

Christmas Eve 2005

12-24-05

“The Bethlehem Miracle!”

1. Intro:

- 1.1. Family Prayer Nights! – T/W/TH(7-8:30pm) & Sat(6:30-8pm).
 - 1.1.1. Prayer, with Worship & Communion.
- 1.2. Let’s listen as an important question is asked, “*Does anybody know what Christmas is really all about?*” [Show - A Charlie Brown Christmas 2min.]
 - 1.2.1. That will be my text for tomorrow morning if you can join us at 8am.
- 1.3. The Nativity: Painters have painted us the scene. Sculptors have hewn us their rendition. Poets have sung its story. In the days of our childhood we did our best to see it with our inner eye.
 - 1.3.1. We have wood nativities, stone ones, plaster, plastic, native Bethlehem Olive wood. We have faceless ones, miniature & large, colorful & natural wood. I even brought Kelly one from Haiti that all fits inside a coconut (& all the figures look Haitian).
- 1.4. Prayer: Hear with a hopeful heart the message of Christmas.

2. THE BETHLEHEM MIRACLE! (Lk. 1:1-7)

- 2.1. A LARGE GOD FOR LITTLE PEOPLE! (1-5)
- 2.2. Getting registered – Not like most baby showers where you register at Robinsons May, or Target.
 - 2.2.1. This registration was God ordained beforehand, that the Messiah be born in Bethlehem.
 - 2.2.1.1. For this to happen, the ruler of the known world **Caesar Augustus** must be moved to require all families to be enrolled each in his own town.
 - 2.2.2. Now Read vs.1-5.
 - 2.2.3. Q: Have you ever felt insignificant in a world of over 6 bill people.
 - 2.2.3.1. Yet there is God, **wielding an empire**, for a lowly carpenter, a little pregnant teenager, & for you & I.
- 2.3. Jesus’ Birth affected **Caesar’s** politics(1-3); [& tomorrow we’ll see it affected] the ministry of **angels**(8-15); the activities of **common men**(15-20).
 - 2.3.1. **Angels sang** about Him, & He’s still the theme of the greatest **music**
 - 2.3.2. **Luke wrote** about Him, & He is still the subject of the greatest **literature**.
 - 2.3.3. **Shepherd’s hastened** to behold Him & he is still at the center of the greatest **art**.

- 2.3.4. **Teachers listened** to Him & marveled, & He is still the focal point for all **truth & wisdom**.¹
- 2.4. **Augustus Caesar** ruled as Emperor over most the civilized world.
- 2.4.1. Under his reign the world enjoyed a period of **peace**.
- 2.4.2. A baby is born in His kingdom, who would offer **the kind of peace that lay beyond the power of the most powerful man on earth**.
- 2.5. God moves in the affairs of nations to accomplish His purposes.
- 2.5.1. The Caesars appeared to be in control of human destiny!
- 2.5.1.1. But God was at work through all these events.
- 2.5.1.2. **God controls all human affairs!**
- 2.6. **INCONVENIENCE!** (5)
- 2.7. **A very pregnant teen, on a 80 mile donkey back ride!** ☹️
- 2.8. It seems that those closest to the Lord, are the most inconvenienced!
- 2.8.1. **Jesus is many things...but He isn't "convenient"!**
- 2.8.2. Mary could have asked God...
- 2.8.3. **Q: Wasn't dealing with a virgin birth enough to have to deal with?**
- 2.8.4. **Q: Does the baby really need to be born in Bethlehem?**
- 2.8.5. **Q: Couldn't Gabriel have gone to Hotel.com & secured a hotel?**
- 2.9. Our culture has conditioned us to **expect** convenience.²
- 2.9.1. We believe it is an **entitlement** that we all deserve!
- 2.9.1.1. We see anything that poses an inconvenience to our lives as a **nasty negative!**
- 2.9.2. Our agendas are sealed, but God's agenda will often conflict w/ours
- 2.9.2.1. And when it does we have a **choice** to make:
- 2.9.2.1.1. **[1] Get mad** at being inconvenienced.
- 2.9.2.1.2. **[2] Or, surrender** our expectations to God, & ask Him to give us **His agenda** for our lives!
- 2.9.2.2. When we choose God's choice, we find **the JOY of obedience** in the midst of **being inconvenienced**.
- 2.9.3. **Q: Has the Lord inconvenienced you lately?**
- 2.9.4. **Q: How did you respond? – How will you respond in the future?**
- 2.9.5. **Q: What steps can you take to **remain joyful** when you're inconvenienced this Christmas/New Year season?**
- 2.9.6. Speaking of inconvenience – I was touched by a sermon given by **Martin Niemoller**. It was in 1944 while he was in Germany's 1st Concentration camp in "**Dachau**". [we visited the very room he stayed]
- 2.9.6.1. It was a Sermon he wrote on Christmas Eve 1944.³

¹ Warren Wiersbe; With the Word; pg.670.

² Bob Coy Devotional; pg.21.

³ Smith; Great Sermons on the Birth, Death, & Resurrection of Jesus Christ;pg.242

- 2.9.6.2. He opened with “When Christmas must be celebrated in captivity it is naturally a rather dismal affair.”
- 2.9.6.3. Yet, he is able to draw **comfort, hope & joy** from the wonderful Christmas story!
- 2.10. **2 SIGNS!** (6,7)
- 2.10.1. We’ll see that the resounding revelation of Christmas is that God is **not unapproachable!**
- 2.10.2. Two matters of **significance** for this child & His identification!
- 2.10.2.1. Lk.2:12 “And this *will be* the **sign** to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger”
- 2.10.2.2. That is all...& what does that tell us? [2 Things]
- 2.11. **[1st] Human Helplessness!**
- 2.12. **Wrapped in swaddling cloths –**
- 2.12.1. Swaddling = *to wrap in strips* - Intended to strengthen the back & bones & provided proper growth.⁴
- 2.12.2. Our **1st sign** is the picture of a child no less **feeble & helpless** than any other baby born into this world.
- 2.12.2.1. [*Jesus’ royal privilege stopped at conception!*]
- 2.12.3. His mother must **nourish & care** for him **or** He die from hunger.
- 2.12.4. He must be **wrapped in strips of cloth** **lest** He freeze to death.
- 2.12.4.1. Both at the beginning & end of His life on earth, it could be said of Him, “*He saved others; himself he could not save.*”
- 2.13. **[2nd] Earthly Homelessness!**
- 2.14. **Lying in a manger – The Saviors Cradle.**
- 2.14.1. A trough or box, for feeding cattle. [usually hewn of stone]
- 2.14.2. Here is our **2nd sign**, the homelessness of this babe.
- 2.14.3. This seemed to be a sign for the rest of his life, “*The foxes have holes, & the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has no where to lay His head.*”
- 2.14.3.1. **Interesting** – Jesus’ family didn’t own either the place he was **born**, nor the place he was **buried!**
- 2.15. **Barns** are normally **not** for babies – at least **not human babies!**⁵
- 2.15.1. No mother or father would want to subject a tiny infant, whose immune system is still very venerable, to the **bacteria of a barn**.
- 2.15.2. Had he been born in our time he would have the most advanced technology to assure a painless, perfect delivery.
- 2.15.2.1. An **epidural** **so** it would be close to **painless**.
A **sterile room** **so** it would be close to **germless**.

⁴ LKGNT

⁵ Bob Coy Devotional; pg.8.

- 2.16. Ken Gire writes, “Where you would have expected **angels**, there were only **flies**. Where you would have expected **heads of state**, there were only donkeys, a few haltered cows, a nervous ball of sheep, a tethered camel, & a furtive scurry of curious mice.
Except for Joseph, there was no one to share Mary’s pain. Or her joy. Yes, there were angels announcing the Savior’s arrival – but only to a band of blue-collar shepherds. And yes, a magnificent star shone in the sky to mark his birthplace – but only 3 foreigners bothered to look up & follow it.”
Thus, in the little town of Bethlehem...that one silent night...the royal birth of God’s Son tiptoed quietly by...as the world slept!”⁶
- 2.17. **Q: What do these 2 signs teach us?**
- 2.17.1. God, the eternally wealthy & mighty God, enters into the most extreme poverty imaginable.
- 2.17.2. **[1]** No man is so **weak & helpless** that God does not come to him in Jesus Christ, right in the midst of human need.
- 2.17.3. **[2]** And, no man is so **forsaken & homeless** in this world that God does not seek him, in the midst of our human distress.
- 2.18. **NO ROOM!** (7)
- 2.19. **No room for them in the (Holiday)Inn** – A lodging-house poor enough at best, **but** there was not even room in this public place because of the crowds for the census.⁷
- 2.19.1. There usually was an **inner court**, a series of arches, an open gallery round the four sides.
- 2.19.2. On one side of the square **outside the wall**, would be stables for the donkeys & camels, & other animals.
- 2.20. **“No room”** seems to be a touching prediction of the reception of Jesus
- 2.20.1. **There was no room for Jesus:** in the **Inn**; in **Bethlehem**; later in **Nazareth**; in the **homes** of those he served (Jn.7:53); he often slept under the stars (Mt. Of Olives); & ultimately there was no room for Him in the **world!** (so they raised him above earth, on a crude cross)
- 2.21. God **could have** seen to it the angel Gabriel **had a room set aside** at the Inn. Jesus **could have** been **born into** a wealthy family. And at the cross He **could have** had him **come down** from the cross & saved himself!
- 2.21.1. **But the question isn’t what God could have done, but what He willed to do!**

⁶ Intimate Moments w/the Savior; Ken Gire; Pg.5,6.

⁷Robertson, A. (1997). *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Vol.V c1932, Vol.VI c1933 by Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. (Lk 2:7). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

- 2.21.2. It was His will that, “**though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.**”
 2.21.2.1. The “**No Vacancy**” signs over the motels in Bethlehem, were for **your** sake!⁸

2.22. **Q: Have you room for Christ?**

- 2.22.1. “But, I’m **not worthy** that he should come **stay with me**”! - **That’s not the question!** - **Have you room?**
 2.22.2. “But, the room I have in my heart is so **unclean & dirty**”! – **Wasn’t the stable?** - **Have you room?**
 2.22.3. “But, my heart is **stone cold**”! – **So was his 1st resting place in the manger!** - **Have you room?**
 2.22.4. “But, I feel my heart has been a **den of beasts**”! – **Wasn’t the manger where animals fed?** - **Have you room?**
 2.22.5. **If you have room for Christ, He will come & be your guest!**
 2.22.6. **Don’t say, “I hope I will have room in the future.” – The time is come** when He shall be born in **your** heart!
 2.22.6.1. Mary couldn’t wait months, or years.
 2.22.7. **If you have room for Him, then let Him be born in your soul today!**
 2.22.7.1. He waits longingly to take up residence in your **heartsmanger**, this evening! [*In your Heart’s **sp. feeding trough!***]

2.23. The **Christ of glory cradled in a manger** is God’s **object-lesson** to every sinner that Christ will come to him if he will **make room for Him!**

- 2.24. “**God Himself has built a bridge, from Himself, to us!” – His name is **Immanuel**(God with us)!
 2.24.1. Christ, the “**God with us**” is also the “**God for us**”!
 2.24.2. And we can **joyfully cry out** “If God be **for** us, who can be **against** us?”
 2.24.3. **If you have room** for Him, let Him be born in **your soul** today!
 2.24.4. **Invitation!** 😊**

2.25. **Wrap up:**

- 2.25.1. [1] He is a **Large God for Little people!** (like Mary & Joe, & you & I)
 2.25.2. [2] Find **the JOY of obedience** n the midst of being **inconvenienced!**
 2.25.3. [3] **2 Signs – Human Helplessness & Earthly Homelessness:**
 2.25.3.1. No man is so **weak & helpless** that God does not come to him in Jesus Christ, right in the midst of human need.
 2.25.3.2. And, no man is so **forsaken & homeless** in this world that God does not seek him, in the midst of our human distress.
 2.25.4. [4] **No Room** – May our hearts sign read, “**More Room**” instead of **No Room!**

⁸ John Piper; 7 Christmas Meditations; A Big God for Little People.