**It’s An 8-Bit Christmas: Christmas Reminders**

**A manger - What do you think of when you think of Christmas? What do you see? Gifts, giving, family, Santa**

**Today a couple we all know… Mary and Joseph – nativity - might not have every character - but it will always have a cradle and those two…**

**Maybe you already know the glory story – Mary and Joseph (engaged) travel to Bethlehem and while they are there – she has a baby – angels appear and declare He is the Savior… cool now let’s open gifts…**

**Let’s pull the curtain back and take a closer look… 2000 yrs ago the Jewish nation was awaiting a prophesied Messiah to deliver them…**

**But things didn’t go as planned… Luke 1:26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin (never had sex) betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. (Two teens legally pledged to marry) And the virgin's name was Mary.**

**Two teens stand up - Two teens about to get married - working towards a normal life in a small town… maybe like your kids.**

**28 And he (Gabriel) came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son (essence and flesh - same identity) of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, (great king of Israel – God’s promise) 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, (Jacob = Israel) and of his kingdom there will be no end.” (he is an eternal king) 34 And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” (How?) 35 And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy - the Son of God.**

**Okay - How do you tell your parents that? I’m pregnant but it’s not what you think… Who can you tell? How will this play out?**

**Christmas reminds us:**

**God tells us what to do - He doesn't always tell us what He will do**

**What if she said – no? God rarely tells us – how – he just days… obey. What is God’s will – how will it happen – what if I fail?**

**“God’s will is not found in a series of perfect decisions, but in a pattern of obedience” – Larry Osborne**

**Moment of decision…what will she do? 38 And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. (As some point after that - boom you’re pregnant)**

**So - Mary goes to see her pregnant Aunt Elizabeth - Gabe said she has a miracle pregnancy too, Elizabeth & Zechariah**

**Mary stays a few months w/ Aunt & Uncle - 2 pregnant women in one house – yikes. ☺**

**Zack - faithful man of God has a visit from Gabriel (same as Mary) says you are going to have a son who will prepare the way for the Messiah (John is Jesus Cousin) Zack said no way – God says way – Zack said shut up – God said no you shut up… literally - Luke 1:20 And now, since you didn’t believe what I said, you won’t be able to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly come true at the proper time.” (Perhaps you have found yourself unable to speak to your friends & family about Jesus because you too doubt that God would or could use you…)**

**Zack from this point on never saw things the same again**

**Christmas reminds us:**

**Trust and waiting are at the core of following Christ**

**Mary didn’t always understand all that was happening. Bible often says, “she pondered these things in her heart” – But, she trusted God.**

**Just because we’re CONFUSED doesn’t mean God is**

**What if you knew tomorrow there was a moment that would change your life? If you knew it was coming, how would you prepare for it?**

**God knew the very moment - and when He wanted it to take place… 1 Peter 1:19 He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. 20 God chose him for this purpose long before the world began, but now in these final days, (of there life) he was sent to the earth for all to see. And he did this for you. (His birth was about his death… born to die… for a cross)**

**Why then why not now, why not earlier, why that day, that moment: The Roads, communication, language barriers, government, society structure… the time was finally right…**

**(Gabriel called Mary favored / blessed – then…) Luke 1:41 When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! (God calls her blessed)**

**Then Joe finds out – he wanted to end the legal agreement… Matthew 1:18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.**

**Christmas reminds us: Blessed doesn’t always mean easy**

**The reality of following Gods will is - Sometimes doing the right thing brings the wrong results (temporality)**

**Her life, her reputation, her marriage, her future, were all at stake**

**An angel appears to Joe in a dream – dude, what Mary says is legit… Matthew 1:20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, (savior / healer) because he will save his people from their sins.” 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God w/ us”).**

**He wakes up, keeps the agreement to marry – and does not consummate the marriage until after Jesus was born.**

**It was hard for him. As we will find out it was not just a bad reputation that was hard - Matt 2:13-18 - On the run for their life - moving to Egypt for a season. Following God can lead to some scary places.**

**Luke 2:1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (Numbers are power & powerful people like to count things: guns, missiles, planes, above all people.) 4So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth… to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. (a lot to stress on: taxes, traveling (2 days), crowds, travelers, soldiers, shepherds, businessmen - accommodations, and a pregnant girlfriend - if you’ve ever been around a preg woman the last couple weeks…hello) 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. (I was there for both my girls – a video they showed us did not prepare us – like all births Jesus entered the world through pain, agony, blood, and love. The God of glory was a blood smeared, crying, hungry little baby… before we could theologically analyze it) She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.**

**Hold a real baby - Jesus was not created that day… Jesus is God. God w/ us, “Emmanuel” – that day God became a man.**

**God became a baby - God on earth – the creator among his creation. A defining movement for every person alive…**

**The nativity makes for a peaceful figurine - But, it wasn’t that peaceful. It wasn’t that Silent (loud chaos, stressful) and then a bunch of local worker (shepherds start knocking on the Door)**

**Do you ever wonder why God chose to arrive this way?**

**Maybe you see the holiday’s the same**

**Christmas reminds us:**

**In our not so silent nights (when life is chaos) - Jesus says… I am here**

**Isaiah 9:6- For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. (weight of the world – as ruler) And he will be called Wonderful Counselor (a dynamic guide), Mighty God (all powerful), Everlasting Father (perfect Dad), Prince of Peace (giver of peace and hope).**

**We try celebrating the birth of the Prince of Peace, but so much gets in the way – stress – worry – it is not so silent**

* **Will you discover the peace in your chaos?**

**We all enjoy the gifts - God has a gift for you… John 14:27- I am leaving you with a gift - peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.**

**Matthew records that at a much later time – wise men far from home came seeking the Christ - Matthew 2:1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”**

**Ever notice how people seem to have a homing device that kicks in at this time - We’ll do anything to get home (fly, drive, walk, Jet Ski…)**

**ASK: How many of you are going to be home for Christmas?**

**How many of you are traveling somewhere to go back home?**

**Sadly many will not be home for Christmas: Soldiers, job transfers, divorced, kids moved away, homeless people - home is special, everybody needs a home**

**If you think about it at the first Christmas, a lot of people weren’t home**

* **Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem – not at home in Nazareth**
* **The Shepherds – at work pulling an all nighter**
* **The Wise men – far from home on a road trip looking for Christ**
* **Jesus – left his home in glory to sleep in farm furniture**

**What does home mean to you? Is it a place – a house – your parents – your friends – a feeling of safety… or maybe a place you’d rather forget**

**Some have a gnawing sense of incompleteness about home - You’re physically home, but not truly at home… why?**

**Christmas reminds us that:**

**Jesus became homeless to give you and I a home**

**My Childhood – moving – abuse – homeless - divorce – Never had a home town – a place to call home – then I met Jesus**

**That night – born poor and without a home to call his own. He left the riches and throne of heaven to become a servant of all – for us**

**Jesus said that His mission for living and in His death was to prepare us a home John 14:2 My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.**

* **Will you come home for Christmas?**

**Jesus went on to live 33 years after that might - then willingly gave his life so that you could know the Father - born to die…**

**This baby was God on earth... the savior of the world.**

**Rather than a manger – this is what it points to - The Cross**

**Christmas reminds us that:**

**We have a big problem – and Jesus is the solution.**

**The problem is – we are born rebellious in heart and sinners by nature. And our sin – keeps us from have a relationship with our Holy creature.**

**God kicked the doors down – (Christmas) walked across the room (His life) and kicked evils tail (the cross) and walked away the winner (the resurrection)**

**Christmas is about this - The Roach – illustration – possible**

**Christmas in some way is about gifts – this gift…**

**Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it* *is* the gift of God**

**Christmas reminds us – that following God is not always easy or convenient, that trusting God is filled with lot’s of questions, that in the middle of the chaos – Jesus is present, that we will never be truly at home until Jesus has our life.**

**Next Sunday – can be the best Christmas ever… if you open your gift today. The Gift of God.**