

The Advent W.A.I.T. "Tell"

Matt 1:18-25

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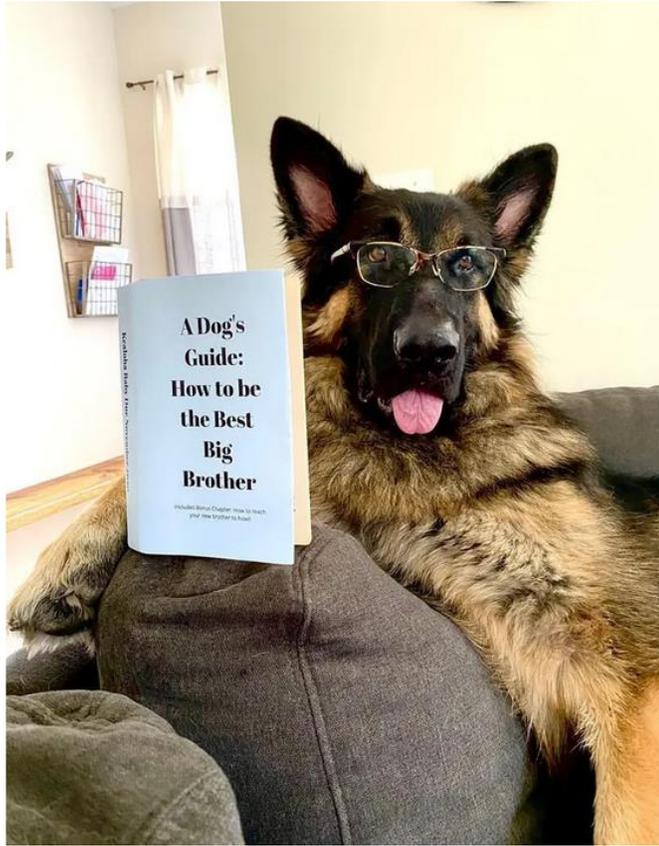
Today we come to the 4th and last sermon in this Advent series and our theme this morning is theme: "Tell." *As we wait for the arrival of Christ, it is our joy to tell the world that Jesus is on the way!* That's the kind of energy that was behind our 1st hymn, "Go tell it on a mountain!"

*"Go tell it on a mountain,
over the hills and everywhere!
Go tell it on a mountain,
that Jesus Christ is born!"*

Many young couples today, who are anticipating the arrival of a new baby, sometimes find fun and creative ways to tell all their family and friends that they are about to have a baby!

Here are a few pictures that I found that seem to illustrate this.





Here's my favorite!



Telling your friends and family that you're going to have a baby and letting everyone know that you're gonna be a "mom" or gonna be a "dad" is almost always, a joyful occasion.

The pictures you just saw are just a few examples of people who found fun and creative ways to let everyone know, but a little over 2000 years ago, when a baby named Jesus was about to be born, there was one person (Joseph) who probably didn't know how to tell anyone.

Matt 1:18-25

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name JESUS, because he will save his people from their sins."

*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" which means, "God with us."
When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

The theme of today's message is: "Tell."

Tell the world that Jesus Christ was born,
Tell the world that a Savior has come,
Tell the world that God is with us!

Doesn't everyone know it's Christmas?

I think it's actually hard to find someone in the world today who doesn't know about Christmas. Whether they believe or not that Jesus is the Son of God and the story of the Incarnation, I think it's actually hard to find someone who doesn't know about Christmas!

Rick Warren, (pastor of Saddleback Church and author of the Purpose Driven Life) wrote in another book called The Purpose of Christmas, he said: "*Christmas is the largest celebration around the world.*"

And to support that statement, he wrote:

Some holidays get a single day, but Christmas is emphasized for an entire month. That's 1/12th of the entire year! During the Christmas season, billions of people set aside their normal routines, to decorate their homes, send out greeting cards, buy gifts, go to Christmas parties, attend church services, sing Christmas songs, watch Christmas specials on tv and travel long distances to be with family. Christmas sights and sounds fill the air everywhere. There are stores and even careers that are exclusively dedicated to preparing for & celebrating this holiday. When Christmas comes, you can't miss it - it's everywhere. If you stop and think about it, it is astounding that the simple unassuming birth of a peasant boy - born 2000 years ago in the Middle East, has caused such commotion.

His birthday even causes traffic jams in places like NYC, Tokyo and Rio de Janeiro. You may have never realized that every time you check your calendar or refer to a date or write one down, you are using Jesus Christ as your reference point. Because of Jesus, history is divided into "BC" (Before Christ and "AD" (anno domini - or the Year of the Lord.) Every other event in history and every other event on your calendar today is dated by how many days and years it has been since JC appeared on earth. Even your birthday is dated by HIS Birthday!

I couldn't have said it any better.

The birth of Jesus Christ was *the* most anticipated birthday in all of history and today *is the* most celebrated birthday comparable to none.

Jesus' birthday changed the political landscape in the Roman world! Jesus' birthday reset history's time-clock! His birthday causes traffic jams! His birthday fuels economies! And for believers all over the world, His birthday points to the moment that God re-entered our world!

But Joseph

But for all that Christmas is to us and for all the impact that His birth has had, there was one person in our passage (and in history) who probably didn't know how to tell anyone about the birth of Jesus. His name was Joseph.

Not too long after our daughter Abby was born, our immediate family members came over to visit to see the newest member of the family!

Grandparents, aunts and uncles - one by one they all took Abby in their arms, and stared into her face - carefully studying every feature and trying to discern, "who" she looked like.

Some would announce: "She has her mother's nose" Other's would proclaim: "She has her father's eyebrows" It was almost as if it was a contest to see who she looked like more. Of course my wife's side of the family all thought she looked like her and my side of the family all thought she looked like me, with of course a few disagreements! (But isn't that the fun part of every new baby? Arguing about who she looks like more?)

Well, for a man named Joseph in our story, I can't imagine what it must have been like to watch Jesus being born. Not being able to have family over and having those fun arguments about who the baby looked like, and like the pictures at the start of this sermon, not being able to tell everyone that they were going to have a baby! In fact, in all 4 of the gospels - from start to finish, there is not a single word recorded having been spoken by Joseph.

Joseph - the husband of Mary and the earthly father of Jesus didn't utter a single word when it came to the birth of Jesus Christ.

This morning, my charge to all of you is very simple: "Tell the world about Jesus!" From the mountain-tops to the valleys, from the heavens to the nations, "Tell the World about Jesus!"

Jesus Saves!

In Matt 1:18-25, the passage tells us that Joseph was a righteous person.

When Joseph found out that "soon-to-be-wife" was also a "soon-to-be-mom," (no thanks to Joseph) Joseph wanted no part of this, and so, true to his character, he was quietly going to divorce her and not make a big fuss.

He wasn't going to expose her. He wasn't going to shame her. He was just going to move on as if this was a "bad dream."

But then in a "spiritual dream" the angel of the Lord appeared to him, and only did the angel reassure Joseph that all of this was from God, the angel also told Joseph what to name the baby.

The angel said: "... you are to give him the name **Jesus** because he will save his people from their sins."

Well, in the NIV translation (as well as in many others) there's a little footnote, right after the name Jesus - "*Jesus*" is the Greek form of "Joshua", which means **THE LORD SAVES.**"

Isn't that a great name with a great meaning?"The Lord Saves!"

This is the first thing that we can tell others this Christmas time - we can tell them that "Jesus Saves!"

Isn't this exactly the opposite of how most people think of Christmas? What I mean by that is most people during Christmas time usually "*Spend! Spend! Spend!*" But the original Christmas - and in the naming of Jesus, His birth, wasn't to encourage us to "*Spend! Spend! Spend!*" but rather that Jesus came into the world to "*Save! Save! Save!*"

There's not too many jokes that you can tell on this topic, but I found one, and I hope it's ok to tell it!

One day, Jesus and Satan were having an argument about who was better on the computer. This went on for several days and so they both agreed to have a contest and asked God to be the judge.

So they sat behind their computers and both of them began typing away. They worked on documents, they worked on spreadsheets, they made power point presentations, each one of them working up a storm!

Well, seconds before the end of the contest, a bolt of lightning struck, causing all the power to go out.

Then, minutes later, when the power came back on, God announced the contest was over, and when He asked Satan to show what he had come up with, Satan was visibly upset and cried "I have nothing! "I lost it all when the power went out!"

"Very well then," God said, "Let's see if Jesus did any better."

So Jesus pressed a button on his keyboard and his screen came back to life. All His documents, all His spreadsheets were all displayed on the screen. Clearly, Jesus was the winner of the contest.

But Satan protested and accused Jesus of cheating. He even asked God, "How was it that he lost everything when the power went out, but Jesus' files were still intact?"

*God simply smiled, looked at Satan & replied: "It's simple: **Jesus Saves.**"*

Jesus Saves! Tell the world that Jesus Saves! Christmas is a time to remember that Jesus Saves!

This past week, you probably heard on the news that vaccines are being shipped out to different places in the nation. Hopefully with this vaccine, we'll be able to get thru this pandemic. Unfortunately, it won't help those who have already lost their lives, but quite possibly, it will save countless others.

The birth of Jesus Christ wasn't a vaccine to protect people from a virus. The birth of Jesus wasn't a vaccine to prevent people from getting sick, but when the angel told Joseph that the baby's name shall be Jesus, (and that His name meant "The Lord Saves") this was the long awaited news that everyone was waiting for!

There's a quote from Rick Warren's book I mentioned earlier: *"When people think of spiritual salvation, they often have a very narrow concept of it; they think that salvation is being saved from hell. But God has so much more in mind than just fire insurance when he sent Jesus to be our savior."*

Then he goes on to say:
*Jesus saves you FROM something,
Jesus saves you FOR something
Jesus saves you BY something.*

Immanuel

Going back to our passage, Matthew does something that is classic Matthew: he pauses telling the story to let us know that the story of Jesus' birth, is somehow connected to an Old Testament prophecy.

You know how sometimes when we get to a certain age, we like to tell stories of things that happened long time ago? It's sort of like that, but instead of connecting it to something in Matthew's past, he connects it to the past of his people.

In particular, to a prophecy or to a quote, and by doing that, he's connecting Jesus to the "good ole days" when God was surely with the people.

So in Matthew 1:18-25, he stops telling the story to insert one of these OT references in vs 22-23. He pauses telling the story of Joseph's dream to let us know and to make this connection:

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel - which means, "God with us."

The quote is taken from Isaiah 7:14 - during the time when God's people were in exile.

See, Matthew wants us to know that Jesus not only brings us salvation, but in Jesus Christ - we are connected back to God. And for a people who were in exile that was a very powerful statement - His name shall be "Immanuel" which mean - "God with us."

A little back story here.

If a "prophet" ever showed up to your front door and rang your door bell, you might not necessarily be happy to see him. If a "prophet" ever came to your home, you might not so quickly invite him in for coffee!

For example, when the prophet Samuel showed up to Bethlehem to anoint a new king, the first thing the towns-people asked him was: *"Do you come in peace?"* Samuel replied: *"Yes I come in peace."* Because "prophets" didn't always bring "good news." Sometimes they brought "tough news" and on some occasions they brought "bad news."

Every once in a while, when I call someone on the phone (a member of a church) after I say "hello" and tell them it's me, - one time this guy said *"Oh-oh... am I in trouble? "Did I forget to turn in my offering?" "No, no! I call in peace!"*

But often times when a prophet showed up, it was to let the people know that God was very upset - that God was disappointed, and that you better shape up or else... God's gonna pay you a visit!

But see, that's why this quote from Isaiah 7:14 is so important - because in that quote Matthew wants us to know that "yes" God is going to pay us a visit, but this

is "good news," not "bad news" because God comes to us in Jesus who shall be called Immanuel which means "God is with us."

God comes in peace. God comes with open hands, and so there is no need to be afraid.

The Peace Child.

Back in the 1960's, two missionaries Don & Carol Richardson travelled to Pap New Guinea to work among native villagers. For years, they tried to share the gospel message to natives that were unwelcoming. Not only that, there was also warring tribes with constant skirmishes often leading to many deaths.

The Richardson's tried to show them what the love of God looked like. They tried to tell them the story of Jesus Christ, and in their memoirs, they shared how frustrated they were because the mindset of the villagers were so different. As an example, the villagers actually thought that Judas Iscariot was the hero of the gospel.

So the Richardson's announced that they were going to leave - to the dismay of the tribes, but since they couldn't convince them to put down their weapons, and stop their fighting - what else could they do?

So, one day, the chief from one of the warring tribes took his very own infant son, then he walked over to the enemy tribe and placed his own infant son in the arms of his adversary. The chief told his enemy that his own son would live with them for the rest of his life, and as long as he lived, there would be peace between them.

That was the breakthrough moment and from that event, the Richardson's were able to connect what God did in Jesus Christ and the villagers finally were able to understand the message of the gospel.

You might have heard that story which is told in a book called: "The Peace Child" but it was by giving of that son where enemies made peace, and there was no more fighting among them.

For a people who were in exile - the name "Immanuel" said everything.
It meant that they were not alone - it meant that *God* was not angry with them,
and it meant that *God* comes in peace in *Jesus Christ*.

I pray this week and in the days leading up to *Christmas*, you will experience
once again *Jesus* who is *Immanuel* - *God* who is *With Us*, and find joy in the
telling of the arrival of *Christ*!