

MIRACLES OF CHRISTMAS
MATTHEW 1:18-25 / 2:1-11
2025-12-28

Were you ready for Christmas? Ready or not—regardless, the baby Jesus has come! The Son of God, God Himself is here. He has visited us, walked with us and has invited us to come and live with Him, to live like Him.

This month we've focused on the hope that the prophets foretold of the coming Messiah, the hope that God alone gives us. We've learned that the peace referred to by God is a very different thing than the peace that people typically speak of. It is a gift from God. Jesus says, "*My peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to as the world gives to you.*" It is a peace that passes all understanding, because it is a peace that's not within us. We learned once again that if anyone has the corner on joy, it is we as Christ followers. Jesus came that we might have joy and have it abundantly—joy that carries on right into eternity.

The beautiful part of the hope we find in Christ is that we can't create it or duplicate it; it's not dependent on life's circumstances. It's a gift of God. The beautiful part of the peace we find in Christ is that we can't create it or duplicate it; it's not dependent on life's circumstances. It's a gift from God. The beautiful part of joy we find in Christ is that we can't create it or duplicate it; it's not dependent on life's circumstances. It's a gift from God. What do you expect we might find with respect to love? Right. We can't create it or duplicate. It's not dependent on life's circumstances. It's a gift from God.

ADVENT means the coming of Christ. But it is every bit as much our coming to Him as He invites us to come to Him—to see Him at the manger, to come to know Him, to see Him grow, to imitate Him once we have invited Him into our hearts. So today, come.

Has God stepped into history? Are you kidding? It is HIS STORY! God has deliberately involved Himself in our history. One of the most startling discrepancies in life is to look at history books that don't acknowledge God's participation in our world as opposed to the one's that give Him the central stage He deserves. God's come near to give us strength and security and peace that we cannot have without Jesus. Look at what He's done! Look at the miracles of Christmas alone! It was Arnold Schwarzenegger, OK, no it was Albert Schweizer who got us going down the road investigating the historical Jesus. He refused to consider any miracles when discussing Jesus. Jesus' story was reduced to Him being born, living an exemplary life and dying. That was it. Just one problem with that. Since when does humankind decide what God can or can't do, when He may or may not act and how He chooses to do so?

It's worth talking about what a miracle is. I'm of the school that any time a baby is born it's a miracle. God's given a new life. But others would say, absolutely not; it's a normal, natural event. Some people try to dismiss things like Jesus walking on water, suggesting He was on a sandbar or it was an optical illusion or, or. So, you get my drift. The issue is, where do you separate the natural from the supernatural? You can try to normalize any and every event, but to

what end? So I do want to talk about the miracles of Christmas! I want to take one last look at the wonder of it all. Today seems like a good day to do it; we'll begin a new series next week.

John the Baptist is born to a too-old, barren Elizabeth after the angel Gabriel appears to her husband, Zechariah, and leaves Zechariah mute for not believing what Gabriel had told him about God's plans. John is the one who prepares the way for Jesus' ministry. A miraculous birth, the appearance of an angel and an instantly changed life (based on a lack of faith).

Gabriel (same angel) also visited Mary and explained that she would give birth to the Son of God. She couldn't figure this out, because she was a virgin. Gabriel assured Mary that she would be "found to be with child through the Holy Spirit." Could anyone question this miracle?

Elizabeth, John the Baptist's mother, knew that Mary would give birth to the Messiah, without her having any way of knowing that, without any prior meeting (No email, no texting, not even a phone call). Clearly, she had been in-dwelt by the Holy Spirit—yet another example that God is omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing) and omni-present (everywhere). The yet unborn baby John, "leapt for joy" at the arrival of the expectant mother Mary, described as something definitely outside the realm of the ordinary.

Next. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph to persuade him to stay with Mary and not follow his intention to divorce her. In all the history of humanity, no one other than Joseph ever had to deal with such a situation. He complied—though you never hear Joseph speak. You just get to see the integrity, trust and love of a man for God and of his family. An angel and belief in the unprecedented.

The baby Jesus Himself fulfills the prophesy from Isaiah, 750 years earlier, that He will be born of a virgin and will save people (Jesus means "the Lord saves") and He will be called Immanuel (God with us). How other than a miracle, can you explain foretelling future events precisely?

Surrounding these events Elizabeth prophesies, Zechariah prophesies and Mary prophesies about the One who will bring salvation through the forgiveness of sins. The awe in what they say and the accuracy of what they say are, shall I say, supernatural?

How about God ordering the events and times of history so Emperor Augustus demands a census be taken of the Roman world, requiring people to return to their ancestral family town. For Mary and Joseph, it's an order to return to Bethlehem, the town of David. Hmm, funny, that just happens to fulfill the prophecy from Micah from 750 years earlier that the Christ would be born there! Coincidence? That word doesn't exist in God's language. How does God do that?

The shepherds hear the news of the birth of the Saviour—first by an angel, then accompanied by a "heavenly host" filling the skies, glorifying and praising God. They told the shepherds where to find Jesus. Lo and behold, He and Mary and Joseph were exactly where the angel said.

Without human prompting, Magi from the east came looking for “the one born king of the Jews”—because they saw “His star” in the east and had come **to worship Him.**” How would they ever come to know that. You and I could study the stars forever and never come to their collective conclusion! They brought Him gifts of gold, incense and myrrh. Mysteriously, they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, who intended to kill Jesus, because He thought Jesus posed a threat to his own kingship.

Joseph is our man of dreams! He’s warned in a dream to escape immediately—as soon as the dream was finished. This didn’t wait until morning. He, Mary and Jesus ran under cover of night. This migration fulfilled another prophesy—Messiah would come out of Egypt. When the danger passed because Herod died, an angel gave Joseph yet another vision to return home to Israel, ending up in Nazareth--and yes, you guessed right, this fulfilled another prophesy.

But bigger than all these miracles is that God chose to send Jesus to us in the first place. The umbrella over all of this is the obvious love that God pours on us. You’ve heard of extreme sports, extreme makeovers, but what we have here is extreme love! Just so you don’t miss it, as with hope in Christ, and as with peace in Christ, and as with joy in Christ, so too, this love in Christ is a very different thing than the world has any clue about. Every one of them—hope, peace, joy and love—are not conditional on any events. They are all gifts from God, and no one can take them away from you; no one can diminish their exquisiteness, their wonder, their miraculous nature. They are all found in Christ; they are all founded in Christ. Here’s the thing, those without Christ have no claim on this supernatural hope, peace, joy and love. We can fiddle each of them away. We can ignore them and diminish them that way, just as we can ignore any gift we receive and not get any benefit from it. Or, we can receive each of these gifts. Receive them with heart-felt gratitude; enjoy and develop them and share them as God intends.

Do you get any inkling of how much God loves us and how He calls us to come to Him? He called Mary. He called Joseph. He called Zechariah. He called the shepherds. He called the Wise Guys. He later called the disciples—“Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” He called everyone—“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.” He’s calling you and me. Come and see what God has done! Come to the manger! Come to the throne of grace!

God just gives and gives and gives! The Wise Men signified this as they brought gifts—gold, frankincense and myrrh—as an act of worship. Gold, the king of metals, is a gift, therefore, fit for a king. Frankincense, a sweet perfume, was used in the Temple sacrifices; it was the gift for a priest. The Latin word for priest means “bridge-builder”. The priest builds bridges between men and God. Does that appropriately describe Jesus? Myrrh was used to embalm the dead. So even at Jesus’ birth, there was the reminder that He would be the One to die for us. And central:

They worshiped Him, alone, no other. He is the only one who is worthy of our worship.

There were three different types of responses to those around Jesus. Herod’s response was one of hatred and hostility. There are still people today who would gladly destroy Jesus

because they believe He'd interfere with their lives. Those who only want to do what they themselves want, never have any use for Jesus. The Christ-follower is one who has stopped doing what he likes and has dedicated his life to what Christ likes. Second, the priests and scribes, noticeably absent from the Christmas scene, reacted with indifference to Christ's coming. There are those today who are so busy with their own affairs, that Jesus means nothing to them. And third, the reaction of the wise men, was of adoring worship, with the desire to lay at the feet of Jesus the noblest gifts they could bring. When any of us realizes the love of Christ, we too should be lost in wonder, praise and love, and bow in pure worship of Him, before Him.

The lady with the alabaster jar in Luke loved Jesus lavishly! How much do you love Him? The disciples thought pouring out the alabaster—worth a year's wages—was a waste. What did Jesus think? What kind of woman was this? She was a sinner. She had a questionable past. She was sad, repentant, generous. She was focused on Jesus. Yes, she was just like you and me.

Readiness for Christmas. Maybe you're not ready until you consider just how much God loves you. Don't do that lightly. **Reflect** on the miracles of Christmas. **Ponder** how God stood on His head to turn the world upside down; how He has demonstrated His lavish love to you and for you. **Receive** His gifts—hope, peace, joy, and His love. Remember, an unopened gift is absolutely useless! **Then, like the shepherds, go rejoicing and sharing** them with others. **Live** these gifts, **be** these gifts, to others this week. What better way to celebrate our Lord's coming to us!