

Luke 1:80-2:14

Sermon: **Nothing out There - the action is Here**

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THE ONLY VOICE JOHN LISTENED TO

1. (Luke 1:80) *"Now the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel."* In the previous passage we saw that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth. He was undoubtedly one of the most extraordinary figures in human history. I believe that from a very young age he was like a sponge—longing to soak up every drop of God's wisdom available to him. Jesus himself said of him: *"Among those born of women there is no one greater than John¹."*

1.1. Sadly, in church circles we rarely hear much about John the Baptist. Yet he was, just like Abraham, a hero of faith. What personally fascinates me is the fact that people today much prefer to talk about figures like Hitler or Charles Darwin. Documentaries are filmed about them, books are written—because that is what human ears seem more drawn to. Those who spread evil with their deeds or wild worldly ideas receive more attention, while people like John the Baptist are put on a shelf to gather dust, almost forgotten.

1.2. This text shows us that John, from the very beginning—unlike most others—had an incredible hunger and passion to know God. And throughout his life he grew and strengthened in wisdom by the help of the Holy Spirit. Luke records that John lived in the wilderness. My question is: why, of all the details Luke could have written, does he highlight that one?

1.3. John had one of the key roles in God's plan: to call the Jewish people to repentance and to bring them back to the Covenant their fathers had made with God fifteen hundred years earlier. And that's why it was crucial for him to be separated from the Jewish culture and religious system of the time, which held a monopoly over the people. John had an "outside" perspective—he could see and

¹ Gospel of Matthew 11:11

critique the system from the outside. He wasn't shaped by rabbinic teaching, he hadn't gone through their schooling. He was taught by the Holy Spirit, self-taught, and that gave him the clarity to recognize where the Jews had gone astray and what their religion had become.

1.4. Just like the prophets of the Old Testament, John was set apart so that he could proclaim what God had placed on his heart. The difference is that John himself took Scripture, withdrew into the wilderness, studied it, and—with the help of the Holy Spirit—pieced everything together into a clear picture. Would John have had that perspective if he had been shaped by the priests, scribes, or Pharisees? I don't know. But from the outside he saw how corrupted and broken the system was, and that's why he could criticize it without hesitation.

1.5. Let's try to put ourselves in John's shoes: he grew up in Jewish culture, surrounded by family, tradition, religious practices, friends, and relatives. And then, at some point, he realized that all of it was wrong on many levels. Could he have proclaimed the truth so powerfully from within, as he did from the outside? In other words: could John have been so clear and uncompromising if God hadn't set him apart and isolated him in the wilderness, far from cultural influence? I don't know. But one thing is certain: sometimes God has to pull an individual out of the grip of culture and tradition, isolate them completely, so that the only voice and influence in their life is God himself. And most often, He does this when preparing that person for something radically different—something that will shake the established patterns and boldly proclaim His truth.

LEGAL RIGHT TO THE CROWN

2. (Luke 2:1–3) “Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city.”

The emperor ordered a census. How was it carried out? Each man had to go to his ancestral town or village, the place of his family origin. Once there, he was required to register all members of his household who lived with him—his wife, children, grandparents, servants, and so on.

2.1. (Luke 2:4) “Now Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David.” We see that Joseph had to travel to the city from which David's clan originated. If you recall, we already mentioned that Jesus had the legal right to the crown through Joseph. Why? Because Joseph descended from the line of David—the very king to whom God promised that from his offspring would come the One, the Son of God, who would reign over Israel forever. Some Bible teachers argue that Mary, Jesus' mother, was also of David's line. That's possible, but the text never explicitly says so. Luke makes it clear: Joseph went to be registered, and Mary, his wife, went with him. Since Mary was married to Joseph, she now belonged to his clan, and it was perfectly natural that she would be registered together with him.

2.2. (Luke 2:6–7) “While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no

room for them in the inn.” Mary gave birth to Jesus and wrapped him in swaddling cloths. Why? Most likely for medical reasons. Even in our culture, when a baby is born, cloth is wrapped tightly around the hips to keep the body steady, since the bones are still too soft and vulnerable to injury. It is very possible that Mary swaddled Jesus for the same reason.

2.3. The text also says there was no room in the inn. How should we understand this? We cannot know for sure, but we can make some reasonable assumptions. People of Bethlehem, especially those with houses, often left one room free for relatives or pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem for the feasts—Jerusalem was only a few kilometers away. Another possibility: landowners with larger estates would allow travelers to stay within their walled courtyards, sleeping outdoors but still protected by the walls. In any case, Joseph and Mary found no lodging. Their shelter was likely some kind of stable outside the town, where animals were kept.

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

3. (Luke 2:8–12) “In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock at night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood near them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. And so the angel said to them: ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’” Some Bible teachers believe the shepherds in this passage were guarding sheep that belonged to priestly families. That would make sense: their location was very near Jerusalem, and the priests certainly kept large flocks. They would sell the sheep to pilgrims coming to the Temple to offer sacrifices during the feasts. It was a large and profitable enterprise. The shepherds’ task was to guard those flocks from predators and danger.

3.1. (Luke 2:9) The phrase “the angel of the Lord” here I understand as a personal manifestation of Yahweh. God appeared to the shepherds in a visible, tangible form. Remember: in the Old Testament, God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush²; in the New Testament, on the Mount of Transfiguration, He appeared in the cloud while Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah³. So the word “angel” in the Bible sometimes means a heavenly being, but sometimes it refers to Yahweh Himself, choosing to manifest visibly to humans at a decisive moment. I believe that is exactly what happens here—Yahweh personally appears to the shepherds.

3.2. (Luke 2:10–12) The text speaks plainly enough—there is little need to add more.

² Book of Exodus 3:2-6

³ Gospel of Matthew 17:1-5

NOTHING OUT THERE—THE ACTION IS HERE

4. (Luke 2:13-14) “And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army of angels praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among people with whom He is pleased.’” Compared to angels, we humans fall short in everything. Angels are glorious beings reflecting God’s splendor, dwelling in the heavenly realms, their bodies eternal and radiant. Yet here something surprising occurs: these heavenly beings acknowledge that what God is doing with humanity on earth surpasses everything else.

We humans are drawn to marvel at the universe—its vastness, mystery, the planets, the stars, and the question of possible life beyond.

– But Scripture gives us a completely different perspective: it shows that the beings who inhabit that vast cosmos glorify God precisely because of what He is doing here, on earth. For it is for humanity, and for this story, that all things—including the universe itself—were created. –

4.1. We are the center of the action. All the drama of life, the purpose of existence, the core of reality unfolds on this small planet we call Earth. And I believe that is why the angels glorify God—because here He is doing something wondrous, something unmatched anywhere in the universe.

4.2. (Luke 2:14) The word “shalom” in this context refers to Israel, specifically to its inner division. The time would come when the Jewish people would have to make a clear choice: either serve the Lord wholeheartedly and receive His blessing, or remain rebellious and face destruction.