

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Daniel the Shepherd: The Face of Jesus”
(Part II of the Advent series “The Faces of Christmas”)
December 7, 2025

Scripture

Isaiah 9:2 & 6
Luke 2:8-20

Core Idea and purpose

Core theological ideas from earlier sermons in the series:

- (11/30/2025) Sometimes, to follow Christ, we must holler, “Darn the torpedoes, full steam ahead!!”

Core theological idea: To be the face of Jesus, we love everyone, proclaim the Kingdom of God, and seek justice by standing in solidarity with people who are poor, oppressed, and marginalized.

Challenge/purpose: To challenge people to be the face of Jesus.

The Sermon

[Dressed as a 1st century Jewish shepherd]

Shalom, my name is Daniel. About two thousand years ago, I was a shepherd who lived on the outskirts of a little town called Bethlehem. It was about a day or two walk from Jerusalem.

Last year, at about this time, I traveled through time to visit and talk with you.

I explained how lowly we felt as shepherds. I described how the people in Bethlehem and, especially the people in Jerusalem, thought of us as backward, uneducated, and smelly hicks. People would talk to us just enough to buy our sheep but no more than that. So, we felt we weren’t worthy to do anything special for God.

Then I told you about the time when Angels visited us to announce the birth of our Savior & Lord, Jesus the Christ.

I described how an Angel suddenly appeared in the sky and stated, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Then thousands and thousands of angels appeared in the sky and

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sang, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

After we found the baby Jesus in a manger, we wondered why God would announce the coming of the Messiah to us, a bunch of lowly, dirty shepherds. Then it dawned on us. We realized that we’re not lowly after all. We are worthy in God’s eyes, not because we observe the Sabbath or obey God’s laws, but because God created us in God’s image and God loves us.

Well, now I am here again to explain how the birth of Jesus changed my life.

About thirty years after we found the baby Jesus in a manger, we started hearing stories about a great teacher named Jesus. He claimed to have authority to forgive sins. He backed up this claim by healing the lame, blind, and deaf. He also casted out demons and raised people from the dead. So, maybe he really could forgive sins. But...only God can forgive sins. Was this Jesus claiming to be God – God in the flesh? Was this the same Jesus we found in a manger?

When we heard these stories, we remembered meeting baby Jesus. We remembered the angel’s announcement and his parents’ claim that he is the Messiah. We also remembered that he was born to a virgin because it was the Holy Spirit who caused his mother, Mary, to become pregnant. After much thought and deliberation, we concluded that, yes, this person we are hearing about must be the baby we met thirty years earlier and, along with being the Messiah, he must also be the Lord – God in the flesh.

We witnessed his death on a cross. We were already in Jerusalem selling our sheep for Passover when the high priest handed Jesus over to the Romans. I suppose the religious leaders of my day were jealous of Jesus’ popularity. It was a horrible, gut-wrenching sight.

But then, something extraordinary happened. On the third day after being executed, he rose from the dead!! Many people witnessed this!! The resurrected Jesus continued to walk this earth for forty days. Then he ascended to be at the right hand of God the Father. Ten days later, during the Pentecost celebration, the Holy Spirit descended and filled those who believed in Jesus. This empowered the followers of Jesus to spread the good news.

When I learned of all this, I knew – Jesus is the Son of God – He is God in the flesh! His resurrection proves he defeated death and only God can do that.

Well, now that I’m old, I often ponder the meaning of all this. What does it mean for God to become human and dwell among us?

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One thing it means is that we can know God’s character. Think about it. If Jesus is fully human and fully God, then we can know God’s character by looking at the life and teachings of Jesus.

When I was about 85 years old, some Gospels started to circulate among the Jewish community and even among some gentiles. These Gospels told us about the earthly ministry of Jesus and how he died and defeated death! We discovered that if we prayerfully read these gospels, the Holy Spirit will use them to introduce us to Jesus. Through these Gospels, we came to know Jesus as savior, Lord, and friend. As previously stated, by knowing Jesus, we can know God’s character. We discovered that God is a good, loving, and just God. You might be familiar with these gospels. I understand they are still around, and you refer to them as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Now, I continue to ponder... If the life of Jesus shows God’s good and loving character, then we should all strive to be like Jesus. The more we become like Jesus, the more we can be the face of Jesus to the world!

Hmmm...if we want to be the face of Jesus, then we should ask, “What was his core teachings?” Our lives should revolve around the core teachings of Jesus. So, what were his core teachings?

Well, let’s think about this. Jesus started his earthly ministry by proclaiming, “The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Now, the Kingdom of God is ‘life as God intends’ – Life as God intends in heaven, Life as God intends in the attitudes and desires of our hearts, and life as God intends here on earth. God does not intend for there to be poverty. So, we do what we can to alleviate poverty. God does not intend for there to be hate. So, we do what we can to love all people. And, God does not intend for there to be oppression. So, we do what we can to seek justice by standing in solidarity with the poor, oppressed, and marginalized people of the world.

Jesus also summarized God’s law with love when he stated, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

We should also remember that Jesus came proclaiming justice as a fulfillment of prophecy. This prophecy is found in Isaiah 42:1-4 and it states, “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on

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him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.”

All this makes sense because justice and love go together. Having one without the other is like having a right shoe without the left shoe. God is a God of justice because God loves everyone. It breaks God’s heart to see one group of people oppress another group of people because he loves all people.

So, I think we can say that Jesus has three core teachings. They are: 1) proclaiming the Kingdom of God, 2) loving all people - to include your enemies, and 3) seeking justice by standing in solidarity with the poor, oppressed, and marginalized people of the world. We can become the face of Jesus to the world if we do these three things.

Ever since I realized that Jesus is the Messiah Son of God, I’ve tried to do this. I’ve tried to proclaim the Kingdom of God, love everyone, and seek justice. But I’ve failed miserably. I’ve discovered that I can’t do any of these things without staying connected to Jesus. If we have any hope of following the core teachings of Jesus, we must stay connected to him.

This is what Jesus meant when he stated, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.” (John 15:1-4)

So, how do we stay connected to Jesus? We do so through prayer, fasting, Bible study, worship and serving others. The Holy Spirit will use these spiritual disciplines to keep us connected to Jesus and empower us to 1) proclaim the Kingdom of God, 2) love all people - to include our enemies, and 3) seek justice by standing in solidarity with the poor, oppressed, and marginalized people of the world.

This Advent, take the time to ask yourself, “Am I proclaiming the Kingdom of God? Am I loving all people, including my enemies? Do I seek justice by standing in solidarity with the poor, oppressed, and marginalized people?” If the answer to any of these questions is no, then ask yourself, “Am I staying connected to Jesus?” We must do this so we can be the face of Jesus to the world.

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Well, I think that’s it. I said what I needed to say. So, I’ll head back to the first century.

Shalom

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Sermon Outline

[Dressed as a 1st century Jewish shepherd]

I. Shalom, my name is Daniel.

A. About two thousand years ago, I was a shepherd who lived on the outskirts of a little town called Bethlehem.

- It was about a day or two walk from Jerusalem.

B. Last year, at about this time, I traveled through time to visit and talk with you.

- I explained how lowly we felt as shepherds.
 - I described how the people in Bethlehem and, especially the people in Jerusalem, thought of us as backward, uneducated, and smelly hicks.
 - People would talk to us just enough to buy our sheep but no more than that.
 - So, we felt we weren't worthy to do anything special for God.
- Then I told you about the time when Angels visited us to announce the birth of our Savior & Lord, Jesus the Christ.
 - I described how an Angel suddenly appeared in the sky and stated, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”
 - Then thousands and thousands of angels appeared in the sky and sang, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

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- After we found the baby Jesus in a manger, we wondered why God would announce the coming of the Messiah to us, a bunch of lowly, dirty shepherds.
 - Then it dawned on us.
 - We realized that we’re not lowly after all.
 - We are worthy in God’s eyes, not because we observe the Sabbath or obey God’s laws, but because God created us in God’s image and God loves us.
- II. Well, now I am here again to explain how the birth of Jesus changed my life.
- A. About thirty years after we found the baby Jesus in a manger, we started hearing stories about a great teacher named Jesus.
- He claimed to have authority to forgive sins.
 - He backed up this claim by healing the lame, blind, and deaf.
 - He also casted out demons and raised people from the dead.
 - So, maybe he really could forgive sins.
 - But...only God can forgive sins.
 - Was this Jesus claiming to be God – God in the flesh? Was this the same Jesus we found in a manger?
- B. When we heard these stories, we remembered meeting baby Jesus.
- We remembered the angel’s announcement and his parents’ claim that he is the Messiah.
 - We also remembered that he was born to a virgin because it was the Holy Spirit who caused his mother, Mary, to become pregnant.
 - After much thought and deliberation, we concluded that, yes, this person we are hearing about must be the baby we met thirty years earlier and, along with being the Messiah, he must also be the Lord – God in the flesh.
- C. We saw his death on a cross.

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- We were already in Jerusalem selling our sheep for Passover when the high priest handed Jesus over to the Romans.
- I suppose the religious leaders of my day were jealous of Jesus’ popularity.
- It was a horrible, gut-wrenching sight.

D. But then, something extraordinary happened.

- On the third day after being executed, he rose from the dead!!
- Many people witnessed this!!
- The resurrected Jesus continued to walk this earth for forty days.
- Then he ascended to be at the right hand of God the Father.
- Ten days later, during the Pentecost celebration, the Holy Spirit descended and filled those who believed in Jesus.
- This empowered the followers of Jesus to spread the good news.

E. When I learned of all this, I knew – Jesus is the Son of God – He is God in the flesh!

- His resurrection proves he defeated death and only God can do that.

III. Well, now that I’m old, I often ponder the meaning of all this. What does it mean for God to become human and dwell among us?

A. One thing it means is that we can know God’s character.

- Think about it. If Jesus is fully human and fully God, then we can know God’s character by looking at the life and teachings of Jesus.
- When I was about 85 years old, some Gospels started to circulate among the Jewish community and even among some gentiles.
 - These Gospels told us about the earthly ministry of Jesus and how he died and defeated death!
 - We discovered that if we prayerfully read these gospels, the Holy Spirit will use them to introduce us to Jesus.

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- Through these Gospels, we came to know Jesus as savior, Lord, and friend.
- As previously stated, by knowing Jesus, we can know God’s character.
- We discovered that God is a good, loving, and just God.
- You might be familiar with these gospels.
 - I understand they are still around, and you refer to them as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
- Now, I continue to ponder... If the life of Jesus shows God’s good and loving character, then we should all strive to be like Jesus.
 - The more we become like Jesus, the more we can be the face of Jesus to the world!

IV. So, if we want to be the face of Jesus to the world, then we should ask, “What was his core teaching?” Our lives should revolve around the core teaching of Jesus. So, what was his core teaching?

A. Well, let’s think about this.

- Jesus started his earthly ministry by proclaiming, “The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”
 - Now, the Kingdom of God is ‘life as God intends’ –
 - Life as God intends in heaven,
 - Life as God intends in the attitudes and desires of our hearts,
 - and life as God intends here on earth.
 - God does not intend for there to be poverty.
 - So, we do what we can to alleviate poverty.
 - God does not intend for there to be hate.
 - So, we do what we can to love all people.
 - And, God does not intend for there to be oppression.

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- So, we do what we can to seek justice by standing in solidarity with the poor, oppressed, and marginalized people of the world.
 - Jesus also summarized God’s law with love when he stated, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”
 - We should also remember that Jesus came proclaiming justice as a fulfillment of prophecy.
 - This prophecy is found in Isaiah 42:1-4 and it states, “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.”
 - All this makes sense because justice and love go together.
 - Having one without the other is like having a right shoe without the left shoe.
 - God is a God of justice because God loves everyone and it breaks God’s heart to see one group of people oppress another group of people because he loves all people.
- B. So, I think we can say that Jesus’ core teaching revolves around three things:
- 1) proclaiming the Kingdom of God,

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- 2) loving all people - to include your enemies, and
- 3) seeking justice by standing in solidarity with the poor, oppressed, and marginalized people of the world.
- We can become the face of Jesus to the world if we do these three things.

V. Ever since I realized that Jesus is the Messiah Son of God, I've tried to do this.

A. I've tried to proclaim the Kingdom of God, love everyone, and seek justice.

B. But I've failed miserably.

- I've discovered that I can't do any of these things without staying connected to Jesus.
- If we have any hope of following the core teachings of Jesus, we must stay connected to him.

C. This is what Jesus meant when he stated, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.” (John 15:1-4)

D. So, how do we stay connected to Jesus?

- We do so through...
 - prayer,
 - fasting,
 - Bible study,
 - worship and
 - serving others.
- The Holy Spirit will use these spiritual disciplines to keep us connected to Jesus and empower us to...
 - 1) proclaim the Kingdom of God,

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- 2) love all people - to include our enemies, and
- 3) seek justice by standing in solidarity with the poor, oppressed, and marginalized people of the world.

VI. This Advent, take the time to ask yourself, “Am I proclaiming the Kingdom of God? Am I loving all people, to include my enemies? Do I seek justice by standing in solidarity with the poor, oppressed, and marginalized people?”

A. If the answer to any of these questions is no, then ask yourself, “Am I staying connected to Jesus?”

B. We must do this so we can be the face of Jesus to the world.

Well, I think that’s it. I said what I needed to say. So, I’ll head back to the first century.

Shalom