

# Reclaiming The Majesty Of Christmas

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[0:00] We're going to be in Luke chapters 1 and 2 for most of the morning, so I invite you to grab a Bible and turn there.

Children, welcome. Glad you're with us this morning as your teachers get a little break. When I was in the Navy band stationed in Japan, I used to have this route that I would run off the base. It was a route that was through this little section of the city. There were storefronts and flower gardens and parks and winding hills that led up into the neighborhoods where people lived. There were interesting people everywhere. There was old people that were so hunched over that looked like their foreheads were dragging along the ground. The hustle and bustle of a city and a culture where everyone walked everywhere all the time.

Well, my favorite part of this running path was along this seawall. It was about a mile and a half or two miles of pavement that went right along the outside of this bay of the ocean.

[1:14] It was beautiful there. You could smell the salt in the air and see the waves gently splashing against the rocks along the shore and seagulls gliding along with the wind.

The good days even could see the water sparkle. It was just good to be alive when I was along that seawall. Even though I was sweaty from the effort and breathing hard and everything else, I knew that soon I'd get to turn around and head back towards the base.

Well, there's one day in particular as I was running along that wall that I will never, ever forget. When I started my return to the base, I turned and was blown away by one of the most majestic things I've ever laid my eyes on.

It took a few moments to realize what was before me on the horizon. There was something different, but I was focused on my pace and my breathing, just enjoying the whole experience. And then, whoa, Mount Fuji was there.

This dormant volcano turned into a hiker's delight just dwarfed the rest of the landscape in front of me. It wasn't just there. It was huge. It dominated the horizon.

[2:28] Now, what's surprising about this is I was nearly 100 miles away from this mountain. Usually, the air wasn't clear enough for me to be able to see it, but this day, it was clear as a bell right before my eyes.

It was so huge and majestic that I lost track of everything else. It was stunning, and I had to stop what I was doing and just behold it.

Forget about the workout. Forget about the interesting people and the sights and sounds of the ocean, the smell of fresh fish caught that morning. And to think I'd almost missed it.

I wasn't immediately aware. I had been running back with this view in front of me for several seconds before I finally realized what I was seeing. The overall experience was so enjoyable that even if I had not seen that mountain that day, I would have been totally satisfied with my run. Everything was going just fine. And I had no notion until that day that the mountain could even be visible from this trail. Well, Christmas can be like that day.

[3:45] There's plenty of interesting and wonderful things for us to enjoy. We've got food, family, and gifts. Those little frosted sugar cookies in the shape of the stockings.

Sometimes, like today, a fresh coat of snow on the ground for us to enjoy. The Charlie Brown Christmas special. Anticipation of being with friends around the Christmas tree.

But when we see God and His majesty, we're suddenly transfixed. Amazed by Him. And all of these other delights and joys of the Christmas season sort of just fade into the background because of how glorious and awesome God is.

Christmas is about the God of the universe becoming a man. He's the Mount Fuji of Christmas. He's the picture on the horizon that dwarfs everything else and puts everything else into its proper perspective.

The word became flesh and dwelt among us. That is the sight to behold at Christmas. Well, to help us see our God in all His majesty, in His unsurpassed greatness today, we're going to walk through this birth narrative.

[5:09] Kind of a little bit of a mashup of Matthew and Luke's account. Mostly Luke, but we'll give Matthew a little bit of time as well. The objective we have is simple.

To show how the birth of Jesus highlights and points to the greatness of God. This baby boy, born in Bethlehem, of a virgin.

He's at the center of God's greatness. Christmas is all about Him. So we're going to look at four realities of the birth story this morning that help us see God in all of His majesty.

In all of His greatness. And to help us track through this, I've given us four P words. Words that start with the letter P to listen for.

My prayer is simply this. That we would all leave this morning with a vision of God that sustains us through this Christmas season.

[6:16] It's all about Him. The first thing about the birth story of Jesus that I want to point us to is the power of God.

We see right in the beginning of Luke chapter 1, starting in verse 5, and then again in 26, there's these two births on display that we know from the text are impossible.

Not just improbable, not just unlikely, but impossible. See Elizabeth and Zechariah we see starting in verse 5. Zechariah is a faithful priest.

And yet Elizabeth is barren. She has no children. Both are advanced in years. Well advanced in years. Verse 7. But notice then in verse 13 when the angel shows up to Zechariah.

It hasn't hindered their prayers. They're still praying for a child that somehow God would work a miracle in their lives. What's amazing is the power of God at work in their lives.

[7:30] God could have allowed a birth much sooner. He could have brought a child into the world for this couple a long time ago. And yet his prevention fueled their prayers of longing.

At the right time, God blesses Elizabeth and Zechariah with a child, but not just any child. A special child.

You shall call his name John, the angel says in verse 13, and you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great before the Lord.

Notice what this special child would do in verse 16. He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. Power of God displayed for this old couple outside of the time to have children.

But there's another birth. It's the birth of the whole Christmas story, and we must not forget to examine this.

[8:37] Verse 26. The angel Gabriel comes to Mary. This young woman, barely old enough for a learner's permit.

And Gabriel comes and says, good news Mary. You are blessed of the Lord, and you will bear a son.

Now, of course, Mary is troubled by this. She has no idea how this will be in verse 34. How? Since I am a virgin. And Gabriel's sort of answer is, God.

That's how. That's how. Look what it says in verses 35 and following. The angel answered her, the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

Therefore, the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son. And this is the sixth month with her who is called barren.

[9:41] Notice verse 37. For nothing will be impossible with God. Power of God on display with these two impossible births.

There's one other thing I want to point us to about the power of God. It's in chapter 2 of Luke.

Starting in verse 1. In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

This is not coincidence. This is not something that originates in the mind of Caesar Augustus. No. Proverbs 21 verse 1.

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord. He turns it wherever he will. The decree to register so Rome can collect taxes ends up bringing Jesus' mom to the town that the prophet Micah said would be the birthplace of the Messiah.

This is no coincidence. God is on the move. He's sovereignly and powerfully making all of the arrangements. Ensuring that his word comes to pass.

[11:04] With amazing power, God saw to every single last detail of this baby boy and his birth. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the city of David, of a virgin.

Because God determined it would be so. Biology was not going to prevent this event from happening.

Neither was Caesar and his senses. Friends, behold the power of God. That the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Second thing I want us to notice in this birth narrative that displays the greatness and wonder of God is the publicity.

I realize when I say that term we start immediately thinking of billboards and junk emails and over the top commercials and people standing on corners with going out of business signs beckoning us in to buy things.

[12:13] The free samples at Costco and Sam's Club. And the airplanes with banners flying around the sports stadiums. But what about God?

What happens when God wants to make something public? To announce the arrival of something so good that everybody is going to want to experience what he is offering.

When God goes public, he takes a little bit of a different approach. Having all of creation at his disposal, angels start popping up everywhere.

I just want us to look at two of these. The first is right back when Mary gets this good news.

Verse 26 of chapter 1. Angel greets her. Mary is troubled by this greeting and wonders what's going on here. The angel says, don't be afraid.

[13:13] Of course, that's easier said than done. But Mary gets by, doesn't she? And it's an announcement. It's a publicization of what's going to happen.

Not just for Mary, but in and through Mary, this woman would give birth to a son. Listen again to verses 30 to 33.

God is not here plugging a product, but promising a person. And the angel said to her, do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. God saves. He will be great and will be called the son of the most high, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David.

And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there will be no end. Who needs Twitter when you've got the angel Gabriel?

[14:23] If we flip back to chapter 2, we see more angels popping up, this time with shepherds. This is shortly after Jesus was actually born.

But here again, an angel shows up. This time at night to some guys who have some smelly clothes on, sleep deprived.

Verse 9, Verse 10, Verse 10,

That's the one. That's the Christ. That's the one that all have prophesied about the longing of Israel. He's born.

He's here. He's not at the Ritz Carlton in the penthouse suite. He's in a cattle trough. And we could go on and talk about these abnormal occurrences when Elizabeth's baby kind of leaps in her womb when pregnant Mary comes into her house.

[16:19] And then she starts prophesying about all of this amazing stuff. Then Mary utters this magnificat, which we kind of sung the refrain, oh, my soul magnifies the Lord.

Or Zechariah, when he doubts Gabriel's message that his barren wife would give birth, becomes mute for almost a full year. Because he doubted the messenger of God.

And his first words are glorifying God for what he has done. Isn't it amazing, friends, that for us today, who are on a different continent, a different era, thousands of miles away from this little town of Bethlehem, what birth is more known to us than that of Jesus?

It seems not so obscure after all. It's not how we draw it up, right? It's not how we would announce the birth of the world's Savior. Little town of Bethlehem, teenage parents, working class shepherds getting the bird's eye view and the first look into the life of this little baby.

But God's way is undoubtedly effective. We sit here in this room today because of how effective God's publicizing the birth of his son really is. We worship Jesus today because God announced him to an obscure few and kept it preserved in this book for all people in all times.

[17:54] A great multitude will be in heaven because God ensured people from all nations would hear about this baby.

It's amazing. Third P is probably the most obvious. It's God's presence with us.

God who created the universe became a man without ceasing to be God. The word became flesh and dwelt among us.

John continues, No one has ever seen God. The only God who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, And they shall call His name Emmanuel, Which means God with us.

What does God's presence have to do with His greatness? We could answer that with another question. How could we, creatures, Ever know in any real way A God who remains above and beyond the galaxies?

[19:18] He comes, He takes on flesh and makes Himself known. That's how. His presence Displays His greatness. See, space and time prevent us From ever getting a real clear picture Of what God is like.

Because He's timeless and He's eternal. And unless He comes to us, We have no hope. But He has. He has come to us.

Emmanuel, God with us. Two things about His presence That I hope will Encourage your hearts today. This is an act of great humility.

The limitless Son, All-knowing, All-powerful, Everywhere present, Enters creation. A certain place, A certain time, As a certain human being.

He didn't cling to His divinity And demand His rights before the Father. But He made Himself nothing. He became a servant. Was born in the likeness of men.

[20:29] The King of the universe Needed His diapers changed. His humility is His greatness. Therefore, God is highly exalted in 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.

God with us. God with us. What an act of humility. Display of how great our God is.

Not only is it a humble act, It is an act that means that our God can sympathize with us. Hebrews 4.15 For we do not have a high priest Who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses But one who is in every respect Who in every respect has been tempted as we are Yet without sin.

Jesus knows weariness. He knows loss. He knows betrayal. He knows death and suffering of many kinds. Though He may not know your particular experience, He understands.

He can sympathize. For because He, Jesus Himself, Has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted. Hebrews 2.18 Our great God Experienced human suffering.

[22:02] He knows and understands our pain. He walked the dust of earth. Breathe the air of an afternoon thunderstorm.

God with us. Emmanuel. But why? Why would the second person of the Trinity, Eternal God, Take on flesh?

Why would He leave heaven so willingly? Why would He experience life in a fallen world? When He had the glories of heaven? Well, the final thing I want us to look at this morning Is the purpose of it all.

Purpose. To make no mistake, God had a very specific purpose When Jesus was born. Why did God become a man?

Why did the Word become flesh? Why did the Eternal Son become the mortal man, Jesus Christ? We see our answer right in Luke 2. Verses 8-14.

[23:12] An angel comes to these third shifters. These weary-eyed shepherds. Keep them watch over a bunch of stinky sheep. God's glory is shining everywhere.

These shepherds are uber scared of what's going on. Listen to what the announcement is. Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news Of great joy That will be for all the people. Not some people. Not those really popular ones. This news is for each and every person. And it's news that each and every person needs. Verse 11 is that news. For unto you Is born this day In the city of David A Savior Who is Christ the Lord.

A Savior. That's the purpose Of this little baby boy Being born in an obscure town in Israel. The Word of God Left the glory of heaven And came to earth To rescue sinners From sin and death. [24:32] Christ Jesus came into the world To save sinners. That's the purpose. A situation that required that purpose. Romans says All have sinned And fallen short Of the glory of God.

No one is righteous. No one is seeking after God And looking to Please Him with their lives. Each and every one Is a child of wrath.

By our very nature And then by our lives That we've chosen to live. So Jesus comes Born in a manger. Lives a sinless Perfect Human life.

Dies the death We deserve. He substitutes Himself for you. He takes Your death sentence On Himself. He dies Is crucified Is buried And three days later Is raised from the dead.

He's now in heaven Ruling and reigning Over all things And one day Each and every enemy That ever opposed Him Will be made a footstool Under His feet.

[25:47] And now we're waiting For His return. That's who was born In Bethlehem Two thousand years ago. He offers you and me Forgiveness of sins In eternal life.

That's the overarching purpose Not just of Jesus' birth But of this book And the announcement That God has made known Far and wide.

And it's the very thing That makes God so great. God shows His love for us And that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

That's why He was born. To die for you So you could live. As we conclude I just want to address A few different groups Of people Who may be here today.

Maybe you're here And you've heard this message And you say You know that's really great This whole forgiveness thing It sounds great. But you don't know How bad I've been. You don't know The sins I've committed You don't know The path I've walked You don't know The people I've hurt A friend of the Bible Does not say Jesus died for Good people Who need a little help.

[27:05] Christ died for sinners. You are in fact A perfect candidate To receive His forgiveness Today. Church clothes Can be deceiving.

We all need a Savior. And He is Christ the Lord. Come to Him Today. Or maybe you're here You've been trusting In your good works.

You've attended church On Christmas every year And you treat your family To generous gifts For the holidays. You're trusting in yourself.

And on judgment day You'll be exposed. You don't need a judge Who takes all of your works And puts them in a balance And weighs the scales.

You need a Savior. Your sin is offensive to God. You need Jesus now. Maybe you're a new believer.

[28:10] You've just come to realize That Jesus is Lord. You've confessed your sins Before Him And you've bowed your knee to Him And you're super excited.

Let me tell you Purpose today To never lose focus Of who this little baby boy is.

This is the beautiful Savior of the world. You've found Him And never forget The joy that you have in Him In Him alone. Let His greatness Be what you savor Forever and ever and ever As you wait for His return.

Let Him remain wonderful In your eyes. Finally, maybe you're An old timer. Maybe you've been a Christian 20, 30, 40, 50 years.

Never forget, friend That Christmas is still All about Him. Jesus Christ Remains Your only hope.

[29:17] For unto us is born this day In the city of David A Savior Who is Christ the Lord. After I pray Let's all stand together As the worship team Comes back up And sing praises To this majestic God Who took on flesh Died for our sins He is Amazing And He is great And none can compare With our Jesus.

Let's pray together. Father, You are the God Of the impossible And today we celebrate that As we marvel at the birth Of Jesus The Word who became flesh And dwelt among us.

We thank You so much God For this purpose For which Jesus came To save sinners From sin. God, as we go Would we behold Not some creation Around us Like Mount Fuji But would we behold Your majesty Your greatness In this baby boy.

We worship You And delight in You alone. In Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.