

The Wonder of Christmas Week 4: His Birth

The irony of Christmas is that Jesus is a king, but his entrance into the world was nothing like a king. His birth **wasn't posh**, but the exact opposite. His birth **was not a public spectacle**, it was off in a corner. It was not a **high society event**, instead shepherds of royalty attended.

Jesus was a different kind of king. From beginning to end.

In those days, this is how a king would go about his business. Kings make edicts that other's put into effect that are intended to bring the mess into some sort of order.

An edict is an official order or proclamation issued by a person in authority. The person in authority speaks it and it becomes law, predetermined to happen exactly as issued. The edict then **becomes external** to the person giving it. **The order is taken in hand by others subservient** to the one in authority who put into action. Because the one has authority, the ones below **are bound to make this edict happen.**

This happened when **Caesar Augustus decrees** that there should be a census taken. **Caesar didn't go out of his castle** and start traveling around counting people. He's, after all, not simply a king; he is an emperor. **He has "people."** **As we said, Jesus is a different kind of king from beginning to end.** Look at the other parts of the story we have celebrated about this advent.

During Advent, we have lit a candle each Sunday representing a different part of the wonder of Christmas. **Week 1, we lit the candle of hope** and talked about the real hope that the coming of Jesus announced. That hope is **not circumstance dependent**. In other words, the circumstances **don't necessarily have to be encouraging** or **speak of good things to come** to have hope because of Jesus. **Week 2, we lit the candle of peace.** That peace, Shalom, means wholeness or completeness. **We are made whole with God, through Jesus.** Like, with hope, this peace that Jesus brought is also **not circumstance dependent**. This shalom does not mean **an absence of conflict**, there can be conflict, but because of Jesus' coming, **we can experience peace amid conflict.**

Last week, we lit the candle of joy. And, as we looked at what the Bible teaches about Jesus bringing joy, you guessed it, we discovered that **joy is not dependent upon the circumstances being good or happy.** Independent of the circumstances of my life, I can experience joy and display that joy by rejoicing.

Today we light 2 candles. We light the **4th candle**, which is the candle of love. Our love for others, **even our enemies, is a gift from God.** It is one of the fruits **produced by the spirit.** And once again, this is **not circumstance**

dependent. Because it is a gift that is produced in our lives by the Holy Spirit, it can grow in any circumstance, not just in warm cozy moments when anyone could love.

The second candle we will light is the Christ candle, the one in the middle. It is for Christmas eve, but since the fourth Sunday of Advent is also Christmas Eve, we are doing them together.

What is the Christ candle supposed to represent? It means... **This King entered our mess.**

He's different from any other king who sets on high, disconnected from the mess, and makes pronouncements that others must go and do. Jesus is a different kind of king. The context of his birth is a microcosm of what he came to accomplish. What he came to do could only be done by entering our mess. He couldn't send anyone else to do what he was going to do. He had to make himself poor, vulnerable, marginalized, homeless, misunderstood, and weak. Coming as a baby being born in a barn with the animals speaks to the kind of king who came to serve, not be served.

Jesus works from the inside out...notice his candle is in the middle, the very center. It's not top-down leadership, but up close and personal.

The picture of the birth of a king in the barn and listen to these words. ⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. ⁶ Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. ⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, ⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Philippians 2:5-8

Here's where we come full circle. Jesus entering our mess means he entered your mess and that is not dependent upon the circumstances of your mess. **Your mess does not disqualify you from encountering Jesus.**

Are you an addict, failure, underachiever, mentally ill, have a criminal record, someone who has hurt the people closest to you, in debt, abused, rejected, bad parent, irresponsible, hypocrite or sinner?

"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God; let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:14-16 ESV

First, he is a king, not like you would expect. Now he's a high priest, unlike you would expect. He doesn't offer sacrifices to God for our sins, he is the offering. He offers himself.

He brings order to your mess making it beautiful.

⁶ When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. ⁷ Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. ⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. ⁹ And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. Romans 5:6-9 NLT

If you think your situation isn't a mess and doesn't need ordering, then Jesus can't really do anything for you. He came for the sick or at least those who could honestly assess their situation as being sick.

Notice that this is for those who are utterly helpless. He came as a helpless baby to save helpless people.

Christmas without the suffering of the cross and death degrades into sentimentality. Christmas without the resurrection is a nice story without a happy, satisfying ending.

¹² "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them wanders away, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others on the hills and go out to search for the one that is lost? ¹³ And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he will rejoice over it more than over the ninety-nine that didn't wander away! Matthew 18:12-13

Sheep that run away, because they are sheep, will always find trouble and some sort of mess.

Is that your story? Have you run off from what you knew to be true when you were young only to get into a mess? Here's some great news, you are the one that this is for. The good shepherd who got his start in a barn, surrounded by animals, wants to bring you back into the fold. And when he does, he will celebrate the true meaning of Christmas.

If you need to experience the wonder of Christmas, today is the perfect time to ask Jesus to meet you in your mess and help give you a clean heart and fresh start.

Make this story your story! How does that happen? You must respond to this king, this high priest in the same manner he came to us. It's in humility. You say to Jesus the king, I will submit to you, trusting that you know best for me. You

say to the high priest, I trust in your ability to wash away my sin and make me into a new creation, I'm not going to try to earn this for myself.

Here's a good place to start. Join many of us who are going to read through the Bible Chronologically. Each Sunday the sermon will.