

“Community”
By Brother Kenneth Ray
Sunday, December 18th, 2011

Community defined: (4) Society in general; the public. (5) Ownership or participation in common. (8) Friendly association; fellowship. (3) A group of nations loosely or closely associated because of common traditions or for political or economic advantage. This is how Webster’s dictionary defines community.

In Louisiana, community is defined as coffee (holding up a bag of ‘Community’ brand coffee). In the South, coffee brings people together. If you’re down South, and you’re not invited for sweet tea or coffee, then you’re not well liked. ‘Community’ coffee is the state coffee of Louisiana.

Community is something that means, in hard times, helping someone. There’s a closeness of community. In a community, you can say something in front of someone, and they won’t look at you like you’re crazy. They won’t tell you that you’re right if you’re not, but they may say, “I see where you’re coming from, but I don’t agree.” Jesus brought community.

Christmas is coming; the geese are getting fat... Next week, we’ll celebrate as Christians; we’ll celebrate as a country. December 25th is the day that we, as a country, have set aside to celebrate the birth of Christ. We’re not saying that was the day He was born—the Bible says that the shepherds were in their fields with their flocks, and they would not have been out in the field on a cold December night—I want to say that so that we are focused on what Christmas is and not on what it isn’t. It’s not a date in history; it’s just a date that has been chosen to celebrate, by Christians (and non-Christians). Christmas is community.

Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her firstborn son...

Luke 2:10 ...Fear not, for I bring you good tidings of great joy...

Listen to what the angel said, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” Notice there was no Christmas tree. Also notice that it says, “all people.” And, as if this message needed back up:

Luke 2:13-14 ...suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the Heavenly host...

Who was he talking to? not himself. One book says that he was talking to the shepherds (Luke 2:8).

The first community I want to talk about this morning is the shepherds. They were not rich; they weren’t at the top of the food chain. They were men of low estate; they were not businessmen. They moved around a lot from field to field, letting the sheep graze. They were of humble means; they kept things small, to make it easier to move. It was these men that the angels came to.

The second community knew about stars; they were educated. They had wealth, they dressed well. They were men of means; the Bible says that they were wise. They saw a star; they followed it; it led them to the same place that the shepherds went.

So, really, that's three communities: The angels, the shepherds, and the wise men. They all came to the same place; they all did the same thing. These were people that, under today's conditions, would not come together in this fashion, if at all. But we can. Whether uptown, downtown, or don't have a town. If you don't have much, well, neither did the shepherds, but they offered their loyalty and service. If you have a lot, well, the wise men brought gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. These men travelled a long distance to bring those gifts.

Why are all of these people from different social classes coming to the same place? because they knew something.

Now, in most Christmas messages, we would have to go to Isaiah 9:6.

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given...

And, yes, Jesus was the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Wonderful, the Counselor, but I have a different Scripture in mind. I do not want to do a cookie-cutter Christmas message. There was a man named Simeon:

Luke 2:25-35 ...he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ...

What a gift! What a promise! What excitement this man must have had. After seeing Jesus, and blessing Him, he said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;" (Luke 2:29-31). It keeps saying 'all people.' The Jews were God's chosen people, but it doesn't say that Christ was only to the Jews. It says that he would be a light unto the Gentiles (Luke 2:32). The scripture says that he was for us Gentiles, too. In case you're confused, let me just say that, unless you were born Jewish, then you're a Gentile. Now, it took a little longer for us Gentiles; a man named Cornelius was the first Gentile Christian (Acts 10), but that's another story.

I'm talking about what Christmas means. Nothing else compares, not diamonds or gold, or a brand new Ford, or LSU winning every game until Jesus comes... How many shepherds were there? I don't know, but I know that each had an individual relationship with Christ. How many people are in a family? Well, a mom and a dad, maybe sons or daughters, maybe a pet... but each has their own individual relationship with Christ.

As my teacher used to say, "Moving right along..." Jesus didn't stay a baby. Jesus is grown up now. He has completed His work for the Father, and is coming to the end of His time in the flesh on earth.

John 14:2-3 ...I go to prepare a place for you...

I haven't seen many housing developments lately. Are they still out there? Yeah? Okay. A housing development usually starts with a ground-breaking ceremony. Jesus birth on Christmas Day was the beginning of glad tidings. The ascension out of the

grave to the sky was the culmination. Jesus had a place planned for you before you were born. He left some instructions and a guide.

John 14:15 If ye love Me, keep My commandments.

They're written in scripture; they're in our prayer time.

John 14:26 ...He shall teach you all things and bring all things to remembrance...

You're going to have issues. You're going to have problems with your wife; you're going to have problems with your kids; you're going to have problems with your dog. The Comforter, the Holy Ghost, can help you through those problems if you pray, and don't pitch a hissy fit. Prayer is usually done on one's knees (not always, but usually).

Where do I sign up? I don't have to sell this to you.

Acts 2:38 ...ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

You can have Him in you. Is it in you? (But wait, there's more!) Something worth having is worth working for. Continue daily in community in one accord praising God and let God add to you daily. As you seek Him more, He'll reveal Himself more.

Christmas Day was the groundbreaking for that one day He'll come back and the sea will give up its dead; the grave will give up its dead. We will go with Him to the best community you could ever live in, and that's what Christmas is all about. The gift of His saints coming home where there will be no more pain or sorrow. Christ's gift to us, and our gift to Christ: Worship Him forever as it was in the beginning, it shall be at the end.

GREAT LAKES