

Preposition Christmas God is “for” you!! December 8th, 2019

Last week we looked at the extraordinary, yet true, statement that God is “with” us. That was clearly communicated through the prophet Isaiah, 700 years prior to Jesus’ birth and then by an angel to Joseph when he was told,

Matthew 1:22-23 (NIV) *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).*

The Apostle John describes this “God with us” this way:

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” (John 1:14 (NIV) And the previous 13 verses clearly explain that the **Word** is Jesus.

But as we all know and probably have experienced at some point in our lives, just the fact that someone is “with” us doesn’t necessarily imply that they are really “with” us. I’m confident that all of us have likely experienced having someone physically with us but their minds and hearts were somewhere else. But God, through Jesus, made it clear that He is not only *with us*, but **He is also for us**. And He proved over and over again through writings and actions that He is not just for you if you look great and are a high achiever. But God proved **He is for you, even if you’ve messed up** – over and over and over again. And that’s certainly evident in the events surrounding Jesus’ birth.

For instance – it’s evident in **Jesus’ genealogy** recorded by Matthew. Genealogies in those days were a way to brag about your family lineage. It’s kind of like a **resume** or **Facebook**. You can edit what details about your life people are privy to know. In first century genealogies you would certainly include prominent people others would be impressed with but leave out the less desirable people. And in that culture and time, **you’d rarely include women in the genealogy**. So, it certainly would have seemed shocking when God inspired Matthew to include **5 women**. So, while that’s shocking you’d assume there must be a good reason to include these women. They must have been honorable famous Israelite women that everyone would be proud to have listed in their genealogy. However, if you study closer you’ll discover that the makeup of these 5 women includes:

- **Tamar** – who **dressed up as a prostitute** in order to trick her father-in-law to sleep with her after her husband died.
- **Rahab** – who was actually **a prostitute** who gave Israelite spies a place to stay overnight and insider information on Jericho.
- **Ruth** – a courageous widow and **a Moabite, not a Jew**.
- **Uriah the Hittite’s wife** – (what’s her name, **Bathsheba**). By bringing up Uriah, it would have immediately brought everyone’s attention to one of the most well known stories in the Bible. The story of when King David slept with married Bathsheba and then arranged to have her husband, Uriah, killed on the battlefield.
- **Mary** – who as a young teenager is pretty inexperienced in life, that’s before the angel appeared to her and told her she was going to become the mother of Jesus.

Why would God choose to include these 5 women, when He could have easily passed over them? Because God wants to show that He is for all people and wants to use people who have messed up and don’t have the greatest reputations. God is showing that He does amazing work with people who the rest of society have rejected and who would have never been included in their genealogies.

Then we have the forerunner to Jesus, his cousin John the Baptist. His parents are described this way: **Luke 1:5-7 (NIV)** *In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly.*

But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

Notice that conjunction "But". That implies that what's about to follow provides something different than what preceded it. The first section is the facts and God's opinion of Elizabeth and Zechariah. The section after the "**But**" is the world's opinion of Elizabeth.

This statement is saying that they are too old to have children. Childlessness in that culture was viewed as a curse from God. So, Elizabeth and Zechariah, were good people, but weren't viewed by society as blessed by God. That's why it's so fascinating and intentional by God to state: "*Both of them were righteous in the sight of God*" They weren't likely viewed as "*righteous*" by others in the town in which they lived, but God viewed them that way. And if you read on, you'll discover that God showed He was "**for**" them in blessing them with a child, even in their advanced years.

Fast forward to the night Jesus was born, and you have the **first visitors** being invited to see him as the lowly stinky shepherds. If you were a shepherd, you weren't viewed very highly by society. It wasn't anything personal, it was just a cross the board rejection. They were viewed **as untrustworthy** and they were **stinky** and thought of as **rejects** (couldn't get a real job). But they weren't rejected by God. He went after them and sent an angel to let them know that He wanted them to be the very first visitors to see His Son. God is saying to them, "**I am for you!!! I want YOU!!!**"

Notice how many times the angel emphasizes that it's them God wants to invite.

Please follow along with me and when I get to the word "**You**" shout it out with me.

*But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring **you** good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to **you**; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to **you**: **You** will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."* (Luke 2:10-12 (NIV))

4 times in 3 verses the angel emphasizes "**You**"!!

Do you think maybe God felt He needed to convince them that they were welcome? That He actually wanted them. How many birth announcements do you think these shepherds had received in their lifetime? I doubt very many. But this invitation trumps all other invitations.

Over the past two nights we hosted our annual Live Nativity event where well over 400 people came through and saw the portrayal of Jesus' birth. There were lots of great moments. Two great ladies and sisters, who I've become friends with simply through this event, came and I was able to share a hug and talk about their situations in life. And there were many families with young children who walked through each station reading the signs to as they walked through the story of Christ's birth.

But no doubt my favorite experience happened Friday night with a bunch of angels. Railey invited a bunch of her friends and they came and dressed up as angels. And they were singing at the top of their voices such classic Christmas songs as "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer", "Frosty the Snowman" and "The Twelve Days of Christmas". None of those have anything to do with the story of Jesus' birth. Come to find out later, they knew very little of the story of Christ's birth. Most of their awareness of the details of Christ's birth came from the Simpsons portrayal of it (which isn't entirely accurate - but that was their reference point). These singing angels were asking such probing questions as:

- *What's this whole thing about anyways?*
- *Why did Joseph get Mary pregnant?"* and the obvious follow-up question: "*What? God actually got Mary pregnant? How does that work?"*
- *"Why didn't Joseph get Mary a nice place to have her baby?"*

After their portrayal as angels, Rebecca was able to walk them all through each station, reading the signs and explaining the story and trying to answer their questions.

As I reflected on all of this, I got so excited because I pictured God up in heaven watching this saying, **"That's exactly the kind of people I would invite to see Jesus' in the manger"**. They need to know, and you need to know and everyone you know needs to know that God is for them and that's the point of Jesus' birth – the point of Jesus leaving his place in heaven and coming down to the earth He created. It's to show people that God is for them and **He's for you!!**

******* And you need to understand this point – God is for you, not because of who you are but because of who He is.

God was constantly saying to the non-Jew and the ones who were rejected by society: **"I'm for you and I'm coming to you."**

So, as you celebrate Christ's birth this season, don't just think about the cute little baby in the manger. Also reflect and celebrate God's profound truths: **He's for you!! He came for YOU. And He loves YOU!!!**

God doesn't just know your name – He knows every detail about your past, what you're struggling with right now and the great future planned out for you using your gifts and talents and special abilities and passions that He's placed within you. And a big part of living out the future He has in store for you means turning your life away from sin and self-centeredness and giving your whole self to Jesus. Saying to Jesus – **"I want to follow you with everything I've got!! I'm done living my life for me and I want to live it for you!"** The rest of your life will be spent praising and glorifying the greatness of Jesus through your words and actions. Letting everyone see the love of God living in you and overflowing through you. Is that what others see in you? That's the transformed life that happens when you pursue becoming the You God wants to use you to change the world. God is amazing at using flawed broken people to change the world – but He needs you to yield yourself fully to His transforming and empowering power.

God doesn't need you to be perfect in order to use you powerfully, but He can't use you to your full potential as long as you keep **playing games with God**. As long as you keep God in your pocket for emergencies and then blame Him when your life isn't going the way you'd hoped it would you'll never be able to be used fully by God. People seriously pursuing God understand that life is not always going to be easy, but it's worth it all when God is with you and for you through it all. These types of people are sold out **for** God and **to** God. God is reflected in how they handle adversity in their lives. They keep saying and believing that **"God is good"** even when life is tough. And you're an inspiration for me constantly.

Romans 8:31-34 (NIV) ***If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.***

God is for you – and not merely with you. And He showed how much He was for you by leaving heaven and coming down and becoming a human, being born in a manger and ultimately dying on a cross. And even while hanging on the cross Jesus showed He's for us by asking the Father to forgive those who were crucifying Him and by forgiving the convicted criminal hanging next to Him and promising that He'd soon be with Him in Heaven.

If you'd like to accept Jesus' gift of His life for your sins, and to begin the next life of giving all of you to loving and serving Him, then I invite you to come as we stand and sing a song. As we're singing come forward.

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How does Christ’s birth show us God is “with” you?

Christ’s birth also shows God is “ _____ ” you?

Jesus’ Genealogy:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

What truth was displayed in God choosing John the Baptist’s parents?

Why did God personally invite the shepherds to see Jesus?

God is “for” you not because of who you are but because of who _____ is.

How does God use a person most effectively?

What evidence have you seen that God is “for” you?

Have you ever questioned if God is “for” you? Why?

What difference does it make to you that God is “for” you?

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