

Joke - What did Adam say to his wife on Christmas?

It's finally Christmas. . .Eve!

Seeing Jesus In The Nativity

Show video - skitguys nativity

Luke 2:6–7 (NIV): 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.

With these words, the Gospel of Luke sets the stage for the most iconic Christmas scene of all time, the nativity. Year after year, we see this scene. Maybe you have those ceramic figurines on the mantle, or wooden carvings on a coffee table, could be plastic statues in the yard, some even have a living nativity in the church sanctuary. While historians and theologians tend to agree that all the characters of the Christmas story were most likely not all together in a barn on the first Christmas, the nativity paints a beautiful picture of the whole Christmas story in one fell swoop.

Have you ever stopped to think that each character not only reminds us of their own story but also helps point us to Jesus? Let's look closer at the Magi, the Shepherds, Joseph, and Mary and see just how well we can see Jesus in the nativity.

1. Like the Magi who may have traveled some 900 miles to bring the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Jesus left Heaven to come to earth to bring the gift of God's love.

John 1:14 (NIV): The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Think about what this a scripture entails. His journey to “become flesh” is that he left the glory of heaven, put on a human suit and was born in a manger to bring us a gift. That gift John goes on to say:

John 3:16 (NIV): For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The gift Jesus was bringing was, in fact, himself! Jesus made the journey to bring the greatest gift. When we look at the magi with their treasures, we also need to remember the journey our savior made and the gift he brought to us.

2. Like the Shepherds: Jesus Proclaims The Good News For Everyone

When we see the shepherds in the nativity, we are reminded that the angels just told them, “Fear not, behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that shall be for all the people!” And, as we read in Luke, they are going to leave the manger and share “the word concerning what had been told them about this child.”

So, not only do shepherds help us see Jesus, the Good Shepherd, but they also help us see Jesus, the “Good News Sharer.” Luke 4 says:

Luke 4:42–44 (NIV): At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. 43 But he said, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.” 44 And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

We don’t generally think of Jesus as a preacher, but think about it Jesus says, “I must proclaim the good news”! That is why Jesus made His journey. He

came not to judge people or make sure they followed the rules. He came as a gift and shared the good news that God loves them.

We often quote John 3:16 and then stop at that verse but look at the next verse. . .

John 3:17 (NIV): For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

3. Like Joseph: Jesus Chooses Mercy Over The Law

Joseph may be the most overlooked character in the nativity. There he stands, over the manger, watching Mary and baby Jesus. The gospels won't tell us anything about Joseph past Luke chapter 2. However, what we read about him prior to that is pretty great. Scripture tells us that he was righteous and good. He was also a man who chose mercy over the law.

The gospel of Matthew tells us that Joseph had plans to “quietly divorce Mary” because she was pregnant with someone else's baby before they were married. The “quietly” part of that speaks to his character in and of itself. However, heaven would intervene, and Joseph would choose to keep Mary as his wife and raise the child as his own. This is an act of obedience for sure, but others would also see it as an act of mercy. On one occasion, he would say to a pharisee:

Matthew 9:13 (NIV): But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

If grace is getting what you don't deserve, mercy is not getting what you do deserve.

Jesus is the ultimate man of mercy. He would show it, and he would teach it throughout his time among us. One of the last things he would say as he

sacrificed his life on the cross was, “Father, forgive them. They don’t know what they are doing.” In other words, “Show them mercy.”

James tells us that mercy triumphs over judgement.

Yes, Jesus would make His journey to share the good news of the gift of God’s love and also teach the world what mercy looked like.

4. Like Mary: Jesus Chose God’s Will Over His Own

Before the Magi began their journey, before the shepherds could share the good news, before Joseph could show mercy. . .Mary had to say “yes.” We read in Luke chapter one, “I am the Lord’s servant, may it be to me according to your word.” The angel tells her God has chosen her to have his son. None of it makes sense to her, but she says, in essence, “Not my will but yours be done.” That baby of hers would grow up and say the same thing in a garden the night before his death.

Jesus understood choosing God’s will over his own long before he would pray that in the garden. His earthly ministry was all about doing the will of the Father. He said:

John 6:38 (NIV): For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

He would teach his followers to pray:

Matthew 6:10 (NIV): your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Remember in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus himself would pray:

Luke 22:42 (NIV): 42 “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”

By choosing God's will over his own Jesus shows us that He knew He was on a mission. He came for a purpose and that was to allow you and I to come into right relationship with God. This trip to earth from heaven to deliver the good news that God so loves and that He shows mercy was not a vacation, it was a mission.

Like Jesus: We can do all these things too.

No doubt, the most important person in the nativity is the baby Jesus. He is the gift, the good news, the mercy found in a manger, and God's good and perfect will for us all. While we can and should see all those things when we look at that little baby, we can also remember the words of the grown-up Jesus:

John 14:12 (NIV): Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

What a statement! Jesus really believes in us. He sees something in us that many of us don't see in ourselves. "All who have faith in me will do the works I have been doing." That statement covers much more than what we have been discussing here.

However, it does mean that we, too, can make the journey to bring our gifts. God has equipped you, given you every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. And we must be willing to use our gifts, give away our gifts, we can cross the street to provide a gift of help to a neighbor in need. We can cross the city to deliver a gift of encouragement to someone this Christmas season who is down on their luck and needs a some. Even now, we can cross the aisle and give someone here a gift of love or forgiveness.

It means that we can share the good news that God loves you. What if every time we see a nativity, our hearts are stirred like the shepherds on that first

Christmas night, and we found the good news of Christmas uncontainable and just had to share it with others?

It means that mercy is not something to be hoarded but shared. If Jesus could muster up the love to show mercy to those who nailed him to the cross, certainly, we can show mercy to those in our lives who don't deserve it.

It means that we have the ability to choose God's will over our own. It begins with working it into our prayers, and then we will find it working into our lives. We would do well to remember that in some form or fashion, we, too, are on a mission trip.

God created you on purpose for a purpose. He calls us to go, shine, and glorify Him in everything we do.

Candle light portion of service

Isaiah 9:2 (NIV): The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

There is darkness in the world – can you see it? Can you feel it? Yet in the midst of it there shines a light. It is the light of Christ Jesus. It is not darkness that gets rid of the dark – it is the light that dispels the darkness. He has come to overcome the darkness in our lives.

But that is not all – He has asked us to share his light. Jesus said:

Matthew 5:14–16 (NIV): 14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

I think Edith Wharton may of had this Scripture in mind when she said, “There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.

And if the people of God will continue to display the light of the world, darkness has no choice but to flee. For light and dark cannot co-exist. As Francis Bacon once said, "In order to shine so brightly, the darkness must be present.

Church we cannot get so caught up with the darkness you believe is around us, we need to shine the light That is within us. See if we will just give light, the darkness will disappear all by itself.

Dwight L. Moody said, "We are told to let our light shine, and if it does, we won't need to tell anybody it does. Lighthouses don't fire cannons to call attention to their shining - they just shine.

This is the good news of Christmas. That Jesus came as the light of the world, so that we can leave behind our prison of darkness and walk in newness of life.

Jesus came to set the captives free. What imprisons you today? Let our hearts be captivated with the Light of the World.

Psalm 119:105 (NIV): 105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

Light candles and play - Noel by Lauren Daigle

Communion portion

As we get ready to share communion together tonight allow me to share a few thoughts which I first read from a book by Beni Johnson. . .

Jesus Christ shed His blood to cut a New Covenant with His creation. To forever bridge the divide of sin that had carved a chasm between man and God, He initiated a New Covenant that was prophesied by Jeremiah. This New Covenant at once echoed and fulfilled the promises made to Abram.

Instead of a sacrificial animal, torn in two to signify the covenant, God offered His own Son—the spotless Lamb—whose body would be broken as the greatest sacrifice.

Jeremiah 31:31–33 (AMP) - 31 Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 Not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was their Husband, says the Lord. 33 But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, says the Lord, I will put My law within them, and on their hearts will I write it; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.

The blood that was shed was a covenant promise for all of eternity. The blood of Jesus paid for everything.

And it changed everything forever. We take His blood, represented in the juice, as a memorial of what Jesus did. By His blood, we can be saved, healed, and delivered.

I want us to just for a moment take a breath, connect with the heart of the Father.

If you would get your wafer from the top of your communion piece, this bread represents Jesus and His broken body.

Listen as I read this:

(Matthew 26:26 AMP) “Now as they were eating Jesus took bread, and after blessing it, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’”

The juice represents the blood of Jesus, our salvation. Jesus’ blood changed everything for each one of us. Forever.

When that stone was rolled away, He rose in victory. We get to participate in that victory and live forever under the New Covenant and partner with the Holy Spirit. You and I are able to go boldly before the throne of Heaven. And we have a Savior who intercedes on our behalf. You will never be alone. You will never be found unworthy of His love. By His blood, we have been saved.

Matthew continues with these words:

Matthew 26:27–28 (AMP) - 27 And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you; 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which [ratifies the agreement and] is being poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Let us drink the cup together