

A Humble Christmas, 1

Luke 1:26-29

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, December 23, 2018

Turn to the Gospel of Luke. And as you're doing that, the World Book Encyclopedia defines Christmas as a Christian holiday that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. That is the encyclopedia definition of Christmas. It's a Christian holiday that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. It goes on to say that Christmas is the happiest time of the year for millions of Christians throughout the world, and people of different countries celebrate the holiday in various ways depending on national and local customs.

I think we all understand Christmas is an important time of the year for us. It's a very reverent time of the year. There's something about this holiday that makes us pause and take things in for a moment. It comes at the end of the year. We're wrapping up 2018. There's only a few days left in this year. And this holiday comes as a reminder that there's more to life than our jobs and our schools and our schedules, amen? There's more to life than the rat race we're all involved in.

I want to mention at the beginning of this that there's a lot of people that feel this way about this. According to the latest poll, 33% of the world's population claims to be Christian. That means three out of every 10 people celebrate Christmas every year. And if you take into consideration the non-Christians that celebrate it, the numbers go up. You could say maybe half the planet celebrates Christmas every year. Something like that. Almost every person on earth is touched by this holiday. And as the Encyclopedia said, they celebrate it in different ways.

In preparing for this sermon, I looked up some ways that people in different countries celebrate Christmas. I thought you might like this. But I found that in Finland, people are passionate about Christmas because that's where Santa Claus lives. You guys are looking at me in stern disbelief, but they say that Santa Claus lives in the North Pole, which is in the country of Finland. So, people send letters there from all over the world, and they go there to visit.

There's actually a theme park for tourists called "Christmas Land" near the North Pole where you can see Santa's sleigh and reindeer and all that stuff. And they celebrate Christmas on three days of the year there; Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day, which I believe we celebrate in Canada. Right?

Boxing Day, the name came from the Middle Ages when the wealthy people would give their servants presents in boxes. So, I was thinking about that and I think if you're wealthy, you can give the rest of us presents in boxes this year. Small ones or big ones. I prefer mine in a large silver box with a bow on it. But that's how one country celebrates the Christmas holiday - the country of Finland

In Hungary, Eastern Europe, quite a ways away from Finland, Santa Claus comes ... they celebrate it on the 6th of December instead of the 25th. Which means they've already celebrated the holiday there. They've already opened their presents. Which makes you jealous until you discover that they put their presents in shoes. That doesn't sound too nice to me. (My shoes are

gross.) But on December 6th, the Hungarian children place their shoes outside the door before going to bed, and when they wake up, they find presents in them. That's their tradition in that country. It might be worth mentioning parents make their kids clean their shoes before they put them outside the door.

One more country as well, just to kind of wrap up the list here, that's the nation of Latvia in Eastern Europe. That's where the first Christmas tree was decorated. And so, to celebrate that special event, the Latvians celebrate the holiday for 12 days. You guys have heard of the 12 days of Christmas. Well, starting on Christmas Eve for 12 straight days they celebrate this holiday. Which means if you don't like your first nine presents, you have three more to go. It also means that you have to buy 12 different presents for everybody in your life. You can imagine the lines at Walmart during the holidays in Latvia.

We could talk about how other countries celebrate this holiday as well, but my point is that Christmas is a worldwide celebration. People all over the world, all across the globe celebrate the Christmas holiday. And what I want to look at this morning and tonight when we come back for our second service, is how did all of this get started? Where did the Christmas holiday come from? And I don't mean the trees and the presents and Santa Claus, I mean the birth of Jesus. The Child in the manger that we sang about this morning, where did that come from?

I just told you that Christmas is a special time of the year for many people. It's a great time to pause and let things sink in. So, let's let that sink in for just a moment. What does the Bible tell us about the birth of Jesus Christ? And if you would like to look at this with me, we see it in Luke chapter 1. If you haven't turned there already, that's our passage for this morning, Luke chapter 1.

Before we get into the passage, actually, I want to mention this might surprise you as it did for me, because it's so humble. As a matter of fact, I entitled this sermon "A Humble Christmas" because that's what caught my attention when I first read it. This is a very humble story. The people, the setting, the background, it's very different from what we think of at Christmastime. Christmastime, we have lights everywhere. We have a lot of glitz and glam, everything's shiny. There's not much shiny in this passage. It's in some ways, maybe a little bit dull in some respects. Charles Spurgeon once said that John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" smelled like a prison because that's where Bunyan wrote it. He said, you could smell the aroma of a prison on every page. I think you could say that you can smell a manger on this page of Scripture. It smells like a barn or a stable. Just very ordinary story in some respects.

But it's a wonderful story, it's fascinating. Because in Luke chapter 1, we see the angel Gabriel coming to Mary to announce the birth of Jesus. He comes to her to tell her about the birth of her child. This is the first time we see Jesus' name in this Gospel. It's the first time He is mentioned, and it is a humble story.

For the sake of time, I just want to dive right into it with you. So, if you're taking notes this morning, in Luke chapter 1, I want you to see four features to this humble Christmas. That's our outline for today, very simple; four features to this humble Christmas. And what I want to do this morning is give you the background for what the angel says. And then tonight, we'll talk about

what he actually says to her. So, this morning we're just kind of setting the stage, laying the groundwork. And then tonight, we'll talk about the announcement that the angel gives. That'll be at our service at 6:00.

The first feature we see for this humble Christmas is this, we see a humble timing. Luke starts off by telling us when this occurs and he gives us a humble timing. If you look in Luke 1:26, this tells us the point in history when the angel gives this announcement. In verse 26 it says, "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth." That's the timing for this event. Luke says, it occurs "in the sixth month". That means six months after the announcement of John the Baptist's birth earlier in the chapter. You actually see a comparison here. Luke is comparing Jesus' birth to John the Baptist birth.

I know that none of you have ever done this, but people used to compare babies back then. Anybody ever done that? Nobody's guilty of that. You put them on Facebook, right? And you put all the shiny stuff on them. That's an age old thing. And John's birth occurs before Jesus' birth. And there's a contrast between the two.

John's birth is very interesting, it's a very impressive announcement. Because verse 5, if you look up there, it says that his father was a man named Zacharias who was a priest and an honourable man. He did everything the Old Testament told him to do. He was a very godly individual, but he had no kids. So, he prayed to the Lord. And one day when he was offering incense in the temple, while all the people were outside during the hour of prayer, an angel of the Lord visited him, and told him he was to have a son named John, who would proceed the coming Messiah. Verse 17 says, John would be His forerunner or His predecessor.

Now, just a few words about this angel. Luke doesn't say much about him here, but the last time an angel appeared to anyone in the Bible was 500 years ago to the Prophet Zechariah. Now, if you think about that for a moment, it's been five centuries since you've seen angel in the Bible, half a millennium. And when the previous angel came to Zechariah, in chapter 1:3, Zechariah says this, the angel told Zechariah to tell the people, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Return to Me, and I will return to you.'" In other words, "Repent." That was the message five centuries ago that the angel brought. "You need to repent of your sin."

If you notice here in Luke 1:16, this is the same message John the Baptist would tell the people. Verse 16 says, "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God." In other words, these two men connect history, these two appearances of the angel. The angel came to Israel, told them to repent. 500 years passed, they don't repent - another angel comes back and tells them to do it again.

But the amazing thing about this story is that Zacharias doesn't believe the angel. In verse 18, he says, "How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years." And as a result, the angel silences Zacharias, renders him unable to speak, until the baby is born.

Now, why do I tell you all that? There's a reason for that. Why did we go into this long story? I want you to notice how impressive John the Baptist's birth was (at least, the announcement of it). I want you to notice how interesting it was. His father was an impressive man with an impressive

record. He was righteous in the sight of the Lord, verse 6 says. Verse 7 says, he was advanced in years, which was a sign of honour to the Jews. He was in an impressive place. He was in Jerusalem, the holy city. He was in the temple, which was the most holy place on earth, and he was doing something impressive. He was offering incense to the Lord.

This was just an amazing part of this story. And I mention that because if you read ... we're going to notice as we read on, none of that happens at Jesus' birth announcement. None of that happens when the angel visits Mary. At this point in the story, there's no miracles, no temple, no priests. There's nothing flashy at all. That's going to come later. There will be some amazing things at the Lord's birth, but not here. At Jesus' announcement, the angel is going to visit a boring girl in a boring town and give what some might consider to be a boring announcement. It just looks dull.

We could say it this way, of the two announcements, the two birth announcements, so one for Jesus and the one for John the Baptist, do you know which one was more impressive? John's was. John's was. Why is that? Well, it's because God's ways are not our ways, are they? His thoughts are not our thoughts. The things He values are not the things we value. The things that are important to Him are not important to us. If it were up to us, we would have shouted Jesus' birth from the rooftops, wouldn't we? We would have proclaimed it in the halls of Caesar. We'd put it on a t-shirt with lights flashing on it, so everyone would know. But God doesn't do things like we do. He doesn't operate by our rules. Some of you might be wondering this morning, why is God treating me like this? Why is that person getting more attention than me? Why are they getting ahead while I fail? I don't know. I don't have an answer to that question, but I know His ways are higher than our ways. They're greater, they're better. They're more important.

You can say it this way, when it comes to the holiday season, you have to remember God's priorities are not your priorities. I mean, more lights and bigger Christmas trees doesn't impress Him. Sold out Christmas concerts, flashy parades, those silly Christmas sweaters ... I don't know how you can wear lights on your body. That's amazing to me. But that doesn't matter to Him. He wants something more important than that. He wants you to be humble. He wants you to be low in your own eyes.

Which brings us to the next part of this announcement. The first feature of this humble Christmas is the timing of it. John the Baptist had a glorious, flashy, impressive announcement at his birth with all the lights and flare of a Christmas tree. Jesus didn't have that. I mean, later on, you're going to see the angels and the heavenly host singing. And you're going to see the star over Bethlehem and all that, but not right here. This is rather dull in some ways. Which brings us to a second feature to this humble Christmas, and that is a humble messenger. Not only was the timing of the announcement humble, but the messenger was humble as well who delivered it. We just read about an angel earlier, the first angel to appear in 500 years, but now we read about another one. You got two angels showing up in half a millennium. Very interesting. Whether it's the same one or not, we don't know because Luke doesn't give us his name earlier. We only get his name here¹. But if you read in verse 26, it tells us the name of this angel. It says, "Now in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God."

Angels are mentioned in numerous places in the Bible. They're kind of rare, but you do read about them from time to time. But the English word "angel" comes from the Greek word *angelos* which means "messenger," someone who delivers a message. And the idea is that angels are creatures that bring us messages from God. They come from heaven to earth to deliver His word. And apparently, they can look like human beings because Hebrews 13:2 says, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it." So, angels can look so much like people that you can entertain them without knowing it and telling the difference.

Here in Luke 1, we don't know what form this angel took, other than that it was a little bit frightening. Because in verse 30 the angel says to Mary, "Do not be afraid." There's something about his appearance that was scary. He said the same thing, the angel did, to Zacharias in verse 13, "Do not be afraid," which means it might've been the same guy.

But the interesting thing about this in verse 26 is, it's very unusual to read an angel's name in the Bible. You don't often actually hear their name. To my knowledge, there's only three angels that are named in the entire Bible. There is Michael who was talked about in the book of Daniel. There is Lucifer who became Satan, the devil. And then there is this guy, the angel Gabriel. Gabriel is also mentioned in the book of Daniel, but other than that, this is the only reference to him here¹. He's only talked about four times. His name means "God is my strength", and because of that, there's some interesting theories about Gabriel.

The Jews say that he carries the banner of Judah before the throne of God. Judah was their greatest tribe, and they say he carried their banner. The book of Enoch, the apocrypha says that he's an archangel, but that's not in the Bible. It means he rules the other angels (the apocrypha says).

But here, I want you to notice Gabriel's humility. I want you to notice his condescension. In verses 26 through 38, you read the whole story. He never gives his name. He never tells us who he is. We only know who he is because Luke tells us, and he never talks about himself. He talks constantly about the Lord. The words "God" or "Most High" appear nine times in this story, because that's all Gabriel cares about. He cares about the glory of God. He also shows his humility by talking to a nobody like Mary. We'll talk about Mary in just a moment. But the way he treats her is so kind. In verse 28, he greets her. In verse 30, he calms her down. Verse 35, he answers her questions, and he's just patient with her because he's humble.

As one author put it, angels can fly because they take themselves so lightly. That's what Gabriel did. By the way, some of you may be wondering, why am I not flying right now? Why do I feel so low? Well, if you take yourself lightly, it might work.

But his whole point in coming to earth was to serve others. And I think that's something we get during the holidays, right? We pick up on this, we feed the poor a little bit during the holidays and we give gifts a little bit, and we help our neighbours a little bit. But when the holidays are over, we often stop, right? And we go back to our former way of life. And once we put the Christmas tree away, we put our good deeds away with it. A friend of mine serves at a

¹ Luke 1:19 also mentions Gabriel.

parachurch ministry in the States, and he says just about his entire budget comes in during the month of December because that's the only time of the year that people give. Folks, I want to remind you, if that's what you do, that doesn't please God. If Christmas is the only time of the year when you give to others, that doesn't honour Him. I mean, the angels serve God at all times. They're humble at all times. They think about others at all times, and we need to be the same way. I'm all for Christmas trees, giving presents. That's great. That's fine if you want to do that. It's fine if you don't. My wife and I actually have a 10-foot blow up snowman in our yard that the wind keeps knocking over. I'm kind of afraid it's going to go bouncing down the mountain on Promontory. If it does, if you see it around the streets of Chilliwack, don't panic. Just put it in your truck and bring it to our house and we'll pick it up from there. But all that's fine. That's okay. But you know what God He's against? Do you know what God doesn't like? He doesn't like making Christianity seasonal. Amen? Does that make sense? He doesn't like making Christianity a holiday. Christmas is a holiday, Christianity is not. You don't get to come to the end of the year and make up for all your bad deeds in one month. It doesn't work that way. You don't get to live like a pagan for the entire year and live like a Christian for one day. That doesn't honour God. That doesn't please Him. And like we see with Gabriel here, you can't be humble just for a few days. You have to do it every day. That's what the angels do. They're humble at all times, and we should imitate their example.

That brings us to a third feature to this humble Christmas. And that is a humble setting. We've seen the timing of this event and we've seen one of the main characters, the humble messenger named Gabriel. And that brings us to a third feature and that is a humble setting.

By the way, can I just say, I think there's a balance with the whole Christmas thing. There are some Christians that get really upset about it and say you can't do Christmas. I don't see that being a Biblical way to look at it. And then there's other people that it's like the only time they become a Christian is during Christmas, and you can't do that either. There's a balance there, I think.

But Luke gives us a humble setting now. He tells us when all of this takes place. He talks about the "when" and the "who". Now, he talks about the "where", the setting of it. And this is interesting. If you read all of verse 26, it tells us the location. It says, "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth." I think it's safe to say that in the minds of the people at this time, Nazareth was a very humble place. It was one of the smallest towns in Israel. Today, it's a touristy town and if you go there, you see some interesting things. There's actually a church called the "Church of the Annunciation" or the "Church of the Announcement" there today, that was built in honour of this announcement of Jesus' birth. And you can go and you can see a lot of things related to that. But at this day in time, there was nothing there.

In the first century, Nazareth was a very small town. Verse 26 calls it a city because there was no word in Greek for town. But maybe a better English word might be the word "village" or "hamlet". If Jerusalem was the capital city in Israel, Nazareth was the armpit. I mean, it almost didn't exist. It was never mentioned in the Old Testament. You opened the Old Testament, you never see the town Nazareth there. And it was never mentioned in the writings of the rabbis or certain historians like Josephus. And it was so obscure that for centuries, nobody knew where it

was. We couldn't find it or confirm its existence until archeologists discovered a bunch of first century tombs in circling the area where Nazareth was supposed to be, and they concluded that a town must have been there.

The Jews didn't bury their dead in town, in the city limits. So, if you saw a bunch of graves in broad sweeping circle, that means a town must have been there. And they assume that Nazareth was there, rightly so. It was located at 75 miles north of Jerusalem. It was entirely landlocked, which means boats and ships could not get there. No major trade routes pass through Nazareth.

Do you guys use the phrase “Podunk” town in Canada? Is that a Canadian expression? That would describe Nazareth. People made fun of it at the time. If you remember, when Jesus was being crucified, Pilate hung a sign on the cross that said, “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews”. You wonder, why did he say “the Nazarene”? Well, that's because that was the most insulting thing he could think of. He said, “Your Saviour comes from Nazareth. How do you like that?” In John 1:46, when Nathaniel heard that Jesus came from there, he said, “Nazareth, can anything good come from Nazareth?” And even if you read the book of Acts, you'll read that the early Christians were called Nazarenes at time. That was not a complimentary term.

Again, I want you to notice that the irony that just leaps off the page as you read this. Notice this: after sending an angel to Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, God immediately sends one to Nazareth - to the armpit. You would think He might've said, “Look, Mary, I've got some important to tell you. Can you go over here to Bethlehem, maybe? Can you come into Jerusalem for a minute so I can tell you this?” He sends her straight to the middle of nowhere.

We'll say more about Mary in just a moment, but women were looked at as second-rate citizens in the first century. They were looked at as a little more than property in some ways. They were not allowed to vote or hold public office. They couldn't speak in public to a man or hold jobs with them. And women who are not married were in an even worse predicament than that. They were just one step above a Gentile in the eyes of their countrymen. And yet, God immediately goes from talking a full grown man, an older man, to talking to a girl like this. He goes from talking to a priest to talking to an unmarried girl. Why? Well, I've already told you because His ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. God is not interested in the things that interest us. He doesn't care about big cities and important people and wealth and riches and glory. He cares about the heart.

You probably already know this, but we tend to get priorities mixed up a little bit during the holidays, don't we? We get caught up in the light and the shiny things and the big shows, but there were no shows when Jesus was born. There were no lights. If you wanted to see something interesting, you had to leave Nazareth. This was a dull boring town, because God is not interested in that. He's interested in the inside of us, not the outside of us. He doesn't care about appearances. He cares about the heart, the soul. He doesn't care how bright your Christmas lights are if your heart is dark, amen? He doesn't care how pretty your house is if your soul is dirty. He wants you to value the things that Mary valued. He wants you to be humble and trust in Him and be saved.

That leads us to one more feature today. This will be a short message this morning. But just to remind you so far, Luke has told us about the timing of this event and how it comes right after John the Baptist's announcement. And he talks about the angel Gabriel who delivered it in a very humble manner. Remember, angels can fly because they take themselves so lightly, and that's how Gabriel presented this. He never said a word about himself, totally selfless. Luke tells us about the setting, it occurs in a tiny little town in Galilee called Nazareth in the middle of nowhere. So, now the only thing left to do is to talk about who he says this to. Now the only thing left in the story is to talk about the recipient of the message. And that brings us to the fourth and final feature to this announcement to this humble Christmas. And this one may be the humblest of all, and that is a humble girl. The angel Gabriel gives this announcement to a humble girl named Mary.

As I just told you before, that was her name. Her name was Mary. And if you read in verses 26 through 27, it tells us, "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary."

I won't say too much about Mary here because we're going to talk about her tonight. But you notice a couple of things. One thing that's interesting is that her name is mentioned last in the passage. Greek is a little different than English in that in Greek, the location of a word in a sentence doesn't matter, but the ending of the word tells you how important that word is. So, what the English translators would do is they would put the words in order according to that ending on the word. And Mary's name is last here because she is last in importance. It's not about her - the author is saying. She's in the story and she plays an important part, but she comes at the end.

Luke tells us several things about her. First it says that she was a virgin. She had never been intimate with any man. It must have been important because he repeats it three times in the passage, not to be crude, but to highlight the significance of this. This is a birth announcement. I mean, the angel is coming to Nazareth to announce the arrival of a baby, and virgins don't have babies. So, three times the author reminds you of the astonishment of this.

Some liberal scholars have said that Mary would not have known this was a miracle because people were so ignorant back then of this stuff. Listen, people have always known where babies come from. I mean, that's been around since the beginning of time. She knew this was shocking. This was incredible. For the first time in history, a child is going to be born of a virgin. A child is going to be born without an earthly father. In fact, later on, an angel is going to appear to Joseph to tell him what's really going on here. Because as soon as Mary comes to Joseph and says, "Listen, an angel appeared to me and told me I was going to be pregnant," what would he say? "Let's get a divorce. You've been unfaithful," right?

Which brings us to the second thing Luke tells us about Mary, and that is that she was engaged. Verse 27 says, "She was engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David." This is really telling about this passage about Mary, because girls were usually engaged at the age of 12 or 13 at that time. People were married young back then because they died young. You didn't have much time.

The verse says that this possibly 13-year-old girl was engaged to Joseph a carpenter (as we learned from other passages - a very humble trade at the time) who was a descendant of David. David was Israel's greatest king. We're going to talk about him tonight. He was their greatest ruler. So, to be his descendant was an honour. It was a special privilege. And Joseph had that privilege, although he was many, many centuries after David, and so Joseph was poor now. David's descendants were poor. But he came from the line of David.

That leads us to one more thing Luke tells us about Mary in verse 27, and we've already talked about this. That's her name. You get her name at the very end of the passage. It says, "The angel came to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary." So, we know she was a virgin, we know she was engaged, and we know her name. We know she was about to witness a miracle because of her virginity and we know she was about to be married, which makes that challenging in some ways. And we know that she had the name Mary. Mary is the Hebrew name – Miriam. Moses' sister was ... many people were named Mary in the Bible. But I want you to notice in this passage, that's all we know about her. We know three things and that's it.

She is shrouded in mystery. In fact, at this point, we know more about Joseph in the story than we know about Mary, because she's not the hero of the story, God is. The glory doesn't go to Mary, it goes to God. And if we were to draw an application of this practical lesson from her life, it would be this, God chooses whomever He wants to. He blesses whomever He wants to bless. It's been said that God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called. And that's the case with Mary. He doesn't call the worthy, He takes those who are worthless, those who are lowly, those who are humble, and He lifts them up to do great things. Nobody in the first century would've looked at Mary and said, "That person should have the Son of God born in her womb." Nobody. Nobody would have looked at Nazareth and said, "If He's going to be raised anywhere, the Messiah, let's raise Him in this town." She was a 13-year-old girl, engaged to a poor man in a poor town, and the Lord chooses to perform one of the greatest miracles in history through her.

Verse 28 even says that she was favored for this. She was blessed for this. In fact, if you read verses 28 through 29 it says, "And coming in, he said to her [Gabriel said to her], 'Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.' But she was very perplexed at this statement." She didn't have a high opinion of herself and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. Gabriel says, "Hi", Mary says, "Huh? Why are you talking to me?" Verse 34 also says, "Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'" She's not arguing with him, she just doesn't understand. She's trying to wrap her mind around what he is telling her. And verse 38 gives her final response this way - and this shows you the kind of young lady Mary was. It shows you the kind of quality she had.

In verse 38, it says, "Then Mary said, 'Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.'" That's a good way to tie this off this morning. It's a good way to put this all together. Tonight, we're going to look at the announcement Gabriel gives to Mary. We're going to talk about what he tells this child. But for now, let's just highlight Mary's response. She was obedient to this. She was submissive. She obeyed the word of the Lord. She didn't understand what Gabriel was saying, she couldn't wrap her mind around it, but she did obey. She submitted to the idea, and that's all God wants from any of us today.

Friends, God doesn't expect you to understand every jot and tittle in the Bible to be saved. He doesn't expect you to understand every mystery in Scripture. You don't have to have a PhD in theology, but He does expect you to do this. He expects you to say, "May it be done according to Your word." You don't have to have the biggest Christmas tree or blow up snowman to be a Christian. You don't have to have the brightest light show outside your house or anything like that, but you do have to believe.

Going back to what we said earlier, you have to be humble. You have to be low in your own eyes. So, will you do that this morning? Will you admit that you're a sinner and your only hope of righteousness is found in Jesus Christ, the one who was born of a virgin? Like Gabriel and Mary, will you give all the glory to God for what He has done? Will you say salvation is entirely of Him? It's all by grace alone, and will you respond in faith? Will you believe even when you don't understand everything?

Like we said earlier, Christmas is a wonderful time of the year for us. It reminds us of our Saviour's birth. That's the whole point of it. It's a great time to pause and think about things for a moment, and I can't think of anything better to think about than this - you need a Saviour. And God has provided you one in Jesus Christ, in this little baby.

A missionary once asked a lady in China if she knew what Christmas was. And she said, "Yes, I do. I think it's the day that Jesus died, isn't it?" And the missionary said, "You know what? In a sense, you're right because He was born to die. One day, this little baby would grow up to be a man, and that man would live a sinless life. And with that sinless life, He would die on a cross so that whoever believes in Him might be saved." Will you believe this morning? I pray that you would, and I pray you come back tonight to hear the rest of the story at 6:00. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for this story that we've read this morning, and we've just scratched the surface of it. There's always more to say in Your word, and there's always more to the story. You've given us a wonderful book in the Bible to tell us about Your Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, I pray for those who are here this morning who know Christ as their Saviour, I pray this Christmas holiday would be meaningful for them, this morning would be meaningful for them as they think about His birth and sing songs to His glory.

Father, if there's any here this morning who don't know Christ and a lot of this is lost on them, Lord, I pray You would remind them that there is a Saviour for sinners. There is someone who could pay for all the wrongs they've done against You, and He can pay for them freely in His blood. Lord, I pray You would save some souls this morning.

Father, as we come back tonight, our prayer is the same as what Gabriel sought after, what Mary wanted. We want You to be glorified, Lord, in all we do. Thank you, Father, that You do take humble people. Thank you that You take people from towns like Nazareth and You do astonishing miracles through them. We give You all the glory for that Father, and we pray this in Jesus' name, amen.