

Sermon Title: ***“A Great Messiah and Kingdom”***

Series: *Learn, Live, Lead*

Speaker: Pastor Damian Mericka

Text: Luke 2:4-7

Introduction

*“Stand firm, and you will win life.” **-Luke 21:19***

We began this year with a look at what Kingdom endurance is. ***Standing Firm*** here means *Endurance* and is a very rich word embodying an ***upward, consistent, contagious, and outward*** motion that goes against the current. *It is swimming upstream after Jesus.* We saw this is the work the Spirit of God does in our lives, just as He did in Jesus’ - He leads us upward to higher ground and a higher life in Him.

We also looked at some of the outward challenges we face when going upward with the Spirit, including the spiritual forces of darkness which our on their way downward. As they are being cast out of God’s Kingdom, we are being brought in. This is the nature of our Spiritual Battle. Unlike the generations that came before Jesus since His Ascension the Spirit has now come upon us to take the battle to where it truly is at.

What does this look like lived out in or lives? Following Jesus as His Disciples.



“Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.”

-Matthew 4:19

This series is set to be a journey answering this question- *what does it mean to follow Jesus?* How do we today answer His invitation and see this journey with Him unfold as it did for the first-generation followers of Jesus? Together we will discover anew what it means to follow Jesus- *to be a disciple making disciples culture that **learns, lives, and leads!***

I. A Great Child is Born (Luke 2:4-7)

“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, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 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.”

-Luke 2:4-7

Building on from last night's Christmas Eve message, *The Inconvenience of Jesus*, we find Joseph and Mary in a manger where Jesus is now born. While there was much *inconvenient* commotion leading up to this moment, it was far from quiet. The *inconvenience* of a government telling you to travel and register, the *inconvenience* of wedding plans messed up with a pregnancy, the *inconvenience* of no room but a stable to deliver in, along with the *inconvenience* of random shepherds coming to invade what little privacy a manger can provide.

Yet Jesus has arrived- a child is born right on schedule in the right place, to the right family. While we focus on what we can see, there is much the Scripture attests to beyond what the natural eye sees in the moment. Like a conversation one has with another, often we sense there is more going on than what we can see, so we dig deeper to find out.

Beyond this incredible moment between Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds, and others who will become a part of this introduction of Jesus into the world, something unseen, something incredible and humbling has happened.

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

-Philippians 2:5-8

Jesus *did not count equality with God a thing to be **grasped***, in the Greek, implies though He is a part of the Godhead (Father, Son, and Spirit) He did not hold on to it or try to take it by force, but gave it up trusting the Father to give it to Him. Jesus, though He is the Creator, is the ultimate undercover boss. He gave up His entitlement (His honor, His position, not His Divinity) entrusting Himself to the Father. Trusting He would raise Him up, trusting He would give Him His Glory. *It is through this act of emptying Himself He not only receives again, but He invites us into and shares with us!*

*“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” **-John 1:9-13***

What Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds, and others beheld was God who had emptied Himself and was born into this world as man. The Creator became a part of the creation. ***With this great child born named Jesus, God has declared war with boots on the ground against sin and the devil, along with his spiritual forces of darkness that destroying His Creation.***

II. A Great Red Dragon Hunts (Revelation 12:1-6)

*“And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.” **-Revelation 12:1-6***

This self-emptying God was not the only event happening in the Spiritual Realm, for since the beginning this enemy has been laboring to prevent this from happening. Remember, God’s promise to Adam and Eve continued through into Noah, then Abraham and the Nation of Israel. With each passing generation the coming of the Messiah drew nearer- a light that began to shine in the far distance is growing brighter with its approach.

Revelation is a book with much symbolism, yet the Bible interprets itself. I always ask myself, where have I read this before? The woman represents the Nation of Israel from whom the Messiah was promised to come. The reference of being clothed with the sun, moon under her feet, and crown of twelve stars on her head echoes back to a dream a young man named Joseph had,

“Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, “Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”

-Genesis 37:9

This event is contrasted by the great red dragon referring to Satan, that old serpent, the Devil. Seven heads, ten horns, and seven diadems refers to glory, honor, and power taken or seized violently. Daniel, another prophetic voice in Israel’s past was invited into this Spiritual Realm to attest to the violent manner in which this enemy takes what he desires,

*After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. **-Daniel 7:6-7***

Note this contrast further. The enemy of humanity, the great red dragon is driven by pride and violently goes after what it wants, attempting to seize what can only be given. The Savior of humanity, Jesus, humbled Himself and gave up what He had in order to be given what the Father alone can give.

This great red dragon awaits to devour the child when He is born. In this simple statement we have the entire breathe of the Old Testament- every up and down, good and bad, have been the efforts of the enemy and personal sin coming between God and His promises to His chosen people. The devil is not after you anymore than he is after us; he wants what we are given and seeks to destroy us to get at Him. It is truly all about Jesus- even with the enemy of our souls.

Yet even in this stance of devouring a fragile child, God in the flesh, Jesus fulfills His mission bringing His Kingdom into this world.

Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

-Matthew 11:2-6

Failed. Everything of the enemy failed regarding Jesus. Jesus is now at the right hand of the Father, His Spirit poured out, His Saints (mighty warriors) are fighting, and His Kingdom continues to come, one heart at a time!

Yet, before Jesus was given this Glory from the Father, He would descend into the greatest depth of emptying Himself. Jesus would experience death on the cross. It is here, in this moment, the enemy, that great serpent stood before the Messiah. Finally, his moment to devour came. Echoed are the words of obi one, *strike me down and I shall become more powerful than you can possibly imagine!* Yet, even in this submission to death, Jesus did this for you and me.

In that moment Jesus cried out, *It is finished!*, that **great red dragon** would swoop in and devour with death the Messiah who gave Himself a ransom for many. Though this may seem like a victory, that old devil was soon to learn how unwise devouring a Messiah is. *What may have tasted sweet soon became very, very bitter for him.*

III. A Great Stomachache (Matthew 12:38-42)

*Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. **-Matthew 12:38-42***

Dear saints, we must understand what Jesus is saying here. As the prophet Jonah was running from God, Jesus was running toward the Father. Both take us to the lowest of depths. **One**

place where we are broken through humility, the other place where through humility we are made whole! (Bunyan referred to this as the Valley of Humiliation).

*“And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.” **-Jonah 2:10***

*“But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.” (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)” **-Ephesians 4:7-10***

Before Jesus ascended to the highest of heights (the right hand of the father) He descended to the lowest of depths where we were rescued. Once held captive by sin and death, now led in triumph by the Messiah who defeated sin and death, bringing us life eternal with Him!

*“When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” **-1 Corinthians 15:54-58***

This incredible victory Jesus wrought is meant to encourage us in our Kingdom Labor for the Lord. ***What is this Kingdom Labor?***

IV. A Great Transition is Happening (Revelation 12:7-17; Ephesians 2:1-10)

*“Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” **-Revelation 12:7-12***

War breaks out in the Spiritual Realm. What began as a boots on the ground declaration of war ends with all things being brought into subjection under His feet! The enemy has no voice in the Throne Room against you and me because of Jesus! We are more than conquerors as the Scripture declares,

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is

*to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” **-Romans 8:31-39***

As one kingdom is on its way out and down, another is on its way in and up! *Further up and further in as Lewis cried out!*

*“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” **-Ephesians 2:1-10***

And it is in this spiritual engagement we experience Kingdom friction- one is defeated, the other victorious. It is in this realm our real battle takes place.

*“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.” **-Ephesians 6:12-13***

Dear saints, in Christ we are being raised in Him, seated with Him, empower with His Spirit, to continue His Kingdom Labors in this world! As we gather in Him, His Spirit moves to train and equip us. As we grow in Him, we experience His Saving, Healing, Transforming, Delivering work in us and through us. This is no small matter- no less a miraculous feat than that of God emptying Himself!

The god of this world, that great red dragon is driven by pride- through deception his efforts reach in and through those dead in sin to accomplish what he desires to seize. Jesus our Messiah was driven by love for the Father, and through humility emptied Himself of everything He had a right to in order to be given by the Father what He alone can give.

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

-John 10:10-11

Understand God's Wrath poured out against sin was not done away with, Jesus endured it for us. Jesus defeated sin, death, and the devil. Sin, death, the devil, and all of those outside of God's Grace through Jesus Christ will drink of God's Wrath against sin and will be driven from His presence into an eternal judgment of torment and suffering. This need not be the destination of anyone- if we are willing to humble ourselves and embrace the work of Jesus on the cross for our behalf.

Pride is of the enemy and will never lead us to bow the knee to Jesus in this life.

Humility not only bows the knee to Jesus, it falls down to worship Him as Savior, Healer, Deliverer, Sanctifier, and King.

All of Scripture points to Jesus.

The Serpent waited to devour and ended up being devoured.

Sin reigned to conquer all until it was conquered.

This Great child named Jesus is bringing a Great Kingdom.

This Kingdom is both here and still coming.

Jesus is coming again, not as a child to die but a Savior to inherit.

We are His possession.

Learn from Jesus. Live like Jesus. Lead others to Jesus.

While this is still the hour of Salvation!

Oh, what a Great Savior and Kingdom that is ours in Jesus!