

Angels and Men Must Meet Again

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon explores how God's strength is revealed through weakness, as exemplified by the shepherds at Christ's birth.

Duration: 37:45

Scripture: Isaiah 55:8

Topics: "Divine Incarnation", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

The sermon focuses on the willingness of God to come to humanity in weakness, as seen in the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's strength in our weakness, the need for a heart open to God's ways, and the call to hasten towards witnessing and partaking in God's truth. The message highlights the significance of being willing vessels for God's glory, praising Him for His miraculous work in our lives, and being open to a transformed life that testifies to God's goodness and power.

Transcript

Praise God. Thank the Lord. Luke chapter 2 please.

Luke chapter 2 in the New Testament. My message this morning is entitled angels and men must meet again. Father, I thank you God with all my heart for the anointing of your Holy Spirit.

I thank you Lord for your strength. I thank you God for speaking to us as a people so clearly in this generation. Your willingness Lord to speak to us.

I thank you for the empowerment to speak this word and the ears to hear it. Give us grace today oh God. Send an awakening to our generation Lord.

God Almighty, we ask you that you breathe life in your house and in every heart that is gathered here today. Bless those that are listening online this morning and who will be listening throughout the day. Oh God Almighty, I ask in Jesus name that you raise us up again and glorify your name.

We ask it in Jesus name. Luke chapter 2 beginning at verse 1. Angels and men must meet again. And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea unto a city of David which is called Bethlehem.

Because he was of the house and lineage of David to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife being great with child. And so it was that while they were there the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the end.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them fear not for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying glory to God in the highest and on earth peace goodwill toward men. And it came to pass as the angels were gone away from them into heaven the shepherd said one to another let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger.

And when they had seen it they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they which heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen as it was told to them. Now I want to take you into this scene that I've just read to you about and take a look at the condition of the nation and what they were facing and how in some respects it at least paralleled some of the things that you and I might be afraid that we're experiencing today. The situation must have seemed both perilous and even helpless.

The nation of Israel had been occupied by a foreign power and this foreign power was bent on creating a worldwide social order in its own image. This was the Roman Empire. Convinced that it was right, its view was correct, it was superior to other cultures and world domination was their goal.

The value system of God's people was marginally tolerated. They were allowed to practice their religion but only within certain limits. But it was becoming increasingly subject to ridicule and control.

People's individual rights were subjugated to the new powers over them and they were being moved about like cattle to be counted and taxed for the greater good of this new order. They had a history of marvelous victory but their present religious system had devolved into something quite powerless and was unable to stop the onslaught that was against them. If you look at it historically in Bethlehem at this time they were in the two-year period between forced taxation and the indiscriminate slaughter of their children.

It was a window when Christ was born. The people in Bethlehem had no idea. I can see the people gathered in in Bethlehem and those who were traveling they're grumbling about the lack of freedom, they're grumbling about even some kind of a grievance against God in some cases for what had

happened to them and all of the things that come into their society.

But they had no idea that this first Christmas there was only a two-year window and in that same town called Bethlehem one day Herod was going to send his troops in being threatened by this the birth of this child and what a tragedy this would be. It says in let me just read it to you Matthew chapter 2 verses 16 to 18. Then Herod when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men was exceeding wrath and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof from two years old and under according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet saying in Ramah there was a voice heard lamentation and weeping and great mourning Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted because they are not. If the people could only have seen what was coming their way I wonder if it would have made a difference. I wonder if they would have been so casually approaching this moment in history.

I wonder if their ears might have been more open to where their source of strength and life and protection really was. You see but it was at this time that God chose to open the windows of heaven to mankind and to come to us in our time of need. Sometimes it's at the darkest moments of history that God has to send angels because his servants on earth are so consumed with the darkness of the moment in which they're living that they can no longer understand or see or experience or comprehend the marvelous ways of God.

I am absolutely sure there were no shortage of devout people in Bethlehem. There were studies of the scriptures. I've no doubt that they were in the end in Bethlehem but most likely they were so self-focused and agenda-driven and focused on their own preservation or just deeply committed to leisure to the point that God could no longer speak to them or could no longer speak through them.

It was such a momentous time that they were living in yet most of that society was going to miss it. Isn't that tragic? God had come. God had come in the flesh.

God had come in delivering power. Everything the people had ever hoped for was now among them but so few could hear it. Isaiah the prophet says it this way.

He says, Lord who has believed our report or our doctrine actually the word report can also be translated doctrine and to whom is the arm with the Lord or the strength of God revealed for it shall grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness and when we see him there's no beauty that we should desire him. Isaiah is crying out God Almighty you're about to bring a marvelous deliverance to those who can hear it but who who will believe it who has a heart that is open and willing to embrace the way you choose as God as the creator of the universe the way you choose to do your marvelous work.

We as human beings have a mental image of and I'm sure everybody did of how how deliverance had to come what it had to look like. I'm sure people are in the inn in Bethlehem praying oh God rend the heavens because they had old testament scriptures that could could validate at least some of their prayer do like you did in Elijah's day Lord send fire from heaven and devour our adversaries. There's so many prayers they could have prayed not realizing that God had already come he'd already answered their prayer the cries had already been heard the victory had already been won in a sense God had come to the earth as a man but who is willing to believe it and we're living in a generation where folks you have to understand the ways of God are not our ways his thoughts are not our thoughts and we must I think in

measure push away all of our preconceived notions about how God has to work in this generation and allow him to be God and allow him to work the way he wants to work and have hearts that are open to this working of God.

So who can God speak to Isaiah said who's going to believe our report in Luke chapter 2 and verse 8 it says there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field keeping watch over their flock by night the shepherds in that generation were the social and religious out crowd they were not esteemed for any power or accomplishment they were not theologians there were people who would be the least looked to for answers in such an hour of crisis if you were looking for an answer if you were looking for deliverance if you were looking for freedom they'd be looking for another Elijah they'd be looking for a King David they'd be looking for a foreign army they'd be looking for anything but they would not be looking to shepherds to be the people who found the answer and I want you to hear

me on this because I have something from God in my heart for you this is not just history this is something that is relevant to you and I today like David the king of Israel tending sheep not considered worthy by even his own father to meet with the men sent by God to anoint the next deliverer of Israel David's father didn't bother to bring him in because he had he had no training as men see training that he would consider worthwhile to be anointed as the next king of Israel but like David the shepherds had something it's something that you need to have it's something that I need to have their hearts could be open to the voice of God and they could be moved to believe a plan that would seem weak foolish and insufficient to the natural man they could be moved into a place of faith they

could be moved into a place of just saying this is what God is saying this is what God is speaking to my heart this is the way God is going to bring victory for you see because the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men for you see your calling brethren your calling I'm talking to you now not many wise men after the flesh not many mighty not many noble are called but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty God has chosen it's not your choice it's not mine it's God's choice and base things that means things that are at the bottom of the world and things which are despised things which which men and women who live by their own

resources their own reasonings their own knowledge despise the weakness of others but God says I don't despise your weakness God has chosen this and things which are not in other words things which have no report they have no ability they have no strength to bring to naught things that are that no flesh should glory in his presence but of him are you in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption in other words he is he becomes the new mind he becomes our cleanse our cleanness in the sight of God he becomes our power to be other than what we could ever hope to be in ourselves and he becomes the fullness the all in all a living testimony of God that according as it is written he that glories let him glory in the Lord I hope you can

hear what I'm about to say in Luke chapter 2 verses 10 to 12 it says the angel said unto them fear not for I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people for unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior which is Christ the Lord and this shall be a sign to you you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger now what is the sign this shall be a sign there's no doubt babies being born everywhere it was common practice to wrap babies in swaddling clothes so why would that be a sign what would it be about this that is so profound what is it about this it would cause the heavens to open and a multitude of angels to begin to rejoice and here it is this is the sign you will find the strength of God

willing to be wrapped up in weakness oh God

would you help us to hear this you'll find the strength of the one who created the universe by the word of his mouth the one who was the fire who came down in Elijah's day the one who did part the red sea the one who has the power to raise men from the grave to restore nations to set up kings and tear them down you will find this God with all of his power willing to wrap himself up in our weakness and this will be the sign oh God how did we get so off track where did we lose this truth as a church age where did we get the idea that we and ourselves have to be strong that we have to have all knowledge that we have to have all wisdom that we have to have the plan that we have to have the natural strength when God says I'm willing I'm willing to wrap the totality of my being of my complete

knowledge of my complete power my omnipresence throughout the world the fact that I always will be never was created and will never die have all power I'm not corruptible like men are altogether other than the humanity that fell away in the garden of Eden but yet in spite of that I'm willing to come and be enveloped and wrapped in your weakness and this will be the sign there never has been any other sign God help us in our foolishness in this generation with all that we've done in the house of God to try to represent his name all the stupidity that's gone on in the name of God when all along all God wanted to do is wrap his strength in our weakness and give us a new heart and give us a new mind and give us a new spirit and do something in us so powerful so profound that we become a

living testimony of the reality of God this shall be a sign I don't think there was hardly anybody left in Bethlehem who could believe it and so heaven had to open and angels had to come somebody had to praise God for this truth suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God the glory of God saying glory to God in the highest glory to God the humility of God the power of God the mercy of God the greatness of God the awesomeness of God the incredible humility of God that he would wrap himself in the frailty of humanity I think the angels are still singing realizing there's now a church in the of the living Christ on the earth and he has come and he has indwelt these physical bodies and one more time he has wrapped his glory in the frailty of you and me

that's why Paul says consider your calling not many wise not many noble not many mighty after the flesh but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty and God has chosen the base things of the world and God has chosen things which are despised God has chosen things that are nothing that he might be in us our wisdom and our righteousness and our sanctification and our redemption that we might glory in the Lord that we might stand in our generation as a living testimony of who God is how did we get so far off track 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 and goodwill towards men

you see we are to be a testimony of God's goodwill towards all people and if it was if it was only the strong it was only the rich it was only the the noble the royal who could know this touch of heaven then it would be an exclusive gospel but no it's to all people the prophet Joel saw it he saw a day coming when when God would pour out his spirit on all flesh young and old rich and poor educated uneducated it really didn't matter it was the hungry heart that would get the victory it was the heart that was open it was the shepherd it was the the person who's not looked to that's why in my heart I thank God that the Lord has burdened this church to partner with a hundred of the smaller churches in the city because God once again those those that are not considered in a sense pastors at 20

and 30 and 40 and these would not be the people that we would normally consider would be God's solution for this hour we'd be looking for another superstar to rise up but it's as if we've never read the scriptures we forgot about Gideon's army we forgot about Moses and his brother we forgot about how God does things yes these men and women are hidden but you heard them pray when we fasted I'll tell you one thing they may not have the biggest church in New York but I know they've been in the presence of God I heard them pray Paul said Lord said to Paul in 2nd Corinthians 12 and 9 my grace is sufficient for thee my strength is made perfect in weakness in verse 16 Luke 2 it says they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger they hastened to personally witness

this truth oh God please help us please Lord Jesus help us to haste to witness this truth to be a partaker of this truth to go beyond just the text to do it's one thing to read it is one thing to read about the mercy and the miracles and the power and what God's done in the past but God is looking for people who will haste to be partakers of it let's say Lord me if you need somebody weak that's me if you need somebody that's not a royal birth that's me if you need somebody who's nothing that's me if this is what you need God if this is what you choose to wrap your glory and then it's me Lord I present my body as a living sacrifice to you which is your reasonable service oh God all I ask is that you glorify your name all I ask oh God is that you protect me from myself and don't let me

touch the glory let me be a man let me be a woman as the case may be who gives glory to God and to God alone for what only Jesus Christ could do verse 17 says when they had seen it they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child and all they which heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds they began in other words to openly testify about this incredible plan of God their lives became an open testimony and as they began to do this it says they that heard it wondered in other words it was a the spiritual conscience of many began to be awakened again we fell asleep as a church age we forgot who we were we forgot who Christ is in us we forgot the simplicity of the cross of Jesus Christ and we thought through clever argument and through

cunning devices that we were going to persuade people to come into the house of God and so we did we put out our clever arguments and our cunning devices and filled stadiums with unsaved people and gave them all the assurance that heaven was going to be their home when there's not one ounce of conviction to live for God and turn away from sin in many cases they began to testify about this incredible plan of God and the spiritual conscience began to be awakened the testimony my friend is a transformed life the testimony is a power to walk away from what you should leave and walk towards what you should be involved in you and I are called to repent that means we're called to have a change of mind that we're going to turn from what we were doing or if we're just living in neutral we're not

really doing the old things but we're not doing anything new either we're just stuck in the inn in Bethlehem eating studying sleeping but we're not growing heavens are closed outside to that place the heavens were opened angels were in the sky if anybody had the courage to step outside of their spiritual box they would have seen it they would have understood it the glory of God would have been revealed to their hearts it was open it wasn't just for the shepherds but it just happened to be the only people outside of the religious noise of the day who could hear verse 20 says the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they heard and seen as it was told unto them I make you a promise from this book if you can hear this message today you too will return glorifying

and praising God for what he has invited you to see and become a partaker of our empty bankrupt religion is not going to touch this generation there's no time there will not be another Billy Graham there's no time

it's going to have to be the whole church you and me living this gospel in the power of Christ inside of our weakness and don't you let the devil tell you that because of your past or your present condition or your lack of education or your constant struggle with besetting sin that somehow you are not a candidate for the glory of God that is a lie hallelujah to the lamb of God no no no I encourage you today to hasten do what they did do what the shepherds did they hasten to witness this truth they hasten to become partakers of it they hasten to go where this great truth was

being revealed when you do that the heavens will open to you and angels and men will meet again you become part of a worship that has got nothing to do with this world it's something so deep it's so profound it's so God that you can't put it into words there are no words to describe it a confidence comes into your heart an excitement for your own future a revulsion for sin but a faith for the future the ability to believe for others when they can't believe for themselves you will return you will come back glorifying and praising God the folks we have to be willing to get up and go where God is they got up and went where God is and you and I have to be willing we can't sit in unbelief any longer this is a vibrant this is an exciting this is a supernatural kingdom and I thank God with all

my heart the renewed joy that's come into my heart just at the understanding that Jesus Christ the Son of God God the Father and the Holy Spirit are willing to invest God is willing to invest himself in this frail vessel and let his power be wrapped up in my weakness what a miracle your life should be a miracle you should let God take you where you can never go and make you what you could never be and give you what you could never possess I want to challenge you today go where Jesus is you have a choice to make you stand at the shore of this incredible life and you look in and you see giants and you make the choice not to go if you do that you die in a wilderness you die in a very very dry place heaven may be your home but you won't very much represent it while you live on the earth but

if you choose to go in say as much as this plan looks foolish as much as it seems impossible I know it's God for this is who God is this is what God does I'm going to I'm going to hasten and I'm going to go where he is and let him do what he chooses to do in my life Father I thank you I thank you Lord God with all my heart for making it just so real and so understandable to us please Father in Jesus name give us the grace to lay hold of this truth that you're willing to wrap up your glory in our weakness help me help us Lord help your church in this generation Lord all of us God help us Lord Jesus Christ to rise up at this time they had only a two-year window from this moment to unspeakable heartache only two years help us to realize the season that we're living in I ask you Father in

Jesus name to send an awakening to New York City ask you Lord to awaken every church of every denomination ask you to do it sovereignly just simply because we ask you nothing to present before you there is no plan and we have no strength of our own but we ask you because you are good and your mercy endures forever I ask you today Father to bless this sanctuary bless these that are here those that are listening and give us the grace to press in to all that you've destined for our lives to be help us not to fail of this great grace of God if your strength is willing to be wrapped up in my weakness then I am willing to be wrapped up in your strength Father I thank you for this and I praise you in Jesus name I'm going to do something different today it's early it's still only 11 30 I'm going

to worship for probably 15 minutes or so and if you feel you want to come to this altar or stand between the screens if that really means something to you if this message has stirred your heart and you want to physically express that in a sense of saying I'm moving towards what I hear and to physically do that means something to you then you're welcome to do that but it means more if it's in the heart I was in a

service years ago where I heard a message and I I was one of just a few I just got up and went and got on my knees and I cried before the Lord and I remember saying Lord I don't I have less than nothing to give you and I so was struggling in my own life with things that were yet still trying to hang on to me but yet I heard him call me and somehow I just knew that he could

override my weakness by his strength and do something through my life I believe that that is the portion of every believer in Christ I don't think any of us are unique I think that's the portion of every believer we're all called to do different things but the same God the same strength is given to all who trust him so we're going to stand we're going to worship if you'd like to come forward and in your living rooms and those that are listening online you could stand you could sit you could lay on the floor you do what you want to do but give give your all hasten to this place of the strength of God praise God let's stand let's take the next 15 minutes to worship together praise God they're twins praise God oh my goodness what are their names Nadia and Naila Nadia and Naila God bless you

you know isn't it ironic that this service began with children and it's ending with children today the willingness of God to be identified with us I'm I'm overwhelmed the willingness of God who cares a million times more than we could ever care for these children as much as we love them and willing to protect us and keep us change us I didn't I didn't quite mean it that way but that's why our Christmas production is called changing a baby changes everything father thank you God thank you you you couldn't speak more clearly to us Lord and if you came down and stood on the platform we're awestruck at your love we thank you Lord for these little ones and in measure it's how you feel about us oh God you see us as dressed in white you see us as pure you see us God as full of potential Lord God

I pray for these children I pray for their guardians their parents Lord I pray for the families I pray for this church God Almighty that we would cherish these little ones all the days of our lives God that none of them would be lost father I thank you for this Lord we don't have to give up our children we ask your Lord for the privilege of seeing millions more brought into your kingdom in our time millions Lord I ask for millions of children to be brought into the kingdom of God all throughout this nation and Canada as well Lord and other countries that are listening father God may this be the greatest harvest in the history of the world father we thank you for this Lord bless and keep these children God we dedicate them to you Lord and we ask that your Holy Spirit come on them from a

young age lead them to give their lives to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior teach them about faith and worship guide them Lord into the life that you have for them Lord we bless you and we praise you for this in Jesus mighty name hallelujah they're beautiful aren't they these are beautiful beautiful babies they really are praise God God bless you we're back today at three o'clock and six this evening be great to make it a day in the house of the Lord all right

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