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MAD OR GLAD ?

People could use good news today. Weather, economy, sports, politics, whatever. Not fake news. What if your life was in the news? Would it be bad? Make you sad or mad? Or glad? Your answer gives insight to your reaction to the Good News at Christmas. Like Joseph and Mary. Everyday people whose lives were impacted by ordinary and extraordinary events. (Good plot for a great movie, like the highly recommended 2006 "The Nativity Story"). The Good News about Jesus pierced a dark world of sin, poverty, disease, death and oppression. With hope and joy. Let's look at the classic passage, Luke 2:

1- DECREE - what do you have to do now? *"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." - Luke 2:1-7 ESV.*

All this came at a very inconvenient time for Joseph and Mary. Though both were chaste and reverent, Mary became pregnant out of wedlock. They believed what the angel said, that it was a miracle of the Holy Spirit. Public shame. Then, government red tape. They had to undertake a very difficult week-long 90-mile journey on foot. Once there, no place to stay. Calamity for the impending birth. And, what about YOUR situation? Someone makes a bad decision and it changes your life. Happens all the time. What is it for you? Loss of job, health, loved one, or relationship? Lots of things spin your life around, making you wonder "where is God in all this" as you struggle just to carry on, with no joy to rise above the pain.

2- PROCLAMATION - what have you heard? Many people get so engrossed in their own activities and diversions they fail to listen to God, read the Bible, attend church, Bible study, or pray. When everything seems to go against you, it can be hard to hear God's voice. Mary and Joseph were devout, but distracted by difficult circumstances. Still, God was at work behind the scenes, bringing about good. Not only in their situation, but dealing with the heart of all human hurts and hangups: sin. Sin is the reason there's hardship and tragedy in the world. It's the result of mankind's rebellion against God. But...

"And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!" - Luke 2:8-14.

3- RESPONSE - now what? *"When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. And at the end of eight days, when He was circumcised, He was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb." - Luke 2:15-21.*

When you finally listen to what God is saying, in spite of difficult circumstances, you hear hope. The way out. Then you must trust and obey. The shepherds listened, then told everyone the Good News. Mary and Joseph listened, then trusted God in spite of their situation. Because Jesus! Look past your hurt to Him! The SAVIOR you need because of sin. The promised CHRIST. The divine LORD come in the flesh, and named JESUS which means "God Himself saves." That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown!

Life IS tough. Bad things happen. You get sad. Even mad. Even at God. He knows, and cares. He's come to heal the real hurt, your real need. It's the Good News about Jesus. Don't live in your hurt. Give all your bad sad mad news to Him. Receive His glad Good News. Believe. In Him! Then live, in the joy of Jesus!