

The Birth of Christ

Introduction: We live in complex times... Yet much of our world uses this time to remember the birth of Jesus

1. Christmas is a time to reflect on the birth of Christ and His entrance into the world (Incarnation)
2. A time of joy
3. A time to reflect on the salvation offered to humanity through Jesus
4. A time to recall the words of Jesus in His conversation with Nicodemus- **John 3:16-18**

I. The Incarnation brings us to the manger

A. Luke's account of Jesus' birth begins with John the Baptist

1. Luke narrates this event (**Luke 1:1-45**)
 - a. Christians don't remember John in their Christmas celebrations
 - b. Perhaps this is not accidental
2. Have you taken a good look at John lately?
 - a. He's an upsetting figure
 - b. John is in the Judean wilderness preparing the way for the Lord (Matthew 3:1; Luke 3:3)
 - c. He preaches a baptism of repentance- (Matthew 3:11; Mark 4:1; Luke 3:3)
3. Matthew adds a view of John's dress and food- Matt 3:4 (he kinda looks different!)
 - a. He's out of place with the shepherds, angels, peace, and good will toward men- **Luke 2:8-14**
4. In spite of John's eccentric dress, his mission is to prepare the way of the Lord- **Mk 1:2-3 Lk 1:14-17**
 - a. Matthew, Mark, and Luke- Before they tell the full story of Jesus, begin with John.
 - b. In order to know how to see this baby in the manger we need to see John first
 - c. When John is on the stage, something's inflexible about his bold call to repentance- **Lk 3:4-6**

B. When John shows up, the "Kingdom of God is near" - Matthew 3:2

1. It 's not a time for Christmas shopping
 - a. Or sending Christmas cards
 - b. Or preparing Christmas dinners
 - c. Or wrapping Christmas presents
 - d. Or participating in Christmas plays
2. No, Christmas is not about these things
 - a. It is about eternity- **Galatians 4:4-5**
3. John comes to prepare the way for the Lord
 - a. For the glory of the Lord
 - b. For a vision of everlasting peace
 - c. For a new and eternal covenant
 - d. For living water
 - e. For baptism with the Holy Spirit- **God coming near!!**
4. John declares- (The Ax) **Luke 3:9**
 - a. With John on the stage, it cannot be Christmas as usual.
 - b. John's message is: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."- **Matthew 3:2**
 - c. **Matthew 3:5-6** - People went out to him confessing their sins, and being baptized
5. Imagine the excitement in the air...
 - a. John shows that repentance is the way of receiving the Lord's salvation
 - b. Repentance is preparation for the coming of Jesus.**
 - c. No doubt this news came as a shock to the Pharisees.
 - God loves:
 - The humble?
 - The meek ?
 - The poor in spirit?
 - The confessing sinner?
6. John shows that repentance is not simply a feeling, but rather, it is a transformation of our actions
 - a. It's a change of how we live.
 - b. We're told to "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3:7)

7. The fruit is possible through the hearts that are transformed and changed from the inside out.

One's piety is not enough.

To repent means:

1. Treating each other with mercy and justice
2. Reaching out to the downtrodden
3. To eliminate grudges
4. Healing broken relationships with you and your spouse
5. Bringing about reconciliation between you and your parents
6. Bringing about make-up between parent and child
7. The end of hostility between Christians

John tells the crowds what repentance means... Luke 3:11-14

II. Responding to the manger scene

A. John essentially demands that we live lives of righteousness, justice, and truth.

1. Can you do this? Yes, but not in perfection.
 - a. Do you hope to be transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son?
2. Here's where it gets a little sticky: If so, you cannot rely upon your own righteousness
3. John comes and preaches the good news to those in darkness
 - a. What is the "good news"? That the baby in that manger is God's way of salvation- **John 5:24**
 - b. Have you crossed over from death to life?
 - c. Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord?
 - d. I can't think of a better time in our calendar than to reflect upon your salvation

B. This is a time of reflection upon the shepherds, angels, and the manger.

1. Do you remember the words that the angel spoke to Mary?
Matthew 1:21
2. Are you listening to the good news about salvation?
3. Are you going to allow your sins and your unrighteousness to keep you away from the manger?

- C. Use Christmas this year as a time for meditation of the incarnation
 - 1. As a time of examination of your life
 - 2. As a time of reflection regarding your relationship with God.
- D. Don't forget that as you think about the incarnation, you must put John on the stage as you go and view the Bethlehem manger.

Song: Silent Night

Conclusion:

- 1. John pointed to Jesus and declared, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"
This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me'' (John 1:29-30).

2. This lesson is asking for a response... for the Christian and the non-Christian

Christian:

- a. The Christian needs to ask... Have I visited the manger lately?
- b. Have you forgotten the words that Jesus has spoken.
- c. Have you built an alter to the things that you have made?

The Believer/Non-Christian

- a. Needs to ask... Am I prepared to no longer rely on my own piety?
- b. Only God can save!

Question:

- 1. How many here this morning would show another person what it means to live a Christ centered life?
- 2. How many would be willing to show someone how to be a child of God?

