

UNEXPECTED

The real story of Christmas



The Unexpected Invitation

Date: Sunday 13th December

Speaker: Adam Pipe

Key Verses: Luke 2:8-18, Matthew 2:1-12

Talk Summary:

- None of us could have predicted what 2020 would have in store for us. People are longing for a message of hope, something to hold on to. Adam re-visited the story of the first Christmas and the accounts of the first visitors to Jesus and invited us to take a journey to Jesus; a journey that will begin to heal our fears and anxieties and bring us much needed joy and peace. Adam reminded us that it is important to remember that Jesus is not some mythological creation of fiction but a real historical figure.
- **The Shepherds (Luke 2:8-18 NET).** One of Luke's big themes is the way ministry of Jesus included people who were rejected by the religious system. Shepherds were socially looked down upon in Jesus' day. Today we may feel like a shepherd: a nobody, an outcast from your family or society, you may feel like everybody is above you and looks down on you. **The message of the birth of Jesus is that you matter to God, you are of infinite worth to him and he has a great purpose for your life. The Shepherds had an unexpected invitation and Jesus is inviting you to journey toward him this Christmas and find your worth in him.**
- When the Shepherds saw the angels Luke says that they were terrified. The Greek literally reads *'they feared a great fear'*. For us in 2020 our year has been characterised by fear, anxiety and worry. What does the angel say to the shepherds? **Don't be afraid, listen up I have good news of great joy.** Jesus wants you to give him all of your fears, burdens and worries today, all of those things that weigh you down. He is inviting you to receive his joy and peace.
- **The Magi (Matthew 2:1-12 NIV).** The Greek word from which we get "magi" comes from a Persian word that means experts regarding the stars: astrologers. The journey the Magi took from Babylon to Bethlehem would have been over 1,000km and have taken a number of months. **The Magi stand in sharp contrast to the shepherds but they also had an unexpected invitation to visit Jesus. They**

followed the star and made the long journey to him. You may feel like you are a thousand kilometres from Jesus today but he is inviting you on a journey to discover him. Wherever you are, whatever your background is he is inviting you to take that first step, to find true life and to find what satisfies the deepest longings inside you.

- Both Luke and Matthew make deliberate contrasts between the earthly rulers of the time and the true King Jesus. Isaiah 9:6-7: Isaiah prophesied that the government would be on Jesus' shoulders. And it was in the form of a brutal Roman cross upon which he died soaking up all the forces of hate, rejection, pain and alienation to set us free. When Jesus is in charge it leads to peace, justice and righteousness. Our vision as a church to Follow Jesus, Live Life to the Full and to Make a Difference. We want to live out as individuals and as a church community what life looks like when Jesus is King. To see more peace, justice and righteousness in our city, local community families, and workplaces.

Worship

Worship is not just singing, it is thanking God for who he is and what he has done and is lived out through a life of trusting obedience. Discussing this together is an act of worship.

(Small group worship resources can be found at bvc.so/sgworship)

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?

If you have a time of singing you can skip the above questions but please do ask this question each week:

- What has God been speaking to you about this week? *(Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it)*

Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

- What stood out for you from Adam's talk?
- As we reflect on the account of the Shepherds in Luke in what ways do we see the 'upside down kingdom' of Jesus in operation? (optional: think of other examples in Luke where Jesus' ministry includes the outcasts of the religious system)
- The shepherds were terrified but then experienced God's joy and peace. What things cause us fear, anxiety and worry at present? How practically do we cast our cares on Jesus and receive his joy and peace?
- The Magi had a long journey to Jesus. Share your journey to Jesus? In what ways do we still need to Journey to Jesus?
- Jesus is the true King, what would our lives look like if he were truly in charge? How do we model what life in the Kingdom looks like to our friends, family, workplace and city?

Witness

We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don't know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus.

How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?

- Share the "Unexpected Journey" film with a friend through social media or text, you can share it from our YouTube page: bvc.so/youtube
- Let us know how you get on, stories@birninghamvineyard.com or on social media. We'd love to be praying for your friends as well!