

Series Title: **Good News for your Soul**
Message Title: **The Geography of Hope**
Scripture Source: **Luke 2:1-7**
Date: Sunday, December 10, 2017
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Are You In a 'Good Place?'

We often use that phrase or question to talk about how we are doing, emotionally, relationally, spiritually. It's language to help describe current reality. 'I'm not in a good place' reveals that all is not well in some specific area of life. To be 'in a good place' speaks of experiencing a healthy perspective on life, of having the ability to weather the ups and downs of life with hopefulness and maintaining a sense of peaceful purpose.

The Geography of Hope...which is really good news for your soul! : Luke 2:1-7

So, what can you and I learn about the good news of Christmas from this passage of Scripture? The birth of Jesus involves geography...a place called Bethlehem. The name means, 'house of meat' Arabic or 'house of bread' Hebrew. A town in Palestine, about 10 km south of Jerusalem. Predicted as the birthplace of Jesus. Micah 5:2 A significant city in Jewish and Christian history...a geography of importance.

Good News in Unlikely Circumstances: Luke 2:1-5

Why did Joseph and Mary journey to Bethlehem? To register officially for taxation purposes. The Roman emperor Caesar Augustus ordered that a census be taken. That was the catalyst for God's predictive promise of the Saviour being born in Bethlehem being fulfilled. Joseph and Mary had roots in this ancient town.

In these very real human actions and interactions, God's purposeful engagement can be seen and noted. Micah 5:2. God is not a distant deity, uninterested in human realities. He is engaged in the nitty-gritty stuff of life, with a grand purpose of offering good news for people like you and me.

The Geography of Hope: Luke 2:6-7

Jesus is born in circumstances edged with obscurity and need. The barest of essentials is at their disposal...a feeding trough for animals is used and less than ideal surroundings for a birth! Debate has been heated and passionate for millennia over the location of the birth of Jesus...was it in the open air courtyard with minimal privacy, was it in a nearby cave, was it in a stable as we think of stables? The important reality is that hope was delivered in the geography of Bethlehem in the person of Jesus.

Jesus...the promised Saviour, the one who would set people like you and me free from the penalty and degrading power of sin...sin, the failure to love God supremely, others sacrificially and ourselves wisely and well. This is good news for your soul and mine. We can be forgiven of our sins. We can learn to follow Jesus and experience a fullness of purpose that nourishes our very souls and enriches the lives of others.

Your Geography Matters

Where ever you are...hope is available. Whatever geography you are part of, hope is offered from the heart and hand of God. Geography can include more than the physical space we occupy...there is hope for your emotional geography, your spiritual geography and your relational geography. God knows the condition of your life, including the unrecognized/underdeveloped beauty and the crippling brokenness, not only where you live, work, play and engage with others. There is an interior geography that God is acutely and compassionately aware of and wanting to engage with you in dealing with. Is there room in your geography for Jesus and his words of life and direction?

The coming of Jesus and his life, sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection offer to people like you and me the good news of hope for our outer and inner geographies.

The hope of God's loving presence: 2 Timothy 4:16-17

The hope of God's forgiveness: 1 John 1:9, Proverbs 28:13

The hope of God's power to live wisely and well: Philippians 4:13

The hope of God's purpose for my life: Ephesians 2:10

The hope of God's promise of a future with him and his people: Revelation 21:3-4

God and my Geography

Ask God for evidences and experiences of his love and power right where you are, in the geography of the good, bad, and ugly. Hebrews 11:6. Choose to believe that God actually exists and deeply cares. Without that faith, we won't experience good news for our souls. Yet, as we begin to turn in honest faith towards God, he will meet us in whatever geography we are in. Illustrate:

Connect with a follower/followers of Jesus you trust and ask them for help to learn to follow Jesus.

Three questions for you:

1. Is there room in your geography for Jesus?
2. Your geography...outer and inner, where do you need to experience the good news of God's hope? Be as specific as you can be.
3. Can you be a conduit of hope for the sake of others...who might that be?