

# The Light of Salvation

INTRO: Today we celebrate the third Sunday in Advent. We are getting closer to this very scene we just witnessed - closer to the birth of Christ. We are beginning to experience what Mary and Joseph were recounting - the anticipation of the birth, of the arrival of the Savior, their child.

That is the feeling we get the closer we get to Christmas. We realize how close the arrival of the Christ child is.

You have to wonder if Mary and Joseph were making the connections to the passages we often look at during Advent. Did they know that they were the ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah's words "A virgin will conceive and bear a son, and you will call him Emmanuel."

Did Mary have any idea that she was carrying in her body the "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace?"

They must have had some idea that their child might be the person "the people walking in darkness who have seen a great light" have seen. The angel told Joseph that Jesus would "save His people from their sins." The angel told Mary that her son will be "great and will be called the Son of the Most High." God will give Him the throne of David, and He will reign forever.

I think they had some idea, that Jesus would be this light that Isaiah spoke of. I doubt they had any idea how it would all unfold. However, because of this understanding, their anticipation might have been greater than that of any other family. They already witnessed miracles in the conception of Jesus. What other amazing things might the Lord do? I think we can say with certainty that their anticipation was very high.

- I. This light of salvation that Jesus brought into the world still shines.
  - A. It shines into the darkness of all kinds
  - B. No matter what may be oppressing us during this season
    1. Fear
    2. Sin
    3. Sorrow
    4. Failure
    5. Suffering
  - C. The Advent season reminds us of the good news of the Savior's birth
  - D. Allow me to suggest three ways in which we can receive the Savior, and stand in the light of salvation that He brings
- II. First, Look for Jesus expectantly
  - A. Sounds so basic, doesn't it? Look for him with expectation?
    1. Yet if we do not do this, we will never find Him
    2. We will skip right past the greatest moments in human history

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- B. Too often I think we get wrapped up in the expectancy of Christmas and forget the reason we are celebrating in the first place
  - 1. We have our Christmas lists and we want to get things for loved ones that they love and appreciate
    - a) Then there is the added stress of paying for it all
  - 2. We look forward to being with family for celebrations and meals
    - a) Yet sometimes we get so caught up in all that must be done that we can't seem to enjoy what is right in front of us
  - 3. We look forward waking up with our families and opening the presents Christmas morning
    - a) There are so many things to look forward to
    - b) And sadly, the birth of the Savior, the Light of our salvation gets pushed into a backseat
- C. This is why we have to fight so hard to be looking for Him with an air of expectation
- D. When a family is preparing to have a baby, we often refer to the mother to be as "pregnant" or "expecting"
  - 1. That is because she is pregnant with potential life
  - 2. And the reality is there is another human being growing inside of her that is just waiting to burst forth into this world and make their presence known
- E. As Mary and Joseph travelled to Bethlehem, they knew the baby would be arriving at any time
  - 1. I would think Mary was probably not thrilled with the timing of the census
  - 2. And assuming she really did ride on a donkey (because Scripture never says that - that is part of the legend of Christmas) I can only imagine that did wonders for speeding up Jesus arrival
- F. Think about the other members of the Christmas story
  - 1. The shepherds were told of the birth of the Messiah
    - a) They were so excited the text says "they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in a manger"
    - b) They did not walk into Bethlehem nonchalantly
    - c) They walked into Bethlehem with passion, with a sense of expecting to see the miracle of the birth of the promised Messiah
    - d) They knew what they were looking for and they would not stop until they found it
  - 2. The wise men
    - a) They knew that there was something special about the star they were seeing

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- b) They knew that it meant something special had taken place
  - c) They followed the star, for hundreds, maybe thousands of miles to see the Messiah
  - d) They came fully expecting to witness God's amazing miracle
    - (1) They came ready to worship the Messiah
    - (2) They came ready to worship Him with gifts of monetary value
    - (3) They came ready to bow down before Him
    - (4) They came expectantly
- G. This is what we need in our modern world - a sense of expectancy
- 1. Too often we have low expectations - its like we have seen it all on our world
  - 2. We often aim at nothing, hitting it every time, because we have no expectations
  - 3. This is so important for Christmas time
    - a) We must expect that the Savior, whose birth we celebrate every year, will be born in us afresh and anew
    - b) We must expect that as we sit in anticipation, the Light of Salvation that the Savior brings will be reinvented in our hearts each and every year in a new way that brings us closer and in deeper fellowship with Him
- III. A second way we can receive the Savior is to prepare for Him throughly
- A. Again, something that sounds basic, but can be more difficult than we think
  - B. When Mary and Joseph had their baby, they had to make all kinds of preparations
    - 1. No doubt they had to begin making clothes for the baby
      - a) Blankets, and wraps, and tiny little togas
    - 2. They had to figure out where the baby would sleep when He came
      - a) Not like we do today with cribs, a baby room, and all that goes into it
      - b) Next to which parent will the little guy sleep on the floor
    - 3. They had to start thinking of how they will feed the baby
      - a) How they will wash the baby
      - b) How they will rear the baby
      - c) How they will keep little baby Jesus away from Joseph's sharp carpentry tools
    - 4. They had to prepare for the trip to Bethlehem, knowing the baby would be born on the trip, away from their home
    - 5. All kinds of things they had to prepare for
  - C. But the truth is, this is the one baby in history that not only did the family have to prepare for, but every family has to prepare for

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1. If we do not prepare our hearts for Christmas, we miss out on the blessings this little bundle of joy brings into the world
  2. If we do not prepare our hearts, we miss out on what this little bundle of joy brings into our lives
  3. If we do not prepare our hearts we risk allowing all of the urgent things of the season to push out the MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE SEASON
  4. It's almost like a game of hide and seek
    - a) When the person that is "it" counts down they announce, "Ready or not here I come"
    - b) And that is Christmas - "Ready or not, here it comes"
    - c) So we need to prepare so we will be ready for this amazing Light of Salvation to shine on us
- D. How do we prepare for His coming
1. First, open your heart to the enormity of what is happening
    - a) God just put on a flesh suit to come hang out with us
    - b) If that doesn't demand your attention I don't know what will
    - c) It is God getting down to our eye level
      - (1) You ever notice there are two times when you get down to eye level like with a child, and they have one thing in common
      - (2) First is because you are dead serious about what you are saying and you want to make sure they get just how serious this is
        - (a) Like when you have to scold or punish
      - (3) Second is when you are seeking to understand or seeking to communicate something important and/or intimate
      - (4) The thing they have in common: communication
      - (5) God gets down to our eye level to communicate with us
        - (a) Sometimes to scold
        - (b) Sometimes to get eyeball to eyeball with us and whisper, "I love you"
  2. Second, after you acknowledge how huge this really is, clear your schedule for some time to meet with the Light of your Salvation
    - a) I am not asking you to forget all the other things in life - there is no doubt they are important as well
    - b) What I am saying is you need to schedule in time for reading God's Word, for reflection on God's Word, for prayer
      - (1) It's no different than anything else we need to do regularly for our walk with Christ

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- (2) However at this time of year, with how crazy people's schedules can become, it becomes VITAL that we schedule this time with our Savior

- IV. Finally, how we can receive our Savior is to welcome him graciously
- A. Another basic thing that we have to be mindful of
  - B. When I say graciously, I mean we have to open our very lives to Him
  - C. Every parent, when they have their first child has all kinds of reservations
    1. Will I be a good father/mother
    2. Will I be able to protect them
    3. Will they like me
    4. I'm not sure I can do this - can we put the baby back until I grow up some more?
    5. But the fact is that when the baby arrives, you fall in love with him or her
      - a) As such you open up your very lives to them
  - D. Mary and Joseph did no less with Jesus
    1. They received Him as a precious gift
    2. And we should be receiving Him as a gift as well
  - E. I think it was my very first mission trip out of the country. We were in a suburb of Tijuana, Mexico
    1. We had been working on fixing up a playground by painting a basketball court near where some of the people of the church we were working with lived
    2. They told us that if we needed to use the bathroom there was a member of the church down the street that we could go to
    3. Well, I took a few of the kids in our group over there
      - a) It was difficult at first because none of us spoke spanish, and the lady of the house spoke no English
      - b) She tried several times to communicate a message with us, but to no avail
      - c) Finally she stumbled on words that we recognized and understood what she must have been trying to tell us all along
      - d) She said, "Mi casa, es su casa." - Translation: "My house is your house"
    4. She welcomed us with open arms
      - a) This woman that had, by Mexican standards, a modest home
      - b) She wanted us to know that she would receive us for anything - arms wide open
  - F. This is an attitude that we need to cultivate when we think about Christmas and receiving the Christ child

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1. We need to welcome the Savior in the same way
2. “Hello! Come on in! Make yourself at home.”
- G. Back in early 1970’s Ray Jenkins, a special assistant to the President wrote an article for the NY Times entitled “The Quiet Drama at Gate 67, in Atlanta”
  1. It was Christmas Eve, and there had been an ice storm in Atlanta
    - a) We all know how well the south does with ice storms
  2. There were many anxious passengers trying to get to their destinations to be with family and friends for Christmas
  3. The gate was a sea of people from all walks of life
    - a) A student on the way home from college
    - b) A traveling salesman
    - c) A grandmother, dreaming of the precious family she would like to get home to
    - d) A young mother cradling her infant to her chest
    - e) A business man that looked like he was indifferent to the whole scenario at Gate 67
  4. Few people talked with each other as they impatiently waited for their flight to be ready
  5. The stillness was broken when a young soldier, perhaps 19, started an animated conversation with the ticket agent
    - a) It was obvious from the bits of overheard conversation that the boy had a low priority ticket, and was trying to get home
    - b) He said this would be his last Christmas with his family as he was deploying to Vietnam after the holidays
    - c) The ticketing agent apologized but said there was nothing he could do
  6. Finally, the plane began to board
    - a) All those with confirmed ticket got on in easy order
    - b) Those with low priority had to wait to see if there was space available - there wasn’t
      - (1) The soldier was not going to make it home for Christmas
  7. Eventually the businessman stepped up declaring, “I have a confirmed ticket. I would like to give it to this young man.”
  8. The boy, tears streaming down his face thanked him profusely
    - a) The man said, “Good luck. Have a fine Christmas. Good luck, son.”
  9. The plane pulled away, and the few that saw what took place at Gate 67 had a glow in their hearts in what they witnessed

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- H. The question I leave you with is: Will you make room in your heart this Christmas for the Savior? What kind of glow would come over you if you did?
- I. Welcome the Savior graciously today.