

“Jesus Chose His Birth for You”

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way” Matthew 1:18.

Birth stories are unique. Just the simple fact that every person here has their own personal birth story which no one else completely shares makes these stories unique. And over the past few years, I’ve had the privilege to hear parts of numerous, unique birth stories from a variety of people. I’d guess that some of you here, also have heard your fair share of birth stories. Whether it’s the birth stories of your grandchildren as told by your own children, or the birth stories of your own children as told by your spouse, or even your own birth story as told to you by your parents or others who know it, we have some familiarity with birth stories.

Some birth stories have the element of surprise. Especially in generations prior, we might hear stories of families learning on delivery day that they would be welcoming multiple babies into their family. Other stories reflect that surprise when the actual gender of the newborn child wasn’t what had been anticipated. There are stories too, where families, to their surprise, realize that the names they chose for some hard-to-explain reason just aren’t the right match now that they hold that little one in their arms and so a new name needs to be picked.

Then there are suspenseful birth stories as well, especially when unexpected factors complicate and intensify an already emotionally charged moment. Those births where delivery had to happen in an unexpected location. Births where the child’s neck has the umbilical cord wrapped around it or the child’s heart rate plummets to an unsafe threshold or an emergency C-section has to occur not to mention so many other challenging circumstances that arise and create suspense.

Yes, birth stories are unique. While I’ve merely highlighted just a couple aspects of surprise and suspense, there’s no doubt that so many other things come into play to make these stories so unique which time won’t allow us to consider fully in this moment. Yet, for all the special details that come with each birth, there’s one thing that every birth story shares, the child-to-be-born doesn’t get to choose the circumstances of the birth. And in a world plagued by sin, this reality brings with it all sorts of struggles.

We know people who are in a constant battle to overcome the social and financial challenges into which they were born. We are friends with people who long for families who actually care and know how to show it in a loving way. We have family members who wrestle and try to come to terms with their adoption or that their loved ones have jobs that put them in a spotlight they didn’t ask for. We have our own struggles too as we inherit certain health challenges from the previous generations that will always hang around and never truly go away. None of us, got to choose the circumstances of our births and no matter the circumstances we received, they are most certainly infected by sin.

This shared fact about each of our otherwise, unique birth stories, is what makes Jesus’ birth story stand out all the more. In the buildup to next weekend’s celebration, amid all the unique details we know and love, this weekend I want to remind you of one simple and powerful truth, Jesus chose His birth for you. Unlike all the other birth stories we may know and consider, Jesus got to choose His own birth story. And what the sinless Son of God chose

was to actually be born into this world of sin for your sake and mine. Of all the perfect situations and circumstances, He could have made, He chose this birth story for the salvation of a sinful world.

In Matthew's account of Jesus' birth story, we are reminded of the Lord's choice as Matthew connects an Old Testament prophecy to Jesus' birth. After writing about the events of Jesus' birth, Matthew provides this commentary, "**All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)**" (1:22-23). Long before His delivery day, Jesus picked His birth story so that God would truly be with His people.

The prophet whom Matthew quotes is none other than Isaiah and Isaiah's record of this prophecy of the virgin birth is our first reading this weekend. Again, the Lord's choice is emphasized by the surrounding context that Isaiah gives. Speaking to King Ahaz, the Lord provides an opportunity for Ahaz to receive a reassuring sign of His protection as Ahaz is under pressure from enemy nations. However, wicked and faithless Ahaz refuses to ask for a sign so the Lord chooses a sign for Ahaz anyway – a sign that ultimately points to this chosen birth story for Jesus.

Yes, Jesus chose His birth for you. He chose to be born into a shameful and messed up family line with the likes of wicked and faithless King Ahaz. He chose to be born of the virgin, Mary, despite the likely, sinful labels this unbelievable situation would bring. He chose to be adopted by Joseph, even though He had no earthly father. He chose a humble and needy birth to a poor carpenter and his wife, in a lowly stable over His heavenly throne. He chose to be the sinless One born among sinners so He might be the sin-bearer of us all.

Because Jesus chose this birth for us, we truly have a God who is with us in every circumstance regardless of what our birth story might be. Because of Jesus' birth we know we have a God who understands the brokenness of sinful families. Because of Jesus' birth, we know that we have a God who isn't going to abandon our sinful families. Yes, Jesus chose to be born into this sinful world so that we who have no choice but to be born in sin in this sinful world might be redeemed and saved through Him.

Jesus chose this birth story so that He might live, die and rise for our full and complete salvation. For from His chosen birth story, came the sinless life He chose to live in our place. From His chosen birth story, came the sinner's death He chose to die in our place. From His chosen birth story, has come righteousness and resurrection hope He has chosen to give us by His grace. From His chosen birth story, comes our story of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. From His chosen birth story, comes our new birth story into His family for all eternity! Yes, Jesus chose His birth for you so that you might have a new and perfect birth story as a chosen child born of God. Especially this Christmas season, may this birth that Jesus chose for you bring you the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding and may it keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

In Christ,

Pastor Dan