The Expecting Couple Christmas Eve 2020

Intro

Merry Christmas Eve everyone!

The expectation of Christmas Eve is such a special thing. I remember, as a kid, wondering what I would find under the tree.

Would Santa really know what I wanted for Christmas?

When I looked under the tree and saw all the presents, I would frantically look for all of the packages with my name on them and then I would wonder what could be in each of them based on shape, size, and if I could get away with it weight.

The expectation and anticipation can be almost as thrilling as opening the gifts.

Last week, in my sermon, I talked about Mary, the mother who was expecting to give birth to Jesus. A messenger from God told her…

“…You have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name Him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord will give Him the throne of His ancestor David. And He will reign over Israel forever; His Kingdom will never end!”

Luke 1:30-33

Tonight, I would like this to be a somewhat interactive service, so whether you are here with us tonight in person, or if you are watching from home, please read the scripture out loud along with me. It will be up on the powerpoint slide. Let’s begin with Luke, chapter 2, verse 1:

**Slide 1**

**“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.**

**So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.”**

Now I know I told you that I liked to try and figure out what gifts I would be getting based on shape, size and weight.

Imagine Mary’s expectation as she went through her pregnancy, pretty hard to imagine a king who would be called the Son of God and would reign forever, based on a baby bump.

So Joseph and Mary, were headed to their home town…which in Joseph’s case, we are told, was Bethlehem.

Let’s continue in the scripture…

**Slide 2**

**“While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.”**

The author, Luke, doesn’t leave us hanging for very long. Mary gives birth to her firstborn son. Actually, the birth itself seems a little bit anti-climactic. Mary and Joseph’s child came into the world in much the same way that any child in that day would have been born.

But this was not a normal baby. He was a baby with heavenly press agents so to speak…

**Slide 3**

**And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”**

I want to pause for a second and remind you that this is an historical account. You know those books or movies, or documentaries that are based on true events…This is even more accurate than those. Apparently, Luke interviewed shepherd’s who heard the angel’s message. It is sometimes easy to get caught up in the biblical account and start thinking it is some kind of mythical story, this is an historical account of a Doctor named Luke.

So we see that the Shepherds were given a sense of urgency that came from the presence of these “terrifying messengers.” Have you ever felt someone’s intensity through the way they conveyed a message. The shepherd’s knew this was a BIG DEAL!

And if there was any doubt left in their mind about the authenticity of the message, it was erased when…

**Slide 4**

**Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,**

**“Glory to God in the highest heaven,**

 **and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”**

We already know that Mary had been told that God’s favor had rested on her. Now we are enlighted to the fact that this “good news” would cause, “great joy for all people.”

But how could the birth of Jesus cause great joy for all people. Hadn’t the angel Gabriel told Mary that her son would reign over Israel forever and that His kingdom would never end?

How does that help people who aren’t Jews?

Let me fill you in on a few definitions of words.

First of all the word Israel…

Is can be understood to mean “one who wrestles with or contends with God.”

Mary’s child would be the king of those who wrestle with or contend with God.

Are you a sinner?

Do you wonder what God is doing sometimes?

Is your relationship to God sometimes like your questions about Santa’s ability to get you the right gift under the tree?

Have you tried as hard as you could to be good enough for God and other people to love you?

Have you realized that you can never be good enough and maybe even found yourself difficult to love?

Then you could easily fit into the description of Israel. You see, when many people think of Israel, they think of a place. Israel is a people…Those who wrestle, contend, and or strive with God. If you fit into that description than Jesus wants you to call Him your King.

Again many people can get confused thinking that Jesus is just a Jewish savior and king. Some even hate the exclusiveness of the name Jesus.

But the name Jesus, the name that Mary was instructed to name her firstborn child, simply means, “The Lord who Saves.”

Anyone, anywhere, anytime, in their own language, can recognize that they are contending with God and cry out for “The Lord who Saves!”

This is what the birth of the KING of KINGS is about. It is good news for ALL PEOPLE! Of His Kingdom, a kingdom that is not of this world, there will be no end!

So what will the shepherd’s do with this “Good News?” They hatched a plan.

**Slide 5**

**“When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”**

Before we move on I want to quickly remind you that, if we know the good news, then **we should have a plan.** And we should do what the shepherd’s did and follow thru with the plan!

**Slide 6**

**“So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.**

**The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”**

As I began tonight, I will say it again. I love the expectation of Christmas. I also love opening the gifts, but it can be challenging to keep that same excitement about your gift all year long. Mary gave birth to the Savior of the world. His Joy, peace, love, forgiveness, power, compassion, and rule never diminishes and never goes away. Take some time to ponder that this Christmas. I know, you are going to wrestle with it. In fact, it is a good sign if you do, because you can’t claim the Christ as your King until you struggle with your thoughts, attitudes, and actions.

Do you need someone to rule the kingdom of your heart and bring you peace?

Don’t let the excitement of Christmas pass you by. Do like Mary did, as she…

**Slide 7**

**“…treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.”**

In the 1st century God sent His one and only exact representation and He lived among His people and died for them as a sacrifice for their contention with Him.

Think about it. And if you are one of us who contend with God, then praise Jesus (The Lord who Saves) as your King.