

## God's Birth Story

*"While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born ..." Luke 2:6*

Friday, December 1, was a deflating day for my household this year. November 30, our baby's due date, had come and gone and now a whole day later the dread was setting in that this baby might not be coming for a while. My wife, Madeline and I, were trying to stay positive and hopeful. But as many of you know, when that due date passes, regardless of how accurate it is or not, it's hard not to feel like all the air had been let out of that balloon of anticipation.

Yet, God in His wisdom and mercy didn't plan for my family to have to wait too much longer. In the early hours of Saturday, December 2, Madeline woke me up to tell me that it was time. She knew that things were moving toward the moment of delivery. So, I moved quickly out of my grogginess anxiously getting things in motion as we had planned. As Madeline powered through labor, I called the doctor to say that we'd be heading that way. Then, I got a hold of my mom so that she could come and stay with our other son as he was sleeping. After my mom arrived, we were off to the hospital.

The doctor we were using worked out of Dupont Hospital and living on the other side of town, we had a little bit of a trip to get there. As we drove, the sense of urgency increased and so did the speed of my driving. We weaved through the parking lot and then finally arrived at the Birthplace door at Dupont. I parked the car and quickly went through the first set of doors for the hospital. Just beyond the next sliding doors was a wheelchair and I made a beeline for that wheelchair.

However, the doors wouldn't open. In my frantic state, I completely missed the security officer window to my right where I needed to check in about why I was there in those wee hours of the morning. After speaking with the security officer on duty, I gained access to the wheelchair and promptly wheeled it out to the car for Madeline. Once Madeline was in the wheelchair, I wheeled her through the first set of doors and again was stopped at the second set of doors. We still had to register with the security officer so that they had the information they needed to admit us.

But while we were answering questions, still in the entry way to the hospital, the time came for the baby to be born. Now the officer had called once already for a nurse to come and meet us, but realizing what was about to happen, she called again for a larger medical team to come immediately. It was like a scene from a movie playing in slow motion watching the medical team hustle around the corner and down the hallway to us. Just as they arrived, so did our baby boy, Silas. In the aftermath of this stunning moment, as I'm in shock and disbelief, my wife shared my favorite line of sheer joy of this moment that went something like this, "Dan, I'm not pregnant anymore!"

Having this experience so close to Christmas has been fun and unique. I told my wife, that I feel like I might now have a better idea of how Joseph might have felt when he knew that Mary was going to have her baby in that unexpected location of a stable and not a room in the inn. Even more than that, I like to think that for all the ways we describe this moment for Mary and Joseph – in both word and song as calm, peaceful, silent, etc. – that there was also a moment where Mary turned Joseph and said with great joy, "Joseph, I'm not pregnant anymore!"

Birth stories are something else. Unlike any other stories I've heard, these stories create connections and bonds that are on a different level. Whether you're the one telling the story or hearing it, the bond and connection a birth story creates is a special sense of unity and familiarity. There's a real sense of brotherhood and sisterhood behind these tales because they describe in such a foundational way what it is to be human. Every person has a birth story and on top of that many people also know some of the birth stories of their family members. And so, no matter the amount of detail known for the birth story and regardless of a person's unique experiences with birth, there's an undeniable notion that underlies a birth story – the notion that we can relate, we can bond, we can connect to a story of birth.

Tonight, we recall the greatest birth story ever, God's birth story, Jesus' birth story! In stunning fashion, the Creator of the Universe, the One, Eternal God chose to have a birth story and He did so for you

and for me. Our God chose to be born of the Virgin Mary so that He might relate and bond to us. So that, He might truly be Emmanuel, God with us. Tonight, our God retells His birth story so that He might reconnect us to Himself.

Since Adam and Eve's fall into sin, we, like all of humanity before us are disconnected from the God who made us. Sinful generation after sinful generation has passed down this severed state. And tonight, we gather together as people who've not only inherited this condition, but as people whose personal thoughts and actions regularly contribute to this disconnection with God Almighty. Whether we acknowledge this state that we're in or not, the reality of this truth impacts all of our lives. We are disconnected from God and need to be reconnected.

Sometimes, our disconnection manifests itself as we lose sight about the true meaning and purpose for this Christmas season. Like Charlie Brown, the holiday commercialism and selfish attitudes we experience leave us distracted and discombobulated. Our misguided focus and priorities untether us from anything substantial during this Christmas season. We find ourselves carried away by the waves of the world's hubbub and frenzy only to end up stranded and isolated on our very own island of misfits.

Other times, our disconnection surfaces in the midst of loss. Broken relationships and memories of deceased loved ones cloud the Christmas season's message of hope. And suddenly those Hallmark, holiday movie heartbreaks become outdone by the reality of our own lives. Even more than the fictional characters of those movies, we find ourselves empty, wounded and detached.

And still other times, our disconnect mirrors George Bailey. In desperation, we cry out to God in prayer only to think that God's only possible answer will be a swift and harsh judgment, a well-placed punch to the mouth. Now these are just a few examples of the disconnect from God that our own, beloved, holiday season media highlight and there is little doubt that many more examples could be shared if we took the time.

While humanity was in this helpless state of disconnect from God, the time came for the baby to be born, the time came for the Savior to be born. God's birth story. Jesus' birth story. Tonight, is the powerful reminder that God Himself chose to be born into this disconnected world so that He might reconnect this world to Himself. Tonight, we remember our Savior who was born so that He might grow, live, die and rise to reconnect us to Himself for all of eternity. Tonight, we remember our Savior who was born so that He might personally relate and bond with us as a fellow human being.

We have the Savior who knows this world's temptations that distract and discombobulate. In our place, He resisted and remained focus and for our failures He has earned us forgiveness. We have the Savior who knows loss. In our place, He defeated death and has brought us the hope of restoration and reconciliation. We have the Savior who knows the harshest answer of judgment. In our place, He endured the cross and has won for us the right to be children of God. Children, whose desperate pleas will, for Jesus' sake, be met with mercy and love.

This is the greatest birth story ever! God's birth story, Jesus' birth story, it reveals the real sense of connection between God and His people. Jesus' birth story tells of the personal and intimate relationship and bond between the Savior and those He came to save. Every person has a birth story and so does every person's Savior, Jesus Christ. He chose to be born so that He could make us part of His family. And so, no matter the amount of disconnect we've known from God and regardless of our unique experiences in adding to this disconnect, there's an undeniable truth that flows from Jesus' birth story – the truth that we are forgiven, we are saved, we are connected to Him again because He is the Savior born for us tonight. O holy Child of Bethlehem, / Descend to us, we pray, / Cast out our sin, and enter in, / Be Born in us today. / We hear the Christmas angels / The great glad tidings tell; / O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel! Amen.

Merry Christmas,

Pastor Dan