**COLORING OUTSIDE THE LINES**

**The Little Town of Bethlehem – Part 3**

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**December 15, 2019**

**Luke 2:11-12 (NIV) – Memory Verse**
Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

**Luke 2:8-20 – Scripture Reading**

**THE UNFOLDING DRAMA CONTINUES**

1. **The Journey of the Magi** (Matthew 2:1-12)

We don't know how many wise men there were. The oldest tradition says that there were three: Balthasar, Melchior, and Gaspar. It has also been said that there were 12, or even a few dozen. I think the smaller number caught on because three wise men are easier to fit on stage in the Christmas program. However, many wise men there were, they caused quite a stir when they arrived in Jerusalem. [Matthew 2:3] They had not only Herod's attention, but the attention of the entire city.

1. **The Little Town of Bethlehem** (Micah 5:2)

For now, let's turn our attention to Bethlehem, a little town six miles to the south of Jerusalem. Normally about one thousand people lived there. Because of the census, it was more full than usual — so much so that Mary and Joseph were unable to find a place to stay.

It was in this inauspicious setting that the Son of God was born. Can you imagine this? He himself created all that exists. He himself holds all things together. This great and glorious God humbled himself, and ...

**Philippians 2:7 (NIV)**
but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

1. **Shepherds Watching Their Flock** (Luke 2:8-20)

Shepherds were typically looked down upon by the so-called respectable crowd. Generally speaking, they weren't educated, and certainly weren't sophisticated. Some shepherds were teenaged boys who didn't have the options of pursuing a more prestigious line of work; others were older men who had been doing this all their lives. Their jobs were such that they spent much time in solitude, often days and weeks on end. They weren't able to participate in community activities like those with a 9-5 job, and because of their second-class status, they wouldn't have been well-received, anyway.

**GOD COLORS OUTSIDE THE LINES**

We often try to put God inside a box, and we wait for him to work within those parameters. That's not how it happens. When you put God in a box, you're likely to be left with nothing but an empty box. That's because God works in a way that we don't often expect: outside the lines of conventional thinking.

1. **God Makes Himself Known To All Who Seek Him**

**1 Chronicles 28:9 (NIV)**
… for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you…

**Hebrews 11:6 (NIV)**
And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and **that he rewards those who earnestly seek him**.

1. **God Gives First Class Treatment To The So-Called Second Class**

The early church was not built on the influence of civic leaders and high-ranking officials. It was built by the so-called second-class — those on the periphery, those who were often overlooked by society. In this culture, which sought to divide and compartmentalize everyone, the message of the gospel was like a breath from heaven...

**Galatians 3:28 (NIV)**
There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

1. **God’s Plan Often Circumvents Conventional Wisdom**

God's plan often moves us along a path that we do not expect. What he wants most in you and me is a willingness to seek him, a desire to hear his voice, and a heart prepared to obey.

For such a person, life will be anything but conventional. You, too, will be called to color outside the lines. But God will lead you every step of the way