

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE -

12.25.2022

THE WISDOM OF CHRISTMAS

I. INTRODUCTION

- The Christmas season is an annual rhythm that forces us to be confronted with the awe-inspiring reality that God came in the likeness of human flesh.
- However, we are challenged by our familiarity with the story.
- But the story is the most amazing story: God invaded human history in the form of a tiny, helpless baby.
- When God promised to free humanity from the curse of the Fall, the last thing we would think is that he would initiate that through the birth of a baby!
- Let's be honest, it sounds foolish. But it is the farthest thing from foolishness.
- Paul writing to the church at Corinth rightly states that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." (1 Cor 1:25)
- The Wisdom of God displayed in the Christmas account defies all human logic and comprehension.
- The Christmas Story is a wisdom story.

- In Paul's letter to the 1 Cor 1, Paul states that Christ is "the wisdom of God." (1 Cor 1:24).
- And then again he says that Christ "became to us wisdom from God." (1 Cor 1:30)
- Christ is the wisdom OF God and Wisdom FROM God.
- He IS wisdom and he comes to us AS wisdom.
- Colossians 2:3 In Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."
- And that wisdom comes to us FROM God in the most remarkable and mind blowing way possible in the incarnation.

Luke 2:8-20

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

II. THE NEWS

- The angel has just proclaimed the greatest news ever!
- And you'd think the greatest news ever was proclaimed in the hearing of the multitudes in a large city, like Jerusalem, or Rome.
- But the announcement wasn't made in a big city, it wasn't even delivered to a small town.
- It was made in some backwater place to a handful of shepherds!
- The greatest news ever—proclaimed to shepherds!

- Shepherds weren't part of the priesthood, they weren't prophets, they certainly weren't influencers.
- They were unclean by religious standards.
- Yet the glory of the Lord shone around them!

- And here's the proof that the good news the angel is delivering is true, the angel says there is a sign that will indicate to them that the baby is the promised one.
- Isaiah 7:4 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
- Now a sign is normally used to speak of something supernatural.
- So what's the sign the angel tells to look for that would be compelling evidence that this baby is the promised Messiah?
- Not something supernatural but something quite ordinary.
- The sign is *"a baby, wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger"*

III. THE SIGN

- How could something so ordinary and commonplace, the birth of a baby, be a sign from God?
- Even though Bethlehem was not a big town, Jesus may not have been the only baby born that night.
- Why did God choose to enter the human race like this?
- And why are swaddling cloths and a manger also part of the sign?

- But this is in the Bible because the details about Christ's birth are important.
- They are part of the message from God that displays the wisdom of God.
- We cannot miss the glory and majesty and wisdom of the humble, ordinary, and lowly birth of Messiah.

- We know God's people were looking for a Messiah.
- The prophets of old told of his coming, that he would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).
- Why didn't they recognize him when he came?

- They missed the sign because they were looking for Messiah’s coming with worldly eyes and worldly wisdom.
- They overlooked the divine, the Word made flesh, in the ordinary, a fragile baby.
- The sign God gave them was not what they were looking for.
- But this sign tells us three things about the birth of Christ that reveals the infinitely superior wisdom of God in the Christmas story.

1) The Wisdom of His Humanity— *“you will find a baby”*

- Christ came into this world just like we all do.
- This brings us face to face with the truth of the incarnation.
- Although he was fully and truly God from all eternity, the divine Son of God took on true humanity when he was conceived and born that day in Bethlehem.
- In some way that is mysterious to us, Jesus became the God-man, two natures joining together in his one person; fully God and fully man.
- 1 Timothy 3:16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh...
- God entered human history in order to provide for our salvation.
- If Christ had not been born as a man, he could not have died for our sins.
- He had to become like us in order to save us.
- Hebrews 2:14-18 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

2) The Wisdom of His Helplessness— *“Wrapped in swaddling cloths”*

- In that day, newborn babies were wrapped in strips of cloth to protect them from the harsh elements.
- What does the binding up of baby Jesus tell us?
- It foreshadows another time, years later, when he would stand bound, before the Jewish authorities and his accusers with his hands tied.
- At his death, he would be wrapped in burial clothes.
- Luke 23:53 Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud...
- He entered the world as he would leave it—bound and helpless.
- It is also a picture of the human condition, we are bound, bound up and slaves to sin and death.
- And we, like a baby, are helpless to do anything on our own about it.
- None of us are born righteous or can become righteous of our own.
- We cannot rescue ourselves.
- The angel appeared to shepherds first because they represented those that Jesus would be coming to save— sinners!
- Rebels, outcasts and sinners—helpless to do anything about their condition—Jesus came to save them and us.
- Jesus was bound and helpless so that we might be set free!

3) The Wisdom of His Humility— *“Lying in a manger”*

- We don’t quite have the appropriate view of the manger scene.

- In the 1st century, stables were often nothing more than a circle of stones around a hollowed out cave on the side of a hill.
- The manger was the feeding trough and it was carved out of stone.
- They were dirty, smelly places made for animals—not a sterile environment for a newborn.
- That’s where Jesus was laid after his birth, on this hewn out slab of stone, where feed was placed for the animals.
- There is powerful foreshadowing of his death in this manger scene because he would be laid again one day on another slab of stone—in his tomb.
- Luke 23:53 Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid.
- The shadow of the cross looms over the manger scene.
- God came into the world in the unlikeliest of ways.
- Philippians 2:7 “(Jesus) made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men”
- Nothing about the baby Jesus appeared supernatural.
- If you had been there you would have concluded that this was just a baby born to a poor young couple.
- Nothing about the outward circumstances pointed to God.

IV. THE WISDOM OF GOD

- None of us would have crafted the coming of the Messiah in the way that God did.
- Therefore, it is profoundly reassuring to us that behind the Christmas story is a God of unparalleled wisdom.
- From our limited perspective, his ways make no sense at all.
- His ways are not our ways nor are his thoughts our thoughts (Is 55:8-9).
- God’s unsurprising sign is a baby, wrapped in strips of cloths and resting in a feeding trough.
- From a worldly perspective, this was not a very likely beginning for a movement that will change the world.
- But there he was, God’s appointed ‘sign’, the one who would save his people from their sins.
- All of humanity is on a wisdom quest.
- We want to know why we exist, is there purpose and meaning to life, and why are we here.
- But true wisdom cannot be found apart from Jesus Christ.
- Those existential questions find no viable answer outside of Jesus Christ.
- That’s why the Christmas story is a wisdom story.
- That night, those who should have known better, missed the sign of his coming.
- And the world still misses the sign today.
- To deny Christ and God’s rescue through him is the epitome of foolishness—not wisdom.
- Jesus’ humanity, helplessness and humility reminds us of the simplicity of the gospel.
- The gospel tells us of our sin-sick condition and God’s remedy through Jesus Christ.
- We are called to repent and believe Jesus.

- He is the wisdom FROM God—he is the sign that God rescues rebels and saves sinners.
- His humanity, helplessness and humility declare the vast superiority of God's wisdom.
- And that is the wisdom and the wonder of Christmas.
- God did what we could never have done, and in doing that, he opened the way of salvation for us all!
- May the story of Christ's birth remind you of your desperate need of a Savior.
- May the story of the incarnation remind you that God's ways are not ours.
- May the story of Immanuel, God with us, remind you that in His great mercy, knowing our greatest need, He sent us a baby!
- May our response today be like that of the shepherds, who upon laying their eyes on the wisdom FROM God, returned glorifying and praising God for all that they had seen and heard.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?