

God Speaks Series

Part 3: Through the Nativity Story

By Brian Flewelling, 12.15.19

This morning we're going to sprinkle some traditional Christmas hymns in throughout the message. I've asked several people to help me out.

Slide: "Those who dance are considered mad by those who cannot hear the music."

Those who dance to the Holy Spirit are considered mad by those who cannot hear the music.

1 Corinthians 2:14 "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned." We know the Spirit is with us.

The question is **What is the Spirit saying today that is revealing the fulness of Jesus in me? What unique work is he doing today** that is revealing the fulness of Jesus in our county, our church, my family?

Emmanuel – means "God is with us." Not, God-was-with-us 2,000 years ago, back there! (but he got off at that exit) It's not, one time, ten years ago God told me not to take that job.

Emanuel—his very nature is to reveal himself--because that is what love does. It makes itself vulnerable. It gives itself away. Jesus said, the **Holy Spirit will take what is mine and make it known to you**. Dynamic revelation is still happening. Humanity is still feasting on Divinity for those that are hungry. Divinity is still breathing in humanity.

What God started in the manger He is still completing in us through the Holy Spirit!

How is the Spirit of God revealing his power over your addictions?
How is the Spirit revealing whole-hearted relationship to my loneliness?
How is he revealing the trustworthiness of Jesus to my anxiety?
He's revealing his compassionate forgiveness to our marital separation.
Over our social corruptions. And our empty religious services. To our mindless routines. Over our culture of mammon.

This morning I want to look at four nativity scriptures that will help unlock the power, the preparedness, and persistence to see God move in our day and our time.

Starting with Luke 1:11-17. Matt's going to read God's revelation to Zechariah this morning.

Luke 1:11-17 (Matt)

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to (Zechariah), standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. 13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear

you a son, and you are to give him the name John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. 16 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Slide: Zechariah--God still speaks power to his purposes.

- Elizabeth and Zechariah cried out for a child--the completion of their togetherness, a legacy. To be normal. To have a family.
- They had no idea that God was going to use that prayer to give them not just what they asked for—a son, but a prophet son-- something so much more than they knew how to ask for. A someone who would have the power of the Holy Spirit to make a way for the Messiah!
- God is still answering prayers. But I am often in the business of praying prayers that are good for me. ILL:
- There's nothing wrong with those prayers. He wants us to pray those prayers. Those prayers are important to him.
- But he wants to supply bigger answers to bigger prayers that we don't even know how to pray yet.
- He wants to give us prophetic children who are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, as was Elijah, as was John the Baptist, who made a way for the King in their generation.
- What is the friend of the Holy Spirit? Urgency.
- When you see people recognize their desperate need for God—that's fertile soil. The Kingdom can grow in that. We start crying out – Father we need you. The Father is always revealing himself to the needy.
- Urgency is a friend of God's. Complacency is the enemy of his greater glories.
- As we sing our first song, **O Come All Ye Faithful** I pray that there would be a new sense of urgent need in our land for the King's arrival.

Song: O Come All Ye Faithful

Luke 1:26-37 (Mandy)

26 In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. 31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."
34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. 37 For nothing is impossible with God."

Slide: Mary--When God speaks, it comes with a price.

What happens when prioritizing God's presence costs us in ways that we didn't expect?

When the baby comes, everything is about the baby. Feeding the baby. Sleeping the baby. Changing the baby. In parenting we've discovered that nurturing life will push you to your limits.

When Jesus Christ comes into your life, "everything is about that baby" -- everything revolves around His life. Nurturing his presence isn't a hobby. It takes everything you've got. And sometimes it costs us in ways we weren't expecting.

The second greatest miracle in history is about to happen to this teenage Jewish girl. And nobody understands her. Thirty years later the Nazarenes were still ridiculing Jesus for being born out of wedlock—the shame of it. *Am I willing to embrace what is good for him, even when it seems bad for me?* What happens when following Jesus becomes a sword that divides us from people who are important to us? When he becomes a wedge that steps between me and the things that are precious to me. When his sword shaves off real chunks of my time alone, because he wants me all to himself.

Can we, as the Christian martyrs who threw away life itself say, "You can have all the world, but give me Jesus. Now that he has come. I will not let him go. His friendship has proved better than life itself.

As we sing **Hark the Herald Angels Sing** let his supreme value be the praise of your lips and life.

Song: Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Luke 2:8-15 (Matt)

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great

joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ^{ES} the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

¹³Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

¹⁶So they hurried off

Slide: Shepherds--God still speaks to the unprepared.

The shepherds were the only ones who didn't deserve God's appearance. Zechariah was prayerful. Mary made herself ready in righteousness. The Magi were watching and on pilgrimage. But the shepherds, for all we know, they could have been in the middle of a game of rummy.

Their lives were interrupted by God. It is a reminder that God pursues even those who aren't ready, weren't diligent, are rather unremarkable. *Isaiah 65:1* "I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.'"

It is the glory of God to reveal himself to old brown men like Abraham and young black girls like Hagar. And powerful Persian sultans like magi, and clumsy tongued tradesman like the shepherds. We all stand equally small before the Son. It doesn't matter what manner of life was like before he came, what matters is that when he came we dropped everything and ran after him.

Song: The First Noel

Number 24:17; (Mandy)

"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.

Matthew 2:1-6

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem **2** and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. **4** When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. **5** "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,

are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."

Slide: Magi—Our persistence unlocks God's provisions to produce the promise.

500 years before the magi, Daniel had taught the Persians the ancient Hebrew prophecies. If the magi hadn't cultivated an attentive ear to the unchanging scripture text, and to the ever-changing witness of the stars, -- they would have missed what God was doing after the long dry period of inactivity.

Sometimes when God promises to give you bread in your life, he hands you a seed. And it lays dormant. "What is this? I wanted bread and he gave me a seed."

"All of my faithfulness and miraculous provision is in this."

This is foolishness to the mind. In twenty years, this will fill your fields, and set your table with banquets of delicious cakes and provisions you could not imagine. What are you going to do with it right now?"

You have to trust that what I say will come into the fulness as I said it would. But that trust is exhibited when you plant the seed. Water the seed. Protect the seed. God planted eternal life into Mary's womb, but she had to nurse it and grow it into maturity.

What word of encouragement, or promise of purpose or resolution of scriptural truth has God written on your heart? Drive away the vultures. Keep the covenant promise he made with you. "Nothing is impossible with God."

Let's end our service with this song of celebration.

Song: Joy to the World