

The Miracle Given

Isaiah 9

ADVENT CANDLE: Last week we worshipped the God Who promised us the Miracle of a Savior. I am so glad God always keeps His promises. Today we turn our attention to the way the Almighty kept His promise to send Messiah to save us. That was a miracle indeed.

INTRODUCTION: Before time began, God determined that

He would love the world so much that He would give His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

He had sent the promise through Isaiah.

Isaiah 7:14 ... Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

Immanuel! God with us!

People of faith were excited by the prospect that God Himself would intervene in the sordid affairs of mankind to set things right!

God would come and heal the hurts and restore hope.

God would dwell with them, defeat sin and devil, and vanquish death!

Many of the faithful waited with grand expectations.

But a hundred years passed, and now they are in captivity.

Another hundred years passed and a remnant had returned to Jerusalem, but the temple and the walls of the city have not been rebuilt, and Messiah has not yet come.

Still another century passes by. Fires burn in the altar standing before Zerubbabel's Temple. Nehemiah has led the people to rebuild the walls of the holy city. Revival has come to many hearts of the citizens of Jerusalem. Yet Messiah still has not come to the temple as foretold by the prophets.

And for the next 400 years, the One True and Living God is silent. After the words spoken by Malachi, God sends no other prophet. The bonfires of hope and expectation sparked by the promise of Immanuel now flicker only in the hearts of a few. **Most have forgotten.**

But God has not forgotten!

The eyes of the Almighty are fixed upon an obscure village in the Roman Province of Galilee called **Nazareth**, a wide spot in a dirt road with **less than 400 residents**.

I. THE ANNOUNCEMENT

Mary, the daughter of Eli, **was a teenager in Nazareth**. While if you asked her if she believed in the coming of the promised Messiah, she certainly would have said, "Yes!," her mind was much too busy to think about that.

In fact, she was not thinking about anything these days that was not related to Joseph, the son of Jacob. My how her young heart had raced the day Joseph asked her to be his bride. She had so hoped for this. She was madly in love with him, and she was just sure that they were meant for each other.

Mary did not know how right she was. God Himself had brought them together. **Both** Joseph and Mary **were descendants of King David**, although in these days of Roman domination, royal descent from a Jewish king did not mean much. But that fact still mattered to God. He had promised that the Messiah, Immanuel would come through David's kingly line, and the Almighty God always keeps His promises!

So while Joseph was building a room onto his father's house so that the betrothed couple could celebrate the wedding feast and begin their new life together as husband and wife, Mary was dreaming about Joseph while still doing the chores assigned by her mother in their own house.

That's when everything changed!

- Not just for Mary
- Nor even just for Mary and Joseph
- Not even just for Nazareth or Galilee or Israel

That's when everything changed for the world.

God dispatched an angel to talk with this young virgin woman to reveal her part in God's plan made so very, very long ago. Across the light years of space the angel Gabriel flew to land in the courtyard outside Mary's home and walk inside through the open doorway.

As you can imagine, Mary was frightened by his sudden appearance.

Luke 1:30–33 30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

The import of all the angel said was blocked by his declaration that she would conceive and bear a son. Immediately she protested.

Luke 1:34 ... "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

And here, my friend, Gabriel explains to Mary and to us the most miraculous part of the Miracle of Christmas.

And the angel answered and said to her,

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you,

and the power of the Highest will overshadow you;

therefore, also,

that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

Luke 1:35

God was keeping His promise! More than 700 years had passed since Isaiah declared a virgin would bear a Son Who would be Immanuel, God with us. Now it was happening.

How could Mary comprehend the fullness of the message God had sent her in this moment? Surely she could not! Her mind must have been overwhelmed with thoughts like

- What about Joseph?
- What about my parents?
- What about the 400 people of Nazareth, every one of which know me, know my parents, know Joseph and his parents, and know the we are only betrothed and should not have yet consummated our marriage?

Yet with all the unknowns, all the risks, **Mary said,**

"I am just the handmaiden of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word."

Folks, may I pause the story here long enough to tell you how much Mary's response challenges me every time I read it or think about it.

God has never called me with anything either as grand or as challenging as He did Mary, yet I am embarrassed to admit that those times that He has specifically called me to do something, I am afraid I have not responded as quickly as this teenage girl did.

I have a tendency to try to count the costs.

Now that is not a bad tendency concerning human plans and endeavors. In fact, Jesus taught us that it is wise to count the cost of building a tower before you start construction to make sure you can finish it.

And that is what I began to do the last time I sensed God calling me to a very specific task, namely, leading our church to become intentional in reaching Millennials and Generation Z so that St. Andrew Baptist Church could remain a Four Generation Church.

I knew the Lord was leading me to commit to leading you.

So I started counting the costs.

- Change – I used to like change just to kind of stir things up. I'm over that! I no longer particularly like change.
- Change in the way I do some things – Wow! I really don't like that. If I thought there was a better way to do something, I would be doing it that way already. So why should I want to change the way I do something?
- Unity – I cannot tell you how much I value, how much I appreciate, how much I love the unity of our church. But I know that major change threatens unity. A lot of people feel the same way about change that I do.

I could have made a longer list, but God prompted me to stop.

When it's God giving the instruction, we don't need to count the cost.

We just need to trust God and obey, because God provides for the costs.

- **When I want to build a tower, I need to make sure I have the money to finish it.**
- **But when God tells me to build a tower,**

I just need to get out my shovel and trowel,

because God has more than enough resources to finish the job.

And at God's prompting concerning leading the church in Building 4 Generations to Come, I had to put away the cost counting and the evaluation of exactly what that would look like for me, even trying to figure what all that would look like for the church, and just trust God, and say "yes."

And eventually, that is what I did, but I respect and admire Mary so much because she did it so much faster. And the tower God was using her to build was so much bigger and cost so much more than the little tower God was calling me to build.

Mary just said, “I am God’s servant. I’ll do whatever He wants!”

- Quickly, God took care of things with Joseph, even though God had to send another angel to Joseph to tell him, “Joseph, God is keeping the promise He made through Isaiah. Mary is the virgin who will conceive and bear a Son, and this Son shall be Immanuel – God with us.”
- God took care of their parents, although we are not told the details of how He did that.
- God even took care of the community, not that Mary and Joseph were never the subject of gossip, or the objects of finger pointing and false accusation, but somehow God settled the hearts of the community that Mary and Joseph were able to go ahead and marry each other right there in Nazareth. And after they fled to Egypt to protect the Christ child, when they were able to return, they came back to Nazareth.

IN PRAYER – God, even now in my life grow me to trust you like Mary did.

- Grow me to say “yes” to You as quickly as Mary did.
- Lord, lead each of us who are so prone to count the costs,
- that when the instruction is from You, to know You can handle all the costs.

II. THE BIRTH

Thus far in the story, God has kept His promise to send the Savior through the line of King David, but God has other promises to keep. One of them is that **the Savior would be born in Bethlehem**, the city where David was born.

So God stirs the heart of another king. His name was Caesar Augustus.

Augustus was a pagan. He did not know or believe in the One True and Living God. But that is no barrier to the Almighty.

Proverbs 21:1 The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.

God put in his mind to order a census throughout the region of Palestine, causing every man to return to the city of his ancestors to be enrolled for the taxation of the empire. So the Scripture says,

Luke 2:4–7 4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. 6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be

delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

In reading these words, given by the Holy Spirit to Dr. Luke, physician, historian, author, we find the epitome of irony.

That in the city of David the king,	lodging was refused to the greatest King of David's line.
In Bethlehem, which name means "house of bread,"	a room could not be found for The Bread of Life.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The woman who found favor with God, • the handmaiden of the Lord who so quickly yielded to God, • the only woman in the history of the earth to conceive a child while still a virgin, 	That she would be sent to a stable to give birth.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, • Who only nine months before had abandoned His throne, walked out the gates of pearl, and came down to the earth to take on human flesh in the womb of His virgin mother, • that He Who was the one and only provision of God for the salvation of the souls of men and women, 	That He would spend His first night in this world sleeping on the hay of a feed trough.
There He lay!	
He Who spoke the universe into being	making only unintelligible sounds.
The One Whose hands shaped the sun, the moon, and stars,	now able to only grasp the finger of His mother.
The only beloved Son of God the Father,	sent into the world to be the Lamb of God to be sacrificed for sin upon a cross.

God's promise was kept!

God's Son the Savior was given.

And **they called His name Jesus**.

III. THE BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT – Isa 9

God's thoughts are not our thoughts and neither are His ways our ways.

We send the Birth Announcement after the child is born.

God sent the Birth Announcement of His Son more than 700 years in advance through Isaiah the prophet.

We read it in Isaiah 9.

Isaiah 9:6

For unto us a Child is born,

Unto us a Son is given;

And the government will be upon His shoulder.

**And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.**

CONCLUSION: Do you know Him? Have you trusted Him? Has the Savior become your Savior through faith in Him?

He loves you. Do you love Him?

Christmas is a time to celebrate His entrance into the world.

Have you allowed Him entrance into your heart and life?

The King of Kings came as a baby in the manger.

Are you allowing Him to be King of your life day by day?