

## A God Story...A Divine Love Story

Advent is the four-week season leading up to Christmas. The term "Advent" comes from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "arrival". It is a time filled with songs, gifts, parties, and joy. It is a season filled with bright colors, twinkling lights, and decorated trees.

This year, our Christmas series is called **A God Story**. Because that's what Christmas is: It's not just a sweet story about a baby in a manger...it is the central, unfolding story of God's love and plan for His creation.

Today, on this third Sunday of Advent, our focus is on Mary, the shepherds in their fields, a message of great joy, and a decision to receive or reject it.

10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:10-11

Christmas is a season filled with great peace, hope, joy, and love. As Christmas morning approaches, we are reminded that this season takes on a much deeper meaning. Christmas is an exclamation point on God's story...a divine love story.

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them

concerning this child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. Luke 2:1-20

To many, the Bible is not just a collection of historical records or moral codes, but a divine love story beginning with creation, continuing through our separation from God, and ultimately God's relentless pursuit of reconciliation. Christmas serves as the "exclamation point" because it is the moment the Creator stops speaking from afar and enters the story Himself.

*"The hinge of history is on the door of a Bethlehem stable."* — Ralph W. Sockman

If the Old Testament was the promise, Christmas is the fulfillment. Christ's birth puts an exclamation point on this love story.

### **The Gift**

In all the world's religions, their gods are distant, demanding, indifferent, unavailable, inactive, and ineffective. Christmas introduces Immanuel, which means "God with us."

### **The Message**

By taking on human flesh, God declares that no part of the human experience—hunger, fatigue, joy, success, grief or pain—are beneath Him. This is the ultimate gesture of love, wanting to be with us.

### **The Restoration**

Because of Christ's birth, the story changes from "Creator and creature" or "Judge and subject" to "Father and child." The incarnation (God becoming man) allows humans to be "adopted" into God's family. This "exclamation point" is the radical shift from being outsiders to being "beloved."

### **The Identity**

Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,[c] being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5b-11

### **The Response**

29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. Exodus 34:29

24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:24

**"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."**

## **The Second Mile: *Going Beyond Sunday***

Let's dig deeper together to see how God is calling and equipping each of us to reach the lost.

**Monday** – In all the world's religions, their gods are distant, inattentive, inactive, and ineffective. Christmas introduces Immanuel, which means "God with us." How does this change everything?

**Tuesday** – By taking on human flesh, God declares that no part of the human experience—hunger, fatigue, joy, success, grief or pain—are beneath Him. How is this a comfort and hope to you?

**Wednesday** – Because of Christ's birth, the story changes from "Creator and creature" to "Father and child." How does this shift to being "beloved" shape how you think of God and yourself?

**Thursday** – Jesus is fully God, yet He emptied himself, by being born in human likeness. That means He has walked in your shoes. Why did He do that and how does it express God's love for you?

**Friday** – Moses radiated the glory of God after being in His presence. We are to take on the likeness of God from being in His presence and following Him. How do you reflect Him or the world today?