

## **“The Gift of Christmas”** **Matthew 1:18-25**

**Intro:** There is something completely wonder-producing about the birth of a child. 3 years and 3 days ago we welcomed our firstborn daughter, Parker Sophia Turley, into the world. It was a night that we will never forget. The first time we laid eyes on her was a moment that is almost impossible to describe. A thousand thoughts ran through my mind: this new, tiny life belongs to us? this feather of sheer grace is our baby? God, what will she be like? God, what will she accomplish in the world? God, help us not to blow it as parents?

The most important birth in all of history occurred about two thousand years ago in a little town called Bethlehem, and the writer of the first gospel in the NT is going to tell us in clear terms why the birth of Christ is the most important birth the world has ever known. Please open your Bible to Matthew 1:18-25. That’s page \_\_\_\_ .

**FCF:** As we begin to look at the Christmas story, I want to caution us with one sobering reality. On this Christmas Day, there is a great danger in our heart to get so caught up in many of the great things about Christmas that we all love so much: Christmas gifts, and delicious Christmas food, Christmas carols, and Christmas time with friends and family, and the start of the NBA season on Christmas. But let’s not miss that the fact that what makes Christmas, Christmas is the fact that the Son of God broke into human history and in that moment God gave us the greatest gift the world has ever known.

**The Point: Jesus is the greatest gift the world has ever known.**

And I believe we’ll see three truths that substantiate that claim in our passage this morning. #1

### **I. Jesus is the gift of God’s promise (18-20).**

- Verse 18 begins by simply saying: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way....”
- The word translated “birth” actually could be translated “genesis,” referring to the origins of Jesus’ earthly life, and it is vital for us to grasp.
- Explain betrothal... was a period of engagement that carried more weight than it does today. Betrothal was a pledge to be married that was legally binding. Only a certificate of divorce could break it, and any infidelity was considered adulterous.
- Can you imagine, then, the feelings of Joseph of it says “before they came together” and we all understand what that means, Mary was “found to be with child”? He must have been sick. Like any fiancé, who had remained sexually pure, the only explicable reason for Mary’s pregnancy was that she had been unfaithful.
- “Joseph was a just man...” He could not in good conscience marry an unfaithful woman, but he did not want to embarrass Mary. Thus, he decided he would “divorce her quietly.”
- After he decided his course of action, God intervened by sending him an angelic message through a dream... “
- Angel: “Joseph, Son of David...” ties back to the ....Genealogy... 1:1 – Son of David, Son of Abraham...
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- **Jesus was the Promised One, the coming Messiah. All of biblical history pointed to his coming, even that he would be born of a woman.**
  - Genesis 3:15, which scholars refer to as the *protoeuangelion*, the first announcement of the gospel, says:
  - 1:22-23
  - Matthew’s formula

- Virgin Birth
  - Though it's difficult to wrap our minds around the idea that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, it is important to remember that this is the clear witness of the gospel writers and most certainly embraced by the early church. All the major creeds state the virgin birth as a fact. The Apostles' Creed:
  - I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; The third day He rose again from the dead.
  - What is so remarkable about Matthew's mention of the virgin birth is just how unremarkable it reads. This narrative simply states it as a matter of fact.
  - Of course, many today, deny the virgin birth of Christ. Many have serious doubts and do not believe in the supernatural... Let me just say if we can buy verse 23, that Jesus is God in the flesh, or the very first verse of the Bible, Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," then we can buy 1:18.
  - The gospel writers were writing historical accounts. We may not be able to explain how the Holy Spirit worked this miraculous conception in Mary's womb, but we know from Mary's response in Luke 1 (How will this be, since I am a virgin?) and the angel's message to Joseph in Matthew 1, that this was their clear understanding and testimony of these events.
  - Conceived of the HS – ensured the holiness of Christ. Because he was born of the Holy Spirit, Jesus did not inherit the sin nature that all people carry. But he was born without spot and completely righteous, and his sinless life from that point made possible his substitutionary death for us possible. Our salvation, in a very real way, is wrapped up in the virgin birth of Christ. Being born of Mary, Jesus was fully man. Being conceived of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was fully God.
  - In this the wisdom of God shines forth: If Jesus had come to earth without being born, it would be hard to see how he was a human like us. But if he had been born to two parents just as we are, it would be hard to see how he could be fully God.
- The magnitude of this moment, the Incarnation, is impossible to calculate.
  - Galatians 4:6
  - "Jesus Lord at thy Birth." "Come thou long expected Jesus born to set thy people free..."
  - But Matthew doesn't dwell on the Incarnation. His purpose is to focus on the why of his coming more than his coming itself.
- Before we move on, let's not miss the presence of the Trinity in this passage. The Triune God is at work in every detail of redemption, and we see that here in the passage...

## II. Jesus is the gift of God's salvation (21).

- The angel gives Joseph specific instructions in verse 21. You shall call his name "Jesus"
- This had the force of a command... "you will call his name"
- Some parents wish it were this easy... "Baby Name Bible"... God the Father provides the earthly name for his Son.
- Why? After all, Jesus was a common name in 1<sup>st</sup> century
- Parents loved this name because it was a name freighted with meaning:
- Joshua led the people of God into the Promised Land.
- Even more than that... the meaning of the name Jesus was "Jehovah saves" or "God saves"
- But... there is something distinctly different about this child receiving the name Jesus, and Matthew tells us at the end of verse 21: "for *he* will save his people from their sins."

- Save... Jesus did not come to show us a better way to live. He came to give us a completely different life. He came to rescue us from the mess we find ourselves in. This is what the word save means. A mess that is displayed in the world around us, and if we are willing to admit it, a mess that is found within us.
- But this is what the gospel is all about. It announces that there is an alternative, a way out, a great escape from the consequences of our sin...
- His people... mission to save a particular people... His name carries a mission with it. His purpose is already spelled out from birth. As so many have said, this baby was born to die. His was a rescue mission. From what?
- If we could for a moment, let's push pause after the word people.
- Jesus is on a rescue mission. Rescue us from what? You fill in the blank...
  - Financial woes? All illness? All physical suffering? ?? ?? ??/ ???
- From their sins...
  - We need to be saved from our sins... the just penalty...
  - Sin is a universal epidemic. Sin is rebellion against God. When we sin we are essentially placing our ways above his ways. In essence, in our sin, we are saying God, you really don't know what's best for me, or I don't give a rip what you think, or perhaps both.
  - Our sin is of such magnitude against the holiness of God, that God himself had to deal with it!
  - Ps. 130:8 "God himself will redeem Israel from all their sins."
  - Jesus is our rescuer.
    - He brings *atonement*. His substitutionary death *covers* over our sin.
    - He brings *deliverance*. He is the true and better Joshua...
    - Jesus brings redemption, reconciliation, and justification and forgiveness to his people.
  - Every stroke of impatience. Every hint of jealousy. Every selfish thought. Every self-serving move. Every cruel word. Every time you neglected the good you knew you ought to do. Every ounce of pride. Jesus died for all of it!
  - We need to be saved from the comprehensive effects of sin... Jesus is the one who brings God's ultimate salvation and the restoration of all things.
  - "No more let sins and sorrows grow, Nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow Far as the curse is found."
  - Have you experienced the tragic effects of the curse of the fall? We live in a world riddled with disease and disaster, oppression and injustice, and we live with hearts riddled with sin, hearts that are prone to reject God and the wonders of his love, and yet Jesus makes his blessings flow into all of that! He will bring complete salvation, complete restoration.
- We should make explicit what is implicit in this text: We are not simply saved from our sins, but we are also saved for God. We are not simply cut loose from the penalty of our transgressions. We are freed to live a totally different life: a life with a holy purpose, full of vitality and joy!
- Jesus' mission of salvation did not entail making a few minor tweaks in our lives as if we were not that desperate. Jesus' mission of salvation brings recreation at the core of who we are.
- The name Jesus indicates what this baby will do. But the next title we find in verse 23, tells us who he is and that is where we come to the third beautiful reality of our text....

### III. Jesus is the gift of God's presence (22-25).

- Not only is Jesus our great Savior, he is also Immanuel, God with us.
- Jesus was not simply a great teacher. He was not someone who simply possessed a moral excellence like no other. He was God in the flesh. This claim is essential to Christianity.
- Immanuel – God with us. *With us. With us!*

- No greater blessing exists than experiencing the presence of God
- Jesus did not simply bring God to us. He was God among us.
- The birth of Christ is the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. He is the Messiah who is God with us, and he is the one Isaiah spoke of in 9:6-7 who is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- Jesus is God in the flesh, the God who humbled himself and came down to dwell among us.
- In this we learn how imminent, how intimate, how close Jesus is to his people. Make no mistake: if you are in Christ and Christ is in you, he dwells in you by his Spirit and closer than your very fingertips!
- No matter how joyful this season is for you, or how hard it may be, Jesus is with you.
- He stands beside you as the Good Shepherd of your soul and is ready to distribute the comfort, joy and peace that he came to bring.
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- God's gracious presence with us strengthens us, sustains us, and it also enables us to take steps of obedience that cause us to glorify him. That's exactly what Joseph did, and he did so quickly and completely.
- **Verses 24-25**
- Verse 25 brings our attention back to where Matthew wants it, on the name: Jesus.
- Jesus. God with us. The Savior of the World.

### **Conclusion:**

**Do you know the promised gift of God's salvation & presence through Jesus? Receive the gift. Give the gift.**

**Receiving more of God's presence, more of God's grace in salvation and then giving away the results of his good work in us should be the daily rhythm of our lives. It should not just be a Christmas rhythm, but an everyday rhythm of life.**

**We accept, we receive Jesus as Immanuel, God with us**

“Man's maker was made man, that He, Ruler of the stars, might nurse at His mother's breast; that the Bread might hunger, the Fountain thirst, the Light sleep, the Way be tired on its journey; that the Truth might be accused of false witness, the Teacher be beaten with whips, the Foundation be suspended on wood; that Strength might grow weak; that the Healer might be wounded; that Life might die.” - Augustine of Hippo (Sermons 191.1)

That perfect Life lived to die that all who receive his death might live.