE SHEPHERDS

1. Last time we spoke about the birth of Jesus. Joseph, together with his wife Mary, had to go to his hometown by order of the Romans in order to be registered in the census. That meant he had to report himself and all members of his household. When they arrived, they found shelter in a stable. Some biblical teachers believe that, at that time, homeowners often had a special room in their houses that was always kept empty for pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem during the feasts, as well as for relatives visiting. In the basements of those homes, there was usually a space where guests could place and protect their animals. But clearly, every room was already occupied, so Joseph and Mary found their place in a stable. It was there that Mary gave birth to the child and named Him Jesus – just as the angel had commanded her.

1.1. Meanwhile, God revealed Himself to the shepherds. Why shepherds, specifically? We cannot know with certainty. Perhaps because Jesus is “the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.” Perhaps there was symbolism in that. But that’s more speculation on my part. Either way – He revealed Himself to shepherds.

1.2. **(Luke 2:15–18):** “When the angels had departed from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another: ‘Let’s go straight to Bethlehem, then, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.’ And they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. When they had seen Him, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it were amazed about the things which were told them by the shepherds.”

1.3. After the announcement, the shepherds immediately set out to see with their own eyes what the Lord had told them. In verse 18 we read: “All who heard it were amazed about the things which were told them by the shepherds.” We Christians today are used to picturing the scene through the

lens of Christmas cards: a group of people gathered around the child in the manger. But the text tells us something different. Verse 16 says the shepherds found only Joseph and Mary in the stable—there is no mention of any “group of people.” So who was it that marveled? I believe it was Joseph and Mary.

1.4. Of course, after the event itself, the shepherds, Joseph, and Mary surely bore witness to others about everything that had happened. Therefore, the phrase “all who heard it were amazed” also refers to those who later heard their testimony.

MARY’S TRIALS

2. (Luke 2:19) **“But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.”**

Let us try to imagine how Mary felt after everything she had heard, experienced, and lived through before the birth of her son. The entire first two chapters of Luke’s Gospel are dedicated precisely to this. The declarations of the angel, Zechariah, Elizabeth, the shepherds, and later Simeon—all of this flowed into the experience of a woman who had just become the mother of Jesus Christ.

2.1. I believe that every word, every detail, every second of all that had taken place, Mary stored deeply in her heart. This is why it’s quite possible that she herself was one of Luke’s main eyewitnesses when he wrote his Gospel.

2.2. But later, as we continue through the Gospel, we will see that Mary’s journey was not easy. All those voices that had spoken to her about the Deliverer, the King, the Messiah—and now this Messiah was her own son—shaped her expectations. Like many Jews of her time, she was waiting for the moment when her son would fulfill those prophecies.

2.3. But did Jesus fulfill her expectations? No. The exact opposite happened. When Jesus began His public ministry, He did nothing that suggested He had come to overthrow the Roman Empire or to deliver the nation from its enemies. He did not appear as a mighty King. Instead, He spoke about sin, He declared that He must die for the sins of the world, He walked among ordinary people, and He slept under the open sky with fishermen from Galilee.

2.4. Mary must have wrestled deeply within herself to reconcile those doubts: *“Is my son truly the One the prophets spoke of? How can my son die? He is supposed to be King!”* That was her inner struggle. But thanks be to God, we will later see in the Gospel that Mary, despite all her doubts, struggles, and even lapses of faith, ultimately accepted the teaching of Jesus and the truth that He brought into the world.

THE MEANING OF CEREMONIAL CLEANSING

3. (Luke 2:21) **“And when eight days were completed so that it was time for His circumcision, He was also named Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.”**

We read that Jesus was given His name at the time of His circumcision, which was the common practice of that time. As I mentioned earlier, the name was not chosen randomly—it was given by the command of the angel¹.

3.1. **(Luke 2:22)** “And when the days for their purification according to the Law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.”

The Law of Moses here contains two aspects:

1. The ceremonial cleansing of the mother, the child, and every person who took part in the birth².
2. The consecration of the firstborn child to the Lord Yahweh³.

3.2. If the child was male, the mother would go for ceremonial cleansing after thirty-three days. If the child was female—after sixty-six days. The person who assisted in the birth was considered unclean until the next sunrise, when she could then perform the cleansing ritual.

3.3. Why ceremonial cleansing? Some Bible teachers argue that it points to the moral corruption of man—that the very act of childbirth reflects our fallen nature. Personally, I believe that view is too narrow. I agree rather with the teacher who offered a different explanation: the Law of Moses was not meant to portray childbirth as moral evil, but rather to remind us of a deeper reality.

— Sexual intimacy, pregnancy, and childbirth are not a curse—they are blessings from God. —

But the symbolism of the ritual reminded parents that they were bringing into the world a being who would inherit Adam’s nature—a sinner who, without God’s grace, would continue to spread evil. That is why the cleansing was not performed immediately at birth, but only after a month, as a reminder of that spiritual reality.

3.4. As a parent myself, I know this sounds harsh. When I say it, immediately a voice of protest rises in me: *“How can you say such a thing about a beautiful little baby who has just come into the world? Surely she is innocent—shame on you!”* And yes, naturally, our child appears beautiful and innocent at first sight. But I believe that, precisely out of love for the child, we must be aware of this truth—because it compels us to raise them to walk in God’s wisdom. Only in this way will they be able to recognize their fallen nature and fight against it. Our duty is to teach them how to walk through life imitating Christ—to love God’s commandments, to live righteously, mercifully, and truthfully, and to reflect the image of God in their lives.

¹ Luke 1:31

² Leviticus 12:2-8

³ Exodus 13:2.12-15

3.5. This is exactly why God gave the Law to Israel—not to portray childbirth as a corrupt act, but to remind the people of their true nature and their need for His grace.

3.6. The same applies to us parents today. The birth of a child is a miracle and a blessing, a gift from God's hand. But with that gift comes an immense responsibility. Love for our children does not mean raising them under the illusion that they are perfect beings—quite the opposite. True love means gradually teaching them to realize who they really are: morally vulnerable, sinful beings in need of God's grace and forgiveness. Only in this way can they inherit the kingdom of heaven.

3.7. God teaches us that true love is not loud, but quiet, patient, steady, and strong. Such love warns, builds, and guides. If we truly love our children, then we will raise them in the same way—in truth, in patience, and in the awareness that only through Christ can they find life.

GOD CHOSE THE WEAK OF THE WORLD TO SHAME THE STRONG

4. (Luke 2:24) *“And to offer a sacrifice according to what had been stated in the Law of the Lord: ‘A pair of turtledoves or two young doves.’”*

We see that Joseph and Mary offered two doves or two turtledoves as a sacrifice. According to the Law of Moses⁴, those who had more wealth were required to bring a lamb, while the poor could bring doves or turtledoves instead. From this we can conclude that Joseph and Mary were poor.

4.1. In the eyes of the world—then, as now—they were completely insignificant. Because the world values people according to status, wealth, and power. But God works the other way around. He acts in ways that seem illogical and unexpected to man. He chose two ordinary, unknown people from small Galilee—Joseph and Mary, peasants whom nobody knew—to be the ones through whom the Messiah, the Son of God, would come. And now, two thousand years later, those same two names are known almost everywhere in the world. Why? Not because they had titles, fame, or power of their own, but because Yahweh glorified them. And when Yahweh glorifies you through the role He has given, then you know you also share in eternal Glory.

4.2. Today, during Christmas, we place nativity scenes in front of churches that portray Joseph, Mary, and the little baby Jesus. Children in schools play their roles in Christmas plays. From being unknown, they became some of the most recognized figures in human history. And not because of human standards of fame, but because God brought them into His story and glorified them through it.

4.3. I want to stress this: God truly works contrary to human wisdom. He chooses the lowly, the humble, the poor—like Joseph and Mary—to be key figures in His story. If we humans were doing the choosing, wouldn't we pick someone famous, powerful, a proven leader, or a person of high status? Of course we would. But God chooses differently.

4.4. Someone might say: *“But you're wrong—the Bible is full of people of high status.”* And that's true. Abraham was wealthy and well-known, Paul was highly educated and respected. So yes, God

⁴ Leviticus 12:6-8

doesn't always choose the poor and the unknown. He chooses people from many different backgrounds, with different experiences and statuses. But what they all had in common was this: they accepted the role that God placed on their hearts, even when that role was hard—sometimes humanly impossible.

4.5. They did not persevere because they trusted in their own gifts, education, wealth, or charisma—but because they trusted in God and His promises. Their faith carried them, gave them strength to overcome moments of weakness, and helped them rise above their feelings. This is what the Bible emphasizes again and again: God's wisdom is the opposite of the world's wisdom. And it is precisely through this irony—through this contrast—that His Name is glorified.

4.6. Let's close this message with Paul's words in **(1 Corinthians 1:27–29)** **"But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the insignificant things of the world and the despised God has chosen—things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no human may boast before God."**