

Sermon: Christmas is for children!

Reading: Luke 1:26-38

Introduction:

Im sure most of you have at some point watched a nativity play in school, or you may even remember starring in one during your own school years. I was chatting with one proud dad who was so pleased that his son had been promoted in the school nativity. Last year he played the back end of a reindeer, this year he is starring in the lead role as Joseph. There is something about nativity plays which is attractive, whether its nostalgia or if it's simply adorable watching children dressed up on stage, as they try to remember their lines. I have to admit there is a cuteness about it all.

Parents can get quite excited when their child has been cast in the lead roles. Proud mums and grandma's boasting their daughter/grand has been cast to play the lead role Mary, Joseph, kings or wise men - When all said and done, we live in an increasing secular nation and so Christmas has lost its moorings in the truth with Jesus at the heart of the celebrations and as Christmas has been rewrapped with its traditions, sentiment and nostalgia, decorations, lights and presents, parents are often heard saying, "Well Christmas is for the children".

Christmas Survey?

In a survey conducted by ComRes on behalf of Theos in December 2010 the following results were obtained.....

51% agreed with the statement "the birth of Jesus is irrelevant to my Christmas"

61% agreed "Christmas is mainly for children"

For those who love Jesus, it must grieve our hearts that more than half of the people surveyed said, Jesus is irrelevant to their Christmas! This survey was conducted in 2010 which means its probably increased significantly since then, ten years later. Our nation has quickly become secular and distanced itself from its Jueo-Christian roots and heritage, to its demise. Don't they know Jesus is the reason for the season? Removing Jesus and replacing Him with Santa is not only idolatry but an abomination. Jesus promotes hope and light to a dark world, through the Incarnate Son redemption and eternal life. Santa promotes lying, covetousness, stress and a cycle of debt each year. But as they say, its for the children!!!

As 61% of people surveyed said Christmas is for the children - then my response is, they don't understand the true meaning and beauty of Christmas at all. Maybe its time the Christian and the church stopped promoting the secular nostalgic christian christmas with Santa and get back to the truth behind the season. You may want to shout 'Humbug' at this point, but let us consider some things together.....

Imagine if your 13 year old daughter came home from school and said, 'Mum, Dad guess what happened at school today, I'm pregnant - Happy Christmas!!' Im not sure you would be thinking, of the joy of Christmas! Imagine what Mary's parents said to her!

When the real Christmas message is understood.....

Christmas is for adults.

It's a mind blowing,

Earth shattering,

Jaw dropping,

Eye opening experience which I promise you, when fully grasped, you will never look at Christmas in the same way again.

St. Paul writes in his letter to the Colossians

“My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

(Col 2:2-3)

Paul was concerned people have the.....

Full Riches - (Which is overflowing cups of blessing)

Complete understanding - (Meaning nothing missing, fully comprehending it all)

That they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ - (We can know Jesus)

This is a hidden treasure (that was held secret from the foundation of the world)

Such Wisdom and Knowledge (is mind blowing)

This should also be our goal each year, that we become concerned people have the full riches and complete understanding, knowing the mysteries of God, namely Jesus Christ. This mystery revealed to us is what changed the whole course of human history and caused many to rethink the meaning and purpose of life. Has it made you rethink life and it's meaning and purpose? If not, keep on reading, if yes read on anyway!

The Great Mystery uncovered in 6 great pieces of Evidence.

Christmas is no great mystery for us today, however it has become covered and wrapped up in so many different layers of tradition and secularism that it has become once again a hidden treasure. So many people today, the young and old are confused over Christmas and think very little of it's meaning and what we are actually celebrating and why it's a time of rejoicing and good news for the world. Everything centres around Jesus and so in order to unwrap Christmas we need to take a look at the person Jesus Christ again and see for ourselves, just who this amazing and wonderful person is who walked the pages of history.

I am often asked when speaking about the Christian faith how do I know Jesus is real? It's not hard to answer. To prove an event in history we need evidence and historical evidence can come in the form of the following accounts.....

Written accounts

Eye witness testimonies

Physical evidence

Do we have any of this for Jesus? Oh yes and we have much, much more. Consider the following, all of this refers to Jesus more than any other person in history.

Prophecies - God long foretold the Saviour would come and kept His promise.

Historical - The prophets words written down and preserved hundred of years before

Angelic affirmation - The heavenly host visit shepherds to testify

Eye witness Testimony - Matthew and John witness to Jesus

Archeological The site of Jesus birth place, life and tomb remain -

Nationality - God reveals the nationality of the Saviour - through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's line

Genealogy - God reveals the blood line, he will be descend from a king -

We know the nationality of the Saviour - **(Hebrew)**

We know Jesus royal lineage, from King **(David)**

We know He will an unusual birth **(Born of a virgin)**

He is Holy, Divine **(Immanuel - God with us)**

The prophet Micah was told the town of Jesus birth - **Bethlehem.**

Our reading today begins to unpack some of God's great redemptive plan as we piece together the evidence and answer why Jesus?

Luke offers most of the birth narrative which has shaped our understanding of the nativity. Although the nativity begins with Gabriel visiting Mary, we know God's plan has been in place since before Bethlehem's manger, in fact Paul tells us just how far back God's plan actually goes when he writes, 'For He chose us in Him **before the foundation the world** to be holy and blameless in His presence' (Eph 1:4).

Luke investigated all the events surrounding the life, ministry and resurrection of Jesus to provide an orderly account. Did he interview Mary, the man born blind, the lame man who went home leaping for joy. The lepers who were cleansed and the numerous people who spoke of being fed on the hillside by Jesus with bread and fish. Luke must have been fascinated by Jesus miracles for he himself was a physician. Like the other gospels, Luke provides evidence of God's plan unfolding by referring to ancient prophecies, and begins with God's messenger John, who breaks the long 400 year silence of God to the nation, details of Mary's encounter with Gabriel and how she was chosen by God to bear the Christ child, even though she was still a virgin. Luke records,

'In the sixth month of Elizabeths pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgins name was Mary'.

(Luke 1:26)

Notice just in this short opening passage Luke refers to the prophecies, miraculous birth 'virgin will conceive', His Hebrew nationality, and the genealogy as a descendant of King David?

Problems with the virgin?

A poll conducted in 2002 which asked 500 clerics if they believed in the virgin birth. The results were published in the Telegraph stating more than a quarter of Church of England clergy do not believe in the virgin birth! Rev. Dr. Keith Archer based in Salford said, "It is not particularly important because it is a debatable translation of a Hebrew prophecy which first appeared in Isaiah."

It really goes to show, no matter how clever you may be, how much you have studied and walls covered with degrees and doctorates, even have the words Rev or Bishop before your name, you can still be stupid! How can anyone can say it is not important is scandalous. So what do the scholars mean by the debatable translation?

Isaiah 7:14 we hear God saying I will give you a sign that a virgin will be with child. The passage which refers to virgin say the scholars can also be interpreted to say, 'young girl' or 'maiden' will have a child.

Now lets be honest here, if God, the creator of the universe, who is all powerful, was going to give us a sign, you would expect a sign to be of significant proportions than a young girl will get pregnant! If God simply meant a young girl shall give birth to a baby, thats not spectacular, people would have the right to ask, has God not visited any town or city across this nation recently, many young girls are pregnant and having babies!!

That is no spectacular sign, nothing out of the ordinary, unusually miraculous - its simple biology.

However as Luke records for us Mary asks the angel, 'How can this be for I am a virgin?' This is amazing as there is no other virgin births in history, not one. This miracle birth is the direct link to the incarnation.

Incarnation / Immanuel

John's gospel marks the great incarnation in his gospel when he says.

'In the beginning was the Word (Jesus) and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of truth and grace'.

(John 1:1-4; 14)

Jesus was not born of human father but was born of human mother. Jesus, truly is fully Divine (The Word became flesh) and fully human as he was born of Mary. Jesus was not born in sin, He had no sin nature (**Hebrews 7:26 / Romans 5:12, 17-19**). The virgin birth circumvents the sin nature passed down from Adam to all of us, which allowed the eternal God to become fully human. So when God tells Isaiah that the virgin will conceive a son, and will call him Immanuel which means God with us (**Isaiah 7:14**), I don't think God could mean anything else, do you? Charles Wesley wrote these great words,

Hark the herald Angel
Christ by highest heaven adored
Christ the everlasting Lord.
Late in time, behold him come.
Offspring of a virgins womb.
Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see
hail the Incarnate deity.
Pleased as man with men to dwell,
Jesus our Immanuel
Hark the herald angel sings
glory to the new born King.

The Birth of Jesus

One of the prophecies states that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. So how does a young girl, a virgin, heavily pregnant, living in a town called Nazareth, some 80-100 miles from Bethlehem come to have her baby in this town? God knows everything and all events which are to come, so the plan unfolds perfectly as Luke describes to us how Mary came to be in Bethlehem. If the prophecy is wrong on one point then it's not of God. For God fulfils all not just 90% but 100% a hundred percent of the time for it is His word.

'In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria). And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea to Bethlehem to the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her first born, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no guest room available for them' (**Luke 2:1-7**)

Summary

It's amazing how God sets out His plan of redemption and works it out perfectly right down to the last detail and brings it to fruition. No matter where we are in life or how bad our circumstances may be remember this, - God gets us there! God's plan is unfolding in your life and being fulfilled, just trust Him and let His will unfold in your life and circumstances and He will lead you. Christmas is for adults in order that we can become children of God. So maybe yes Christmas is for children - children of God. **Amen.**