

What Christmas Teaches Us about God's Provision – a Savior!

Luke 2:10-11 (12/15/13)

Ernie Godshall
Faith Bible Church
Evansville, IN

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:10-11

Before we get into our text this morning, let's think about three "what if" events of history. What if these things never happened or turned out completely differently.

October 10, 732 - What if Charles "the Hammer" Martel, representing Christendom, had not defeated the hordes of Muslim Moors at the Battle of Tours? The Muslims were determined to sweep into Europe and turn it into an Islamic continent. Historians see this moment as of macro-historical importance. If Martel and the Franks had failed, we well may be memorizing the Quran, learning about Mohammed, and chanting Allahu Akbar!

October 31, 1517 - What if Martin Luther had never nailed his 95 theses to that chapel door in Wittenberg? The Reformation that brought gospel freedom to Europe and eventually the world would never have been unleashed. We would not have the five solas we hold dearly today. We may still be submitting to the pope and practicing those seven sacraments, hoping we could build up enough grace to at least lessen our time in purgatory!

October 19, 1781 - What if the British had not surrendered to Washington and our fledgling nation at Yorktown, Virginia? What if the British had subdued us and we would still be under British rule? Surely the War of Independence was one of the great wars of history that birthed a nation that has become the greatest, most powerful, most exceptional, and freest nation on the face of the earth! Imagine if that war that broke England's power over America never happened!

But all these pale in contrast to this unthinkable question - What if Jesus Christ, the God-man, had never been born in Bethlehem? What if Rome had simply destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70 and paganism had continued without the hope of the gospel to shatter the darkness of sin and superstition and idolatry that blanketed the planet? What if we lived in a world with no Christ and no gospel?

And yet that's what so many people want to believe. Christmas has become mostly an economic boon to move the balance sheets into the black. Here and there in the public square, in public school assemblies, in malls with choirs singing, Jesus is acknowledged and the great Christmas hymns and pageants warm hearts. But it's a battle. Even the Air Force is removing Nativity scenes. There's a new church planting movement called Sunday Assembly. Los Angeles, San Diego, Nashville, New York and other cities are drawing hundreds to these new congregations. What is the Sunday Assembly? From their website: "A godless congregation that celebrate life. Our vision: a godless congregation in every town, city, and village that wants one." And they boldly affirm: "The Sunday Assembly is 100% celebration of life. We are born from nothing and go to nothing. Let's enjoy it together." Do they mean let's enjoy nothing together?

How good to read this wonderful story of the birth of our Lord! Luke 2:1-20. Our Christmas series is entitled, What does Christmas teach us about man's problem – sin, God's provision – a Savior, and our

purpose – worship. This morning I want to give you five broad truths about what Christmas teaches about God's provision in this story.

Christmas teaches you that there is a living, real, personal, loving, communicating God who is really there and who controls all of history. He created you; you don't come from nothing. Nothing ever comes from nothing. He created you to know Him, to commune with Him, to love Him. And you are never alone – He is here with us. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We don't see Him, but Christmas teaches us He is there. He is there, not only because Christ is over there in that manger in Bethlehem, but because these heavenly messengers, this angel came from His presence. When they are finished their mission, they return to heaven, into the very presence of God. God is there, the living, loving God is there, behind the veil. Christmas teaches you this.

Christmas teaches you that this living, loving, eternal but personal God knows exactly what you need. He sent His Son because He knew we needed help. Big time help. He knows we are rebels against Him. We live on a rebellious planet. He knows we are blind spiritually and dead to Him. He knows our hearts are cursed by that sin that doesn't want to bow to Him. He knows we'll believe lies, anything but the truth of His Word. Instead of His creating work in Genesis 1-2, we are prone to believe the myths of evolution and atheism. In a tribute to Paul Walker the song was sung "Coming Home." I looked up the lyrics. That is not a gospel song. It was really sad to hear. All these people gathered in hopes that Paul is now an angel in the upper regions. No, Christmas teaches us that God knows exactly what we need, and we need Him.

Christmas teaches you that the living, loving God has provided exactly what you need in His Son. You need forgiveness, first and foremost. We are all guilty. Not first in our deeds, but in our nature. This was Martin Luther's heart-wrenching struggle. How can a sinner be accepted by a just and angry God? God has provided forgiveness in His Son. You need that assurance that you are accepted by God. You need strength and grace to endure through this world. You need reason to hope and reason for joy. You need to know where you are going when you die. You need exactly what Christmas teaches us God came to provide for us – His Son, our Savior!

You need solid reason not to live in anxiety and fear and uncertainty. True, the world, the culture, the academic and scientific community assure us there is nothing to fear. Yes, but who's going to pay for my sins? Lennon's song *Imagine* makes a dreamy, seductive ditty, but is as false as an ice cold sun. God knows you and I need His Son, and that's what Christmas teaches us.

This angel brought good news that is the best news you'll ever hear. Good news that is designed to bring your heart great and eternal joy, filled full of hope. Good news that is for you, one of all the peoples. He didn't come for just the higher echelon. He came to shepherds, the most common, even despised of people. If He came to shepherds, then He came for people like you and me. We qualify. Shepherds were the bottom feeders of the economic chain, the minimum wage burger flippers.

God doesn't do things the way we do! When Kate Middleton gave birth to royalty last summer, 10 bell ringers rang the bells in Westminster Abbey for 3 hours! There was a 41 gun salute, and then another 62 rounds were fired at the Tower of London. That's how you announce royalty! Not in the middle of the night to insignificant, uneducated, unskilled shepherds. True, they may have been watching sheep intended for temple sacrifices, but really, Lord, shepherds? Imagine if Joseph had been a hoity toity hob knobber and heard shepherds were coming to see their brand new baby! Why send us the rabble of Israel? Is that all we are worthy of? Where are the big boys? The mayor and all the council people?

Where are the Rothschilds and the Buffets? I mean, our son is the king of kings and lord of lords! Really, shepherds?

Christmas teaches you God's ways aren't man's ways, and aren't we glad? God goes right past the Caesars and governors and neurotic kings like Herod, right down to the nobodies and nothings like these shepherds, like us! 1 Corinthians 1:28-29 tells us why: so no man may boast in man! Beautiful! Think of it. The living, loving, eternal, almighty God chose to bring His Son into this world to join the human race to be our Savior, and He chose to use an unknown couple from an unknown family in a humble village of which it was said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Then He brings the pride and joy of His heart, in whom He is well-pleased, tucked away in that Jewess' womb, down over those many miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to fulfill His story, His promise that Messiah would be born in this village of David, Bethlehem, Bet Lechem, the house of bread, to feed millions from every nation and tribe and people groups the world over the bread of life!

Christmas teaches you that the loving, living God knows not only what you need and provided His Son, but He knows exactly what it's like to be a human being. He was born over there in that stable. He was born for us, for you, for all who receive Him. I can imagine the excitement in the halls of heaven when God announced He was going to send some messengers down to make this birth announcement. I can see them raising their wings high in the air, "Pick me! Pick me!" We don't know who God picked. Maybe it was Gabriel. When God sent them, they soared out those heavenly gates and zipped down through the endless celestial space at breakneck speed to get to those shepherds.

That glory cloud like a brilliant halo enveloped that hillside and scared the bejeebers out of these poor fellows, until they heard these assuring words: We've got good news of great joy for you fellows! In fact, there has never been better news in all of your history that what we are about to tell you. It's for all the people. For you, yes, but for so many more, even down to the 21st century! A Savior has been born for you! This is the One! Right over there in David's city God has been born as a man. He has entered the human race. Mary and Joseph will feed, clean, bathe, care for none less than the greatest of all human beings, who will become the Savior of the World. He has become one of us, bearing human genetics, a DNA code. Wow! The humanity of Christ blows me away as much if not more than his deity.

Theologians describe Him like this: the Theanthropic Person in hypostatic union. Cool, aye? That simply means He is the God Man joined together as One Person. God and Man, but One Person. Only God could pull that off! And therefore He knows exactly what it's like to be a five year old, a pre-teen, a young adult. He knows what it's like to face trials and struggles and rejection. He lived with meager earthly possessions. He was tempted just like we are, but He resisted so He could give us the grace to resist. He had no bank account. He depended on some ladies to pay his bills, which were minimal. God the Son took our skin, our nature, just like us, but without sin. He was made sin for us that He might bring us to God. He's our Savior, Christ the Lord. That's your good tidings of great joy.

Finally, Christmas teaches us that God has kept every one of His promises He made throughout the 1000s of years of Old Testament times. Every one! He promised His Son to be born a child and given as a Son in Isaiah 9:6-7, and there He is. He promised He would send Abraham's seed, the son of David, His Messiah, the Anointed One, Christ the Lord, the prophet, priest, and king, and there He is. He promised He would be born in Bethlehem in Micah 5 and He's right over there. Where? In Bethlehem! He promised He would come to you in humility to save you through His death on that cross in Isaiah 53, to be your Savior, to rescue you, to shield you from your well-deserved punishment for your sins, to bring you to God! But He promised also to rule and reign as Lord of lords and King of kings over this earth and in your heart.

There is nothing you need more than Jesus Christ ruling as Lord in your heart. That's why God made you. With Christ as your Lord, you have His power, His resources, His grace to deal with any human difficulty – any anger, bitterness, habits of yelling and manipulating and lying and self-pity. And on the other hand, with Christ as your Lord you have what God requires to love Him with all your heart and to love other people just like you love yourself.

So think about it. What if all of this never happened? What if there were no angels, no good news, no great joy, no birth of a Savior in Bethlehem, no “Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth, peace and good will to those with whom God is pleased?” We are here this morning as living epistles to the fact that all of this did happen and it happened for our joy inexpressible and full of glory! We've been rescued by the Savior, Christ the Lord!

Let me add one more “What if...” What if God had never brought His good news of great joy to your heart personally? What if He had never drawn you and given you a heart to believe and submit to the Lordship of His Son. What if you were still a lost person today, and remained a lost person for the rest of your life? All the other what ifs of history wouldn't make a bit of difference in light of your future judgment and the reality of your coming eternal punishment. Can you live with that? Is that your choice?

But what if you submitted your heart to Christ right now? What difference would it make? What if right now Christ became to you God's good news of great joy? What if you right now received the good news of forgiveness through faith in Christ alone? What if you right now received the gift of eternal? What if God right now completely changed the direction of your life, so that you would live the rest of your life for Christ, for His glory, for His purposes in your life? What if? What difference would it make? Only you can answer that question.