

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: December 24, 2017

Sermon Title: Why Christmas Matters - Part 2

Text: Luke 2:8-20

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

Date: December 24, 2017 P.M. Service
Title: Why Christmas Matters [Christmas Eve] – pt. 2
Text: Luke 2:8-20
Theme: Christmas is a time of great celebration, but unfortunately, we seem to overlook the obvious. Sometimes we can be so close to the trees that we miss the forest. This season is all about Jesus.

Introduction:

“A man was bothered with continual ringing in his ears, bulging eyes, and a flushed face. Over a period of three years he went to doctor after doctor. One took out his tonsils, one removed his appendix, another pulled out all his teeth. Nothing seemed to help. He still had ringing in his ears, bulging eyes, and a flushed face. **Finally a doctor told him that there was no hope; he only had six months to live.** The poor fellow quit his job and decided to live it up in the time he had left. He went to his tailor and ordered several suits and shirts. The tailor measured his neck and wrote down the size: 16. The man corrected him: 15. The tailor measured again: 16. But the man insisted that he had always worn a size 15 collar on his shirts.

‘Well, all right,’ said the tailor, ‘but don’t come back here complaining to me if you have ringing in your ears, bulging eyes, and a flushed face!’”¹

“Christmas has become the product of an odd mixture of pagan ideas, superstition, fanciful legends, and plain ignorance. Add to that the commercialization of Christmas by marketers and the politicization of Christmas in the culture wars, and you're left with one big mess.”²

“Sometimes the solutions to life’s problems are more simple than we think. Our world has incredibly complex problems: wars, terror-ism, famines, catastrophes. People have complex problems: physical, emotional, and family problems. Sometimes we despair as we try to help others or to deal with our own problems. At times the proposed solutions seem so complex that we aren’t sure we can implement them. But God provides a simple solution for all of the complex problems we face in this world. It is the simple solution of the Savior, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas.”³

I wish to welcome you on this Christmas Eve. It is always with joy I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is possible in the midst of all the chaos and uncertainty surrounding us that we fail to hear what the shepherd’s heard, see what the magi saw, hold what Simeon and Anna held, understand what Mary and Joseph understood, and [if an unbeliever fear] what Herod feared. Christmas is a pivotal moment in the Great Biblical Narrative. Paul calls it the fullness of time. In the incarnation God is fulfilling ancient promises carrying us all the way back to Genesis 3:15. Yet it is possible for us during this season to fail to hear, see, and hold the Christ. Are we like people who are alive, yet dead; do we seek to fill our cravings with chaff and not the kernel, that seek to warm ourselves at pictures of fire, and fill our empty existence with shadow rather than the substance? Friends, let us not forget why we gather on this day. In the birth of Jesus, we celebrate His death, His burial, and His resurrection. The incarnation of Jesus is a punctuation point in the sentence of God. Pentecost is His confirmation that God keeps His word.

Outline:

I. Sense what Zachariah and Elizabeth sensed (Luke 1:1ff) – Release leading to Joy

In v. 12 Zacharias was “troubled” by the appearance of the angel Gabriel. It is the same word we find to describe Herod in Matt. 2:3. The word “troubled” is the same one used of our Lord in the upper room in John 14:1 and 27. It is the same word used of our Lord being “troubled” (John 12:27; 13:21). Jesus would be “troubled” so that His people would never again be “troubled.” The most repeated command in the Bible is the command, “Do not be afraid” (Luke 1:13).

This troubling was so intense that it “gripped him.” It paralyzed him. Think about it. What is it in your life that “troubles” you? What is it that keeps you awake at night, or is robbing you of life and joy? God is saying to you at this season in the incarnation, “Do not be afraid, I got this.”

The key idea of all this for Elizabeth is found in verse 25.

- ²⁵ “This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men” (Luke 1:25).

The word for disgrace occurs only here and means “reproach.” It carries the idea of shame and disfavor. Her barrenness was looked upon by others as a sign of God’s judgment, of sin, and death. God, by giving her John, was removing from her this social shame.

What is it in your life that you hope no one ever discovers about you? Friend, in the incarnation God is removing your reproach. Today, He is giving you release and rest. This rest leads to joy.

II. Understand What Mary And Joseph Understood (Luke 1:26; Matt. 1:18-25) – Mystery leading to compliance

- ²⁸ “And coming in, he said to her, ‘Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.’ ²⁹ But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was” (Luke 1:28, 29).

The word “very perplexed” is our word “troubled” with a prefix. It means “to be disturbed wholly.” It only occurs here. She was having a hard time registering what the angel was saying. It just didn’t seem to fit her circumstances. The word “kept pondering” means “to reckon thoroughly.” The KJV translates this as “cast in her mind.”

Mary was putting the pieces together and it did not seem possible, but God assures her that with Him nothing would be impossible (v. 37).

This is the same word spoken in shadow to Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18:14, “Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

Mary's response is classic, "Behold, the bond slave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word" (v. 38). How beautiful. Such a saying brings tears to one's heart.

Much of our lives are swallowed up by movements of God that we cannot see or understand. God desires for us "not to be afraid" (v. 30). God is the God of the impossible. He will bring He has promised to pass. The incarnation assures us of His faithfulness to keep His promises.

III. Hear What The Shepherd's Heard, (Luke 2:1-20) – Glory leading to witness

"Shepherds once enjoyed "most favored status" in the stories of Scripture. Great heroes of the faith - Abraham, Moses, and David – were shepherds. One of the most loved psalms speaks of God as a shepherd (Psalm 23). By the time Jesus was born, however, shepherds had suffered several centuries of bad PR. They were poor. They lived outdoors. They were not refined. They were not educated. Worst of all, they smelled like sheep. The technical term used in Jesus' day to describe shepherds and other less than acceptable people was "*am haaretz*" – meaning "common folks," or "people of the land." Let me assure you, being classified "*am haaretz*" was no compliment in Jesus day."⁴

The appearance of the angels before the shepherds filled them with fear. Like our previous two encounters we hear the common refrain, "Do not be afraid" (Luke 2:10).

What the shepherds heard was ¹⁰ "But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; ¹¹ for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'"

Perhaps today you feel marginalized, even common. There is nothing about you that seems or appears special. You have no "super powers" and when you are around other people, you feel pretty stupid and incompetent. Today, in the incarnation God says to you a Savior is born, who is Christ the Lord.

Notice the language of 2:15-18. The common people of God became witnesses of the uncommon power of God.

2:19 revisits 1:29. It wasn't one and done. Mary was perpetually perplexed even as she bowed in obedience to the Lord's will.

IV. Hold What Simeon And Anna Held, (Luke 2:21-36) – Redemption leading to Gratitude

The word used in verse 25 is **paraklesis**. it is the same family of words for "comforter." Notice the language in verse 28. Simeon took Jesus in his arms. Can you feel the Christ child today?

Anna speaks of Jesus as "the redemption of Jerusalem" (v. 38). This is the one who will fully and finally pay the debt, the ransom. In Him, we will hear, "It is finished."

It says in verse 38 that she “gave thanks.” The word only occurs here and I’ve never seen it before. Friends, in the incarnation we have our redemption from sin and death. Such redemption leads us to gratitude. May this Christmas season find us grateful. Our next two responses are in Matthew 2. Many suggest and most would agree that the Magi and Herod could very well have occurred two years after His birth. But let us note them this day nonetheless.

V. See What The Magi Saw [a star / the Christ] (Matt. 2:1-12) – Inquiry leading to worship

The magi came from the East perhaps as a result of Daniel’s witness. They had come a long way and were searching diligently for the Christ child. When they finally found him, they bowed down to the ground and worshipped Him. After this they opened their treasures and gave gifts worthy of royalty.

Perhaps today none of this makes any sense. Maybe you are so disillusioned and depressed that nothing and no one offers you any hope or joy. Friends, today we are marking God becoming flesh. He is the Messiah, the Christ. He is our hope and comfort. He is our redemption. We have become blinded by the circumstances of our day and as such can no longer see the star pointing to the Christ child. Friends, let us once more search diligently for Him and when found, let us bow down and worship and give to Him our gifts.

Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

Tonight, let us work to . . .

1. Sense what Zachariah and Elizabeth sensed (Luke 1:1ff) – Release leading to Joy
2. Understand What Mary And Joseph Understood, And (Luke 1:26; Matt. 1:18-25) – Awe leading to submission
3. Hear What The Shepherd’s Heard, (Luke 2:1-20) – Glory leading to witness
4. Hold What Simeon And Anna Held, (Luke 2:21-36) – Redemption leading to Gratitude
5. See What The Magi Saw, (Matt. 2:1-12) – Inquiry leading to worship

Friends, this is the power of the incarnation. This is the reason for this season.

¹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/christmas-1992-simplicity-christmas-luke-28-20>

² <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/the-truth-of-the-nativity-and-birth-of-jesus-christ-11596840.html>

³ <https://bible.org/seriespage/christmas-1992-simplicity-christmas-luke-28-20>

⁴ https://www.heartlight.org/articles/200812/20081222_smellofsheep.html_