**Light of the World – Wrapped and ready!**

**Have you wrapped the gifts yet? What is in this present? It is not empty. It is ready, but we have to wait.**

**What really happened on Christmas? Are the specials right? Are the pics on the cards accurate? Is the Nativity reality?**

**Most well know story in the bible and the most mis-told story.**

**The most detailed Christmas of the 4 gospels – Luke’s story**

**He set out to write a “carefully investigated… and orderly account”**

**Last week the angel Gabriel made a visit to an elderly couple and said they were going to be the parents of the first prophet in 400 years. Their names – Zechariah and Elizabeth. (Explain – Zack being mute)**

**Against the backdrop of Roman oppression and rule - Luke 1:26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged (betrothed) to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. (A modest Mary & an average Joe)**

**Two teens about to get married - working towards a normal life in a small town… but it was about to be anything but normal**

**28 The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” 29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. (The kindness of God) 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. (Hbw - Yahshua, Gk - Iesous, Joshua. God saves) 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”**

**He is an eternal king of an eternal kingdom. The Messiah!**

**The focus was Jesus, not Mary. He will be great!**

**He will reign forever! The Son of God = God in the flesh.**

**34 “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” (lit. I have not been with a man) 35 The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. (the Shekinah cloud of God will cover you) So the Holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.**

**Same glory cloud of Moses will conceive a baby inside you.**

**He will be not born of a man – but miraculously born of God**

**Isiah 7:14 – the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son.**

**How do you tell your parents about that? I’m pregnant but it’s not what you think…**

**\*\* Jesus was miraculously conceived – Messiah arrived in the womb.**

**Not result of God having sex with Mary – sorry Mormons.**

**\*\* Jesus was born without a sin nature – conceived w/out a man (Gen 3)**

**Not a result of Joseph having sex w/ Mary - sorry progressives**

**\*\* Jesus was fully God from the beginning – Immanuel / almighty God**

**(Is 9:6, John 1:1-5, Mark 1:1, Matt 1:23)**

**Not a creation of God (Michael the arch) - sorry, Jehovah’s W.**

**\*\* Jesus was fully man - conceived, grew, and was born in the flesh.**

**He did not just seem human he was - sorry, Christian Science**

**The hypostatic union. \*\* Heresy of Docetism.**

**He was crucified in the flesh, risen in the flesh – and sits…**

**- When you mess with his birth – you mess with the gospel.**

**BTW – Christmas day is related to the conception of Jesus, not pagan traditions. In 200 AD Clement of Alexandria notes: some think Jesus B-day is April 20/21 or May 20. Also notes some celebrate his birth and childhood in early January. This was soon called the day of Epiphany (Catholic) and day of Theophany (Orthodox). Celebrating by 250 AD. [[1]](#footnote-1)**

**The Roman calendar of 354 (the oldest known Christian calendar in history) lists Dec 25 as the birth of Jesus. West determined it was the 25 / the East – Jan 6. Why those dates?**

**It was calculated by Tertullian in 200 AD that Jesus died (our calendar) on March 25 (West) and April 6 (East). It was believed Jesus was conceived on the same day as crucifixion.**

**9 months later… He is born. The W celebrated both by the 4th cent, days in between were the 12 day of Xmas.**

**The day was never a pagan - 1st suggested 1000 yrs later.**

**Celebrate with confidence – Dec 25 or Jan 6. The day or not.**

**This is a lot for a teenage girl to handle – but she is not alone.**

**36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. (John was to be Jesus cousin) 37 For no word from God will ever fail.” (“For nothing will be impossible with God,” ESV, KJV) 38 “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.**

**39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. (the HS came upon her)**

**42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”**

**Mary breaks into song: Known as The Magnificat (praises)**

**The real “Mary’s song” - Luke 1:46-55 – Read out of the Bible!**

**Have woman – read. Play instrumental of The Nativity**

**1:56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.**

**2 pregnant women - one house – Zack is not able to say anything… God is funny.**

**She left just before Elizabeth had her baby - a long time to be away. Mary returned 3 mths pregnant. She was showing.**

**Luke 1:57 When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. (The mercy of finally having a baby) 59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, (eight days later) and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, 60 but his mother spoke up and said, “No! He is to be called John.” (this tells us that they were communicating to each other even though he was made mute)**

**(John = God is gracious) 61 They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who has that name.” 62 Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. 63 He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment, he wrote, “His name is John.”**

**64 Immediately, his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. 65 All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. 66 Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, “What then is this child going to be?” For the Lord’s hand was with him.**

**Zechariah sings a new song – known as the Benedictus!**

**Short for Latin – “Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini”**

**“Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lod!”**

**Have Dan read. Play instrumental of Creation Choral**

**Read Zack’s song, Luke 1:67-79**

**Luke 1:80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel. (Don’t hear from him for 30 yrs)**

**\*\*\* Next week Christmas Eve morning. The Birth of Jesus (Luke 2)**

**This Christmas Story - Reminds us:**

**Before we can open the Gift, we must realize**

**1. God uses the humble and unexpected to bring about his will**

**A young lady from a small town – nothing unique. Nothing especially special – but she was who God favored for his purpose. God uses the foolish & simple things to baffle the wise. God gets the glory.**

**Her simple faithfulness to God’s word and willingness to obey**

**30The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.**

**Favor - she will know the kindness, blessing, and grace of God. How amazing. She was a simple girl with a humble heart.**

**Matthew 23:12 - For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.**

**James 4:6 “God opposes the proud but shows favor (shows kindness) to the humble.”**

**Why do we seek to put the proud in places of authority?**

**God will not bless the arrogant and proud.**

**2. Sometimes God tells us what to do, but not what He will do**

**He doesn't tell us what He will do or how. We just have to trust Him!**

**To know Jesus is more than head knowledge - Faith in God is filled with mystery and learning to trust the un-seeable.**

**At the core of following Jesus is trusting in God’s word and direction – even when we don’t know where it will lead.**

**3. Following Jesus doesn’t always mean easy**

**Mary gets pregnant – what follows is scandal (Matthew records it) what follows is a lifetime of confusion, heartache - and incredible joy.**

**Her life, her reputation, her marriage – through the mud. Facing potential abandonment, destitution – and even stoning.**

**Joe was visited by an Angel – and given the details. He was to adopt Jesus and raise him as his son.**

**(The angel tells him) Matthew 1: 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, (Yeshua - God is our savior) because he will save his people from their sins.”**

**Mary - You are going to be the birth mother of the Messiah!**

**Joe - You are going to be the stepdad to the Messiah.**

**Blessed does not mean easy. Your plans or a normal life…**

**It has been said – “You want to know how to make God laugh? Tell him your plans.”**

**Mary’s response - Luke 1:38 “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.**

**What a great challenge for us… When God flips the script –**

**“I am the Lord’s servant – God, your will be done.”**

**4. With God, the impossible is always possible**

**Luke 1:37 - Nothing is impossible with God! (NOTHING!)**

**Luke 1:37 - For no word from God will ever fail.**

**The miracle of a virgin having a baby! A barren older woman - God does the unexpected. Just when you think, “How can I be sure / It’s too late / It’s not possible / I am nobody / It’s too bad!”**

**We can always count on God when faced with impossible situations.**

**Ephesians 3:20 - Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us…**

**(NLT) Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.**

**What is your impossible today? Maybe it is that God is finished with you – you have messed up to many times. Maybe it is that God can work in your family.**

**Possible end if needed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**5. Christmas really is about the presents – of God.**

**Christmas is the season to forget the past, forget the future, and just focus on the present’s - HIS PRESENT. (gift)**

**To be present means to be in a particular place, in attendance, near during a period of time – it is what is occurring now.**

**In English, we have a present tense and present perfect (a past event that has present consequences). Jesus embodies both – he is the perfect present, and he is also present perfect.**

**Jesus is the perfect present sinless ONE. His presence is a present and the present is his presence. And this present is everywhere.**

**When Jesus was born, he was called Emmanuel, “God with us.” (Matt 1:23) Literally means Jesus – “the presence of God”.**

**Psalm 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.**

**Christmas is all about the presents!**

**Jesus is present in eternity past – present in the eternal future – He is just as present today as he was present yesterday and will be tomorrow. We celebrate his presence with His ultimate present’s!**

**Jesus has come to give us the ultimate present- his presence**

**Let me ask you a question - What did you get for Christmas last year? Car, engagement ring you would remember - Most are trying to come up with an answer… that is because Christmas is not really about the earthly presents, we give each other. It is about HIS present and his presence that has come.**

**We (you) need his presence more than any present we are given. God’s presence puts our presents to shame.**

**Christmas eve – figuring out Christmas**

**Or**

**Christmas eve service – surviving Christmas – the greatest present.**

**I enjoy giving great gifts, especially the older I get the more I enjoy giving great gifts. I want them to represent me. A glimpse of my love.**

**That process is just a microcosm of what God went through when he gave us the ultimate present.**

**Let’s say you have maxed out your credit cards this Christmas. Your credit card is smoking you’ve used it so much. And then you lose your job and make the minimum payments - start getting the phone calls, emails and texts. Panic sets in - you can’t make the payments. “What do I do?! - And then you’re scrolling through your emails and you see an email written to you. And to your shock and awe, someone paid your debt in full. They’ve taken care of what you could not. Well, that’s what Jesus did for us. We were maxed out. Jesus took our debts and he paid for them on the cross. He purchased them.**

**Dec 31 – what are you waiting for?**

**https://www.northcoastchurch.com/sermons/sermon-archive/?enmse=1&enmse\_sid=225&enmse\_mid=2217**

1. https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/how-december-25-became-christmas/#note03r [↑](#footnote-ref-1)