

Jesus: The Life of Christmas – Various Texts

I wonder this morning if we have truly remembered the true meaning of Christmas. Sure we say things like, “Jesus is the Reason for the Season” or “Keep Christ in Christmas” but what does it all mean? Christmas is more than just a Happy Birthday party for Jesus. It’s a time for celebration, but what is it that we are celebrating. Christmas should be a time of great celebration of Jesus’ birth, but it is also a time to celebrate and anticipate the proclamation of a promise. We need to remember that Christmas is about God making promises and keeping promises. Christmas is about the promise of life that is found in Christ. Jesus is the life of Christmas.

I. His graciousness, the promise of redemption

Genesis 3:1-15 - ¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”⁴ “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”¹⁰ He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”¹¹ And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”¹² The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

In order to truly understand and celebrate the birth of Christ we have to go back to the beginning. We have to go back to the foundational passage of the Christmas story. We have to go back to Genesis. It is here in Genesis, where we see it all unfold. In Genesis 1 we see, “In the beginning God.” From there we see the handiwork of God on display with the 6 days of creation, ending with the creation of man. Genesis 2 starts with God resting on the seventh day and then looks in detail at the creation of man and woman. We see that God is responsible for breathing life into man, God puts man in the garden to take care of it, God gives man freedom to eat of anything in the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and God created woman to be a suitable companion for man. Through two chapters we see the undeniable grace of God. Then we come to chapter 3, in which the enemy (Satan) is introduced and lures man/woman away by causing them to question the very word of God. Satan presents a very appealing case and delivers a great sales pitch as why they should listen and buy into what he is saying. What is Satan promising? Take a bite and be like God. Sounds tempting doesn’t it? The only problem Adam and Eve did not realize they were going to be victims of a false advertisement and marketing strategy. **We have a tendency to focus on what we don’t have, instead of what we do have. Satan will prey on what we don’t have or what we shouldn’t do. What is it that we don’t have? No Job, Maybe a better job, maybe we want a relationship, maybe we have lost a relationship, maybe we want more money, maybe we have no money, maybe we want to be happier, maybe we are not happy. We have the promise of grace, we have the promise of victory over sin, Satan, and death, and we have the promise of redemption. When focus on what we don’t have, we take for granted what we do have. Adam and Eve had everything, and there was only one thing that God had asked not to do. Talk about hoping for one thing and getting something entirely different. Instead of becoming like God, they actually sinned against God and thus separating themselves from Him. Adam and Eve threw fellowship with God away because they bought into a lie. All of us at some point have bought into to this lie and still some here today continue to buy whatever the enemy is selling, and during this time of the year, some of us go for broke, becoming more enslaved and indebted in our sins. What’s that one thing that you wish you had that you truly think or wish you had? Is it worth it? For some of us we are willing to throw away what truly matters in order to have what we want?**

Of all the holidays that we celebrate, Christmas is probably the most revealing of where our devotion, passion, and hope truly lie. What do I mean by this? For some people, we get caught up in getting the perfect Christmas present. We are drawn into the thinking that if I can just get this present or if I can just give this present I can have some sense of satisfaction/contentment in life. Where do we get this type of thinking from? This line of thinking comes from the commercialization of Christmas that comes from all angles constantly bombarding us with how to get into the Christmas spirit. How do we get into the Christmas spirit? For some, we decorate our house to the point where it resembles a version of Disneyland. For some, we get a second job so we can give people what they want for Christmas. For some, we border on lunacy willing to trample over people or spray people with pepper spray in order to get the perfect gift. Christmas time brings with a sense of anticipation and celebration from children to adults. Then Christmas comes, we open our presents, we eat our food, we spend time with family, we attend a church service (maybe a candle light service), we wonder how we will pay the credit card bill and in the end the anticipation and euphoria of Christmas is replaced with emptiness and despondency. We silently wonder to ourselves, is this it? What now? This is not what I expected. I thought I was going to get more out Christmas than this.

After buying what the enemy was selling, Adam and Eve tried to fix things, first they realized they were naked so they covered themselves, then when they heard God walking through the garden so they ran and hid. Then we see God faithful pursuit begin. It begins, with a question, “Where are you?” God knew where Adam was, He wanted Adam realize and confess what

he had done. After seeking out Adam/Eve and hearing their response notice what he doesn't do; He doesn't kill them or He doesn't disown them. He is gracious. **He begins the pursuit with a promise. Christmas is about God's pursuit of us, which adds to His glorious splendor. We blew it, He made a way.** What does He do? He turns to the serpent (Satan) and makes this promise (v.15). Through the offspring (Jesus) of a woman (Mary), Jesus will crush his head and you will strike his heel (The cross). Right before our eyes we see the first prophecy that Jesus would be born of a woman, defeat the enemy, and bring reconciliation to man.

II. His faithfulness, the preserving of His promise

Matthew 1:1-17- ¹ This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:² Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³ Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, ⁷ Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, ⁸ Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, ⁹ Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, ¹⁰ Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, ¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. ¹² After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³ Zerubbabel the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, ¹⁴ Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Elihud, ¹⁵ Elihud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.¹⁷ Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

We looked at the first book of the Old Testament; now let's look at the first book of the New Testament. The gospel Matthew opens up with genealogy of Jesus, the promised offspring/seed from Genesis. What is interesting about this genealogy is the cast of characters that make up this list. If you take time to research and run character references on these people you will find a people that are incredibly flawed. This is not a family tree that you would be proud of. What can we take away from this? None of these people did anything special to be a part of this genealogy, this is testimony of the graciousness and faithfulness of God. This is good news for sinners and bad news for the self righteous. There is nothing that we can do that will be accredited as righteousness in the sight of God. No gift we can give, no service we can offer, or no words we can say. Notice when we get down to verse 16 concerning Joseph and Mary, Joseph did not beget Jesus. Jesus was from God. Jesus was given as a gift, to redeem mankind. Grace, what an incredible gift! Through all the deceit, immorality, murder, and exile God stayed faithful to His word spoken so long ago, from the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; from the clan of Judah; from the throne of David; Jesus would be born. **Take time to reflect back on God's faithful pursuit of you. How was God been faithful? Do you recognize His all powerful and preserving hand in your life?**

III. Our worship, the culmination of His promise

Matthew 2:1-12 - 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."³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:⁶ "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. ⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

God's grace and faithfulness in keeping His promise paves the way for worship. Notice that Magi state that "Jesus was born King of the Jews." Jesus would not become a king, He is the King. This was not news that King Herod was excited to hear. King Herod's life is one marked with paranoia and wickedness. King Herod saw this as a threat to his kingdom and would do anything to hold on to what wasn't his to begin with. Since Jesus is King, He is worthy of our worship of our adoration. What is it that we worship? From this account and other gospel accounts of Christ's birth is where we get the Nativity Scene. In every nativity scene, Jesus is always the center, the focal point of the Nativity Scene. **Is He at the center of your Nativity Scene or has He been replaced? What have we replaced Him with? (Money, Possessions, Relationships) all of these things offer false hope and empty promises.**