



First Baptist Church Selmer

SONGS OF THE SEASON • THE BIRTH OF JESUS •
MATTHEW 1:20-25; HEBREWS 4:14-15 • 12/24/2023

MAIN POINT

God communicated to us most clearly when He sent His Son Jesus, the loudest expression of love.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Have you ever been to a foreign country where you did not know the language? How difficult was it to communicate?

Have you ever tried to calm a fussy baby? How badly did you wish you could understand what the child was trying to communicate?

We probably take our ability to communicate for granted. When we go to the grocery store, we know how to ask where the milk is. When we are in a department store, we know how to ask for the bathroom. But when we are in a foreign country, communication gets difficult, if not downright impossible. We quickly realize how important communication is in those circumstances!

Sometimes, we want to express ourselves in ways that words will not always serve us. How do you tell someone that you love them when everyone who has told them that has treated them unkindly? How do you express your appreciation for an act of kindness or for a gift that touches you deeply? Words are simply not enough for many circumstances like these.

The birth of Christ is God's way of communicating with us how serious He is about loving and caring for us.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

We pick up from last week after seeing Joseph choosing to walk alongside Mary in their journey of faith. Now it is time to look closer into the long-awaited birth of the Messiah.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 1:20-21.

20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'" (ESV)

What catches your attention most in this very familiar account of the birth of Jesus?

How do you think Joseph felt, as a father, hearing that his son would be God's Son?

Why do you think the angel of the Lord specifically told Joseph that Jesus "will save His people from their sins"?

Joseph could have easily made life extremely difficult, or even dangerous after it was revealed that Mary was pregnant with a child that wasn't his own. Instead of seeking to shame her, which would be a jealous reaction we could understand, Joseph cared enough for Mary to do this secretly. He thought of Mary's well-being and the well-being of her child more than he thought about his need for justice. Joseph's actions communicated his righteousness better than his words could have.

While the people of Israel were looking for a deliverer, many of the people of Israel only thought about a Messianic deliverer in terms of political liberation. In the prophetic account of Isaiah from Week 2, we saw that the Jewish people desired political deliverance with little regard that their true deliverance would come through something far greater. They didn't need a President, a King, or even a Prophet, they needed a Savior.

Jesus did not come to deliver His people from Rome, He came to deliver them from the tyranny of sin. The angel told Joseph that Jesus would deliver Israel from their sins in order to communicate the kind of Messiah Jesus would be.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 1:22-25.

22 "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us). 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus." (ESV)

Why was Mary's virgin birth a necessity to have God's Son? What did that communicate?

What does it mean for God to be with us? What does this communicate to us?

What do Joseph's actions communicate in these verses? What things did Joseph do in response to the dream he had?

James writes, "Show me your faith without works, and I will show you faith from my works" (James 2:18). Nowhere does the Bible record Joseph saying that he loved God, but we can clearly see that Joseph did. Joseph went ahead and married Mary, he refrained from sexual relations with her to ensure that everyone would know the child was a miracle child, and Joseph named the child Jesus just as God instructed him to do. This obedience communicates Joseph's righteousness and faithfulness to God.

Jesus could have appeared to people in any way God chose. In God's omniscience, Jesus would come in the form of a baby. A baby that could and would sympathize in all ways with humanity.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 4:14-15.

14 "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (ESV)

How is Jesus' identity as Immanuel, 'God With Us', confirmed in these verses?

Why was it important for Him to become like us and be born as a baby?

In theological terms, why is the incarnation crucial to the gospel message?

God promised through Isaiah that *"The virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14). When this sign came to pass, it would signal to Israel that God was bringing deliverance to His people. Perhaps one reason that God chose a virgin is because that is an unmistakable miracle. God did the seemingly impossible through Jesus by delivering us from our sins, and He wanted us to be sure that we knew the coming of the Messiah was an unprecedented and miraculous event.

God has always been with us, but not in the way He came to be with us in Christ. John writes, *"The Word became flesh and took up residence among us"* (John 1:14). Jesus permanently took on human flesh. The second member of the Trinity became a human being because He wants to be with us. God wanted us to relate to Him, and to know that He loves us as His own children. So the Son of God became a man. The incarnation communicates God's love for us in ways that words alone cannot do!

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What are some ways that we communicate our love to others without using words?

How does the incarnation of Christ communicate God's love to the world?

How did God communicate His love to you personally, and how might meditating on that help us to communicate His love to others?

PRAYER

Thank God for sending His Son to die for your sins, the clearest, loudest form of communication. Reflect and pray about ways you can show God your gratitude.

COMMENTARY

| MATTHEW 1:20-25

1:20-21. Mary, initially fearful of being an unwed mother, accepted God's revealed intentions for her. And Joseph, initially not all that sure himself about the "virgin birth," was originally thinking divorce, albeit quietly and with no public scandal. But when Joseph was approached by God through the angel, he accepted his role and did precisely as he was instructed by God. He kept Mary a virgin until after Jesus was born, after which their normal marital relations produced other children who were the half-brothers of Jesus. And Joseph, as the legal heir to the throne, named their son "Jesus" as he was told. Mary and Joseph learned that the only way to follow God was to "trust and obey" His word. The character of these two young adults reminds us that God fulfills His purposes by using people of strong character and faithful obedience.

The name "Jesus" chosen by God for His Son (1:21) was, in that day and for centuries before, a common name with special meaning. Jesus is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Joshua," meaning "Yahweh is salvation." Jewish boys for centuries had been given this name Jesus with the frequency of today's John or Mike. This reflects, in part, the hope of Jewish parents for God's salvation from centuries of oppression under a succession of world powers. God's choice of such a common name, when He could have chosen something unique, also emphasized that Jesus came in a way that identified with "the average Joe." He came in love to become one of us, that we might be drawn to Him and become one of His. Jesus was approachable and touchable. He was one of us. "We do not have a high Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses" (Heb. 4:15). Jesus did everything to build bridges to us.

Yet, while the name Jesus was common, only this child was qualified as the God-Man to save His people from their sins (1:21). Jesus came at the strategically appointed time to seal the eternal salvation of all whom the Father had chosen.

1:22-23. In these verses Matthew provided the first of many direct quotes from the Old Testament, and the first of many Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by the earthly life of Jesus. These Old Testament quotes and prophecies show, in part, the linkage and unity between the Old and New Testaments, helping us understand how God was preparing the way for the Christ from centuries past. They also validate the identity of Jesus as the promised Messiah, strengthening our faith in Him. And their perfect fulfillment in Jesus gives us confidence that God is faithful and mighty to keep His word to us today.

Matthew is quick to support the doctrine of the virgin birth, and his quote in 1:23 is from Isaiah 7:14, originally written by the prophet Isaiah over seven hundred years before Jesus' birth. This verse in its original Old Testament context seems to be referring to a child who

was to be born in that setting of Isaiah's day, rather than centuries later. However, Matthew's inspired revelation fills the original statement out to its full intention. God is never so clearly present with His people as He is through His virgin-born Son, the Messiah of Israel. Jesus is Immanuel! The linguistic components of the name Immanuel and their individual translations—Im = "with," anu = "us," and el = "God"—make it clear that Isaiah's original prophecy could refer in its fullest sense only to the promised Messiah. This name of Jesus is a strong argument for His deity.

1:24-25. The dream that had begun for Joseph in verse 20 ends in these verses with him waking and choosing to obey everything the angel had told him to do. This fine man had learned to "trust and obey."

| HEBREWS 4:14-15

4:14. Jesus is called the Son of God. This statement identifies the historical Jesus as our high priest. It also presents Jesus as one who perfectly combined humanity and divinity in his ministry for lost sinners. His human name was Jesus, but in reality, he was the Son of God.

4:15. Jesus is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. Weaknesses are broad enough to include any form of human stumbling or failure. Christ has sympathy for the needy. Second, Christ has been tempted in every way, just as we are. This statement may mean that he faced the full range of temptations we face. It need not mean that he met each specific type of temptation which we face. A sample of the entire range of options for sinning fell on Jesus. Because Jesus never yielded to sin, we know that he faced more intense temptation. Most of us say "yes" to sin before Satan has thrown all his weapons of temptation at us. Jesus said "no" as Satan hurled every arrow in his quiver. He resisted until he broke the power of Satan (Heb. 2:14). Third, Christ was without sin. Jesus was completely a human being (Heb. 2:17), for he became like his brothers in every way. Must a person experience sin in order to be human? No! Jesus had no sin or deceit in his life (1 Pet. 2:22).