

THE DEAD MADE ALIVE

Merry Christmas Vertical Church!! What a glorious day it is as we come together today to celebrate the birth of our SAVIOR and our KING! The birth of JESUS truly is the day in history when God set in motion the process for making ALL THINGS NEW!

Luke 2:8-20 (NIV) **8** And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. **9** An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. **11** Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. **12** This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

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

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

15 When 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."

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. **17** When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, **18** and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. **20** The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

When we began our THROUGH THE BIBLE JOURNEY back in February we started with Genesis and the fall of mankind into sin where Adam and Eve partook of the TREE of The KNOWLEDGE of GOOD and EVIL. And since that day God has been working to redeem and make new what sin has disfigured. The story of the Bible is God's story regarding His redemption plan for us. A plan to undo the curse that had been placed on every son and daughter of Adam born since. What was this plan? It was a plan where there was going to be one SON who would be born that would not be under the curse. Unlike you and I this Son wasn't to be born by the seed of man but He was to be born by the seed of the Holy Spirit. This promised Son of God would be the SAVIOR of all mankind and would undo the curse and allow God to make ALL THINGS NEW. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise made throughout the ages and He is the ONE who makes ALL THINGS NEW.

Matthew 1:18-23 (NIV) **18** This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be

pregnant through the Holy Spirit. **19** Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

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

Today begins **Week 47** and the FINAL SIX WEEKS of our year long journey of reading through the Bible. And it is in these final SIX WEEKS that we are going to see how it is that God makes good on His promise of making **ALL THINGS NEW**. Because of Jesus God makes NEW what sin has tried to destroy! And that is GOOD NEWS and a reason for celebration TODAY! It is the reason the shepherds and angels rejoiced. It is why Mary pondered these things in her heart. The miracle of the birth of Jesus was just the beginning of God fulfilling His promise which was first made to Adam and Eve and later passed on to Abraham and his family.

So in honor of Christmas Day and the celebration that takes place in honor of Jesus and His arrival on this earth, I want to remind you of THREE REALITIES CONCERNING OUR SALVATION so that we can live out our calling as people made alive by Christ and so we will not let Christmas just become another holiday. If you have your portion of God’s word turn with me to **EPHESIANS 2**.

Reality #1 - We are all born into sin

EPHESIANS 2:1-3 (NIV)

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, **2** in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. **3** All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

When it comes to our relationship with God we all start at the same place. We start with a life broken and cursed by sin. We are considered dead in sin not because of sinful acts that have been committed but because of our sin nature which we inherited from our father Adam. No one is better than anyone else. We all have the curse of sin hanging over our lives. Left to ourselves we are deserving of God’s wrath. Which also means there is nothing we can do to make ourselves acceptable to God. We are in a sense hopeless without help. Without someone who can break us free. The “ways of the world” Paul is referring to is the world order (such as humanities values and standards apart from God and Christ) In **2 Corinthians 10** Paul refers to these ideologies as fortresses in which people become imprisoned and need to be set free.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (NIV) **4** The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. **5** We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

This is what makes the GIFT of Jesus so special. This is what makes Christmas so special. Through Jesus God fulfilled His promise to mankind and pierced the darkness of our sin by giving to us One who has the ability to break us from this curse of sin and obtain something much better. **We are all born into sin**

Reality #2 - We are saved by grace

EPHESIANS 2:4-9 (NIV)

4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5** made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. **6** And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, **7** in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. **8** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **9** not by works, so that no one can boast.

Salvation is a display of God's glory as He demonstrates both His boundless LOVE and MERCY for the spiritually dead due to their sinfulness. More than anything else a spiritually dead person must be made alive by God Himself as He grants us grace. One who is dead cannot do anything to change their current situation without help. This is why salvation can never be achieved by our own merit because our status before we even begin is DEAD. It is only through God's great love for us can our situation be altered. The spiritual power that brings the DEAD to LIFE is the same power that energizes every aspect of what it means to live for Jesus. Notice the past tense of RAISED and SEATED used in verse 6. This indicates that our being raised to life and being seated in eternity is IMMEDIATE and a DIRECT result of our salvation. This transaction takes place when we trust in Jesus (The one born of God and who chose to take our wrath) by faith. Even the faith we demonstrate is in and of itself a gift and cannot be exercised apart from God. God's grace is front and center in every aspect of the salvation process. Our salvation is both for our blessing personally and for God's eternal glory!! **We are all born into sin, We are saved by grace** and

Reality #3 - We are made alive to serve the Lord

EPHESIANS 2:10 (NIV)

10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

While good works can never produce salvation, good works are the result and evidence of it being given. First of all, if sin was good why then would we need to be saved from it? We have been saved not so we can continue in that which produces death but so that we can now be free to experience life. Secondly, our lives are all about God's glory and nothing brings glory to God like good works that bless the lives of others. For us to claim salvation only to continue in sin is a self defeating effort and is certainly not something that God is a part of. Just as the first Christmas led to people praising and glorifying God, so should the result of our lives be when we have received SALVATION. In fact, this was what God designed for us from the beginning

Romans 8:29-30 (NIV) For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. **30** And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

This means that God's plan from the beginning was to redeem our lives from sin and to empower our lives so as to bring Him glory. He had predetermined to choose to love us and establish an intimate relationship with us. And ultimately, that we would be conformed into the image of His Son.

Invitation:

Have you received SALVATION by FAITH? Do you know the Christ of Christmas?

Are you letting Him conform you to the image of His SON? Is there evidence of GOOD WORKS in your life?