



Title: Catching the Miracles of Christmas
Theme: Miracles of Christmas
Sermon Series: Grasping the Truths of Christmas

“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

Word became flesh

Miracles are an absolutely essential element in Christianity. If Jesus Christ is not God manifested in the flesh, then our faith is a silly myth. If He did not rise from the dead in bodily form, with the grave being empty and His appearance being recognizable, then we are yet in our sins and, of all people, the most miserable. If the miracle of grace is not verifiable in the transformation of the life of the one who puts his faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, then our Christian gospel is a miserable fraud. (The New International Dictionary of the Bible)

C.S. Lewis gives this definition, “A miracle is an interference with nature by supernatural power.” One of the greatest miracles to have ever taken place was in Bethlehem a little over 2,000 years ago, when God interfered with the natural way of bringing children into this world through a virgin who gave birth to a child.

Listen as I read about one of the greatest miracles of all, John 1:14, “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) Pray!

I would propose to you that one of the best ways to grasp the joys of Christmas is to fully understand and be prepared to tell others about the miracles of Christmas.

Many people including Christians, too often focus on the manger, the stable, and many of the other earthly surroundings of the birth of Christ but miss the truths and purposes of God becoming man.

Just what are four miracles that took place during that first Christmas season? Christians need to understand and be able to teach others who came at Christmas, how He came, who He came to and the benefits of His coming.

Image of the invisible God

Christians need to take the event of the birth of Christ and point people to the miracles that took place at the time of His birth. One being God’s coming to earth.

The world stood amazed and watched as man walked on the moon. They need to know, however, that there was a much more amazing event that took place in Bethlehem. Christ while keeping His Deity, came as a baby and walked this earth for 30 plus years. Christmas is not the celebration of the beginning of Jesus Christ, it is the celebration of His arrival on earth. It must be understood and taught that Jesus' true beginnings were not in a stable.

Colossians 1:15-17 says, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:15-17)

The Holy Spirit wants you to catch this in the first division of today's message, "He is the image of the invisible God." The key word is "image" (*eikon*) and here it means that Jesus is the image of God indicating the revelatory character of the incarnation. Yes Jesus is man; however, His character is the exact representation of God. (Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament; Word meaning in the New Testament) Jesus is not a feeble copy. He is the illumination of, the very essence of the heart of God. Our Lord said, "...Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father." (John 14:9) Jesus is the manifestation of God, literally displaying and proving the very existence of God.

The apostle Paul writes in Colossians 1:19 that "...God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in [Jesus]." (Colossians 1:19) Jesus is a portrait of God not a mere sketch. In Jesus you see the characteristics and the distinguishing marks of God. If you want to see what God is like you must look to Christ. Get a Biblical understanding of Jesus and the Holy Spirit will give you revelation of God.

This Greek word for image (*eikon*) is sometimes a diminutive form of another Greek word (*eikonion*) meaning portrait. It is the equivalent to our word photograph. It is also used when referring to a legal document which is drawn up for a receipt or an IOU. It always includes a description of the chief parties, so that there are no mistakes to all who are involved in the agreement.

I read a story about a boy whose dad went off to World War II for many years. The boy was just a toddler when his dad went away. Before he went away, dad made sure that he left a portrait of himself for his son. After a while the boy forgot about his dad as a person. He would look at the portrait of his dad more and more frequently and say, "If only Dad could step out of the picture and be real."

When Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit, the Word which painted the portrait of Christ stepped out of heaven, the Word became flesh and He is the perfect replica, the precise copy, the image of the Father who made the promise of sending a Savior who would save mankind from their sins. He is more than a picture, He can be known and Jesus makes known to us the image of God and who is God in the flesh. According to the Word of God and the testimony of the Holy Spirit who brings revelation and illumination of the written Word, there is nothing more necessary for God to do in order to show His love for us.

God so loved the world He gave His one and only Son and the Son willingly gave His life on the Cross of Calvary and God by the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. (John 3:16; John 10:14-18; Romans 8:11)

Religion that focuses on a baby in manger is just dead religion. But true Christianity grasps the truth that the One who laid in that manger is the very image of God, the very One who created all the things in heaven and earth. He controls all kingdoms, powers and rulers and is the one who holds all things together. (Colossians 1:15-17) Christians who understand, grasp and can teach this truth are Christians who enjoy the forgiveness of God, find peace of mind and their purpose in serving the Lord.

Being made in human likeness

There was much more than just a baby lying in the manger on that night in Bethlehem. He was God coming to earth. Another miracle worth grasping about Christmas is that God man.

Philippians 2:6-8: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself..." (Philippians 2:6-8a)

The words the Apostle Paul use in this passage of Scripture are chosen with great care to show the absolute reality that Jesus is God in the flesh as well as truly being man. He is flesh and blood just as you and I. The writer of the Book of Hebrews tells us the great benefit of the Lord becoming man.

"Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels He helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted." (Hebrews 2:14-18)

Satan, the first sinner, is very powerful and effective in taking those who do not have Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord and putting them into the bondage of sin. Just as Satan wanted to dethrone God, he finds those who have dead souls and unprotected hearts and causes them to dethrone God in their lives. This causes mankind to curse and reject the Lord, ignore God's will for them and neglect His teachings. They do not seek Him for guidance nor use their talents and abilities for His glory but for their own pleasures. These people live lives marred by the acts of the sinful nature spelled in Galatians 5:19-21.

Now is a good time to repeat that familiar phrase, "Jesus was born to die." He could not have been tempted as we are, lived a life of victory over sin unless He was of flesh and blood. Being man, the sins of the world were able to be laid upon Him. 1 John 3:8 says, "...The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." (1 John 3:8) The devil's work was destroyed on the Cross of Christ. (Matthew Henry, Barnes Notes, The Expositors Bible Commentary) Colossians 2:15 says, "And having disarmed the powers and authorities [of Satan]. He, [Jesus] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." (Colossians 3:8)

Christians who have come under the blood of Christ are now able to get victory over the flesh, the world, and the devil. The Apostle Paul writes, "For [God] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves." (Colossians 1:13-14)

Jesus coming to earth with the chief purpose of redeeming fallen mankind gave us a Savior, Priest or rather a Shepherd who is able to help those who are being tempted. The Greek word for "tempted" (*peirazo*) here can mean to try men by adversity, to test their faith and confidence in God. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary; Thru the Bible)

The Bible says, "Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted." (Hebrews 12:18) "Help" (*boetho*) meaning that Jesus will run to our aid at the hearing of a cry for help in times of suffering and pain, trials and temptations. He can give help and deliverance. (The Complete Word Study; The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible) He has been made like us in flesh and blood in order to sympathize with us and come to our aid and deliverance in compassion and as a Savior who is victorious.

Christians who understand what Jesus' coming as man has purchased for them, become like Dietrich Bonhoeffer who wrote to his twin sister, "It is good to learn early enough that suffering and God are not contradictions but rather unity, for the idea that God Himself is suffering when we suffer is one of the most convincing teachings of Christianity. I think God is nearer to suffering than to happiness, and to experience [the presence of the Lord in trials and temptations gives way toward peace and rest and gains a strong and courageous heart.]" (Citation: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in a letter to his twin sister, Sabine. Christian History, no. 32)

I had once read the testimony of a young lady who had let Satan lie to her about how she was worthless. At the age of 12 she began sleeping around, doing drugs and drinking and she gave her family a hard time by punishing them with her attitude because of unforgiveness and bitterness. She felt everyone who actually trying to help her where against her. One evening the family had to call the police because she had gotten so out of control. Over the course of just a few years she had been in and out of several mental hospitals. Drugs, drinking and a non productive life caused her to begin to hear voices.

She finally responded to a brother's invitation to start attending a Bible believing church and there the Lord met her cry for help and He touched her. She has sensed His presence in her life ever since that day when she received Christ as her personal Savior and Lord. She writes, "He restored my broken heart and now I am stronger than I have ever been. I am also now in Bible College and I plan to become a youth pastor." (Bec James: SheLovesGod.com)

Jesus, being born of the flesh, can minister to those born in the lowliest state for He was born in a stable. (Luke 2:7) He can minister to the poor for He was born to poor parents. (Luke 2:24) He can minister to those who are raised in despicable places and poor religious conditions. (John 1:46; The New International Dictionary of the Bible) Jesus knows how to come to the aid of those who are opposed by the religious and rejected by their listeners. (Mark 14:1-2; Matthew 13:53-58) He can minister to those who are being accused of being out of their minds and possessed by demons while serving God. (Mark 3:21-22) He can comfort those who have been betrayed by a co-worker in the work of God. (Mark 14:10-11) He can strengthen those who have been deserted in the heat of persecution. (Mark 15:50) He can strengthen those who stand before courts being falsely accused. (John 18:33) And He will be at the side of those who are being executed for the cause of Christ under false charges. (John 19:16)

The writer of the Book of Hebrews gives us this awesome promise about the Christ who is born of flesh and blood, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Jesus came through and came to common people

The blessings of having Christ being man born of flesh and blood, being fully man goes on and on and on. Testimony after testimony can be shared by those who have grasped the truths of Christmas, Jesus being fully man and God. Another truth worth grasping is that Jesus came through and came to common people.

Luke 2:7 says, “and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:7) Luke 2:8-11 says, “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 of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.’” (Luke 2:8-11)

The Bible goes on to say, “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.’ 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,” (Luke 2:15-17)

The Lord came through and came to common people. The King of the universe was not born in a king’s palace nor was His birth announced first to the priesthood. No, He was conceived in a poor woman, Mary, who was simply a willing vessel of the Lord and a kingdom seeker. I love Mary’s answer to the angel Gabriel, (Luke 1:26) “I am the Lord’s servant... May it be to me as you have said.” (Luke 1:38) She was submissive to the Lord’s will for her.

The secret to grasping the truths and joy of Christmas is to be a willing humble common person sold out to the cause of Christ.

There is something worth grasping about these shepherds who were most likely devout men seeking the kingdom of God. They were servants about their business ready to receive the good news God was about to give them through the angels.

Take note, no one is out of the way of a divine visit of the Holy Spirit of God. The call of God to hear the good news can come at anytime and the privilege of spreading the good news to others will come to those who are diligently working in their callings. These shepherds were obedient, diligently doing their work; they were not sleeping, but keeping watch.

Christians must have a willingness to spread all they know about Jesus Christ. There can be no slumbering, nor wishing they were somewhere else, but faithfulness to their call and having a heart hungry and ready to pass on what God’s Word says about Christ.

We might live through Him

Christmas came to common people and Jesus came for our benefit. So Christians may no longer be bound by sin but be changed and set free to live a life of righteousness, walking in fellowship with God, Christ and in step with the Holy Spirit.

1 John 4:9 says, "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him." (1 John 4:9)

There is a huge difference between existence and true life. All of mankind who walk upon this earth are existing but not all have life that is truly satisfying and pleasing to God. A famous doctor once said that men would find a cure for cancer more quickly than they would find a cure for selfish living. Jesus Christ gives Christians His purpose for their existence and directions for which they are to live. He gives them the heart desire and the strength to live pleasing lives to God. This life in Christ brings peace and this living turns mere existence into fullness of a life that testifies to the Lord's mercy and grace. (William Barclay)

Jesus explained clearly why He came to this earth. John 18:37 says, "...In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth." (John 18:37)

"Truth" (*alethia*) here means that Jesus would testify to divine truth or true faith found only in and through Him. He is the key source of understanding the true gospel and in the declaration of the will of the One true God. He through the Holy Spirit of truth can guide in true worship as opposed to heathen practices. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament)

Heathen practice today is that worldly thinking among men that wants to recognize God only when it seems to be beneficial to them. For instance, when a tragedy strikes our nations borders, then prayer is okay. However, to seek God in prayer for daily guidance is a violation of a so called "Separation of Church and State." There is a worldly opinion that Christ should not be mentioned nor worshiped publicly during the Christmas Holiday season because it may offend others.

Biblical truth is that the Children of God are to "...pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayer." (Ephesians 6:18) Truth is that the only reason for this season is to celebrate the birth of Christ. To rob God of the worship due to Him and call it "Happy Holidays" so stores can have record sales for the year is to rob God for financial gain.

In John 10:10 He says, "...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10) It is because of Jesus that God will send His Holy Spirit into the lives of Christians. Thus, they may live a full life walking with the Lord and exercising their Holy Spirit gifts under the guidance of sacrificial love. All this for the cause of Christ and for the benefit of all they serve.

Grasp the truths of Christmas this holy season and pray for opportunities to tell others about the miracle of God's coming to Earth when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Grasp the benefits of Jesus being fully man so He can be the compassionate Shepherd to the Children of God. Let the Holy Spirit place so deep within your heart the truth that Christ through the Spirit of Christ indwells common people and makes great use of them. Lastly, meditate upon the benefits of Christ coming.

Let us pray!

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