Sermon Notes

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12/29/24

What Will We Do with the Baby? Advent part 5

1. I can remember very well how nervous and thrilled Kami and I were when we found out that she was pregnant with our first child. We wanted to have children but, like most other first time parents, we were also concerned.

2. A new baby brings new dreams, new hopes and a vast amount of preparation and worry. There are things to buy, a place to prepare, medical care to plan.

3. When the baby arrives, everything changes. This is a good thing but it is also a stressful thing. It is a hard reset for your daily schedule. Will they sleep at night? During the day? Will they have upset stomachs and allergies? Colic? Will they be healthy? Will they like me??? Will I like them???

4. Think of Joseph and Mary. When Mary found out that she was pregnant, that changed everything for the rest of her life. She would always be "that woman" whose story was too strange to be believed. Add to that the normal concerns of new parents... and newlyweds.

5. The arrival of Jesus was an atom bomb in Mary and Joseph's life...and in the world. We see Jesus on the night of his birth. We then see him somewhere between 1 and 2 years later when the wise men visit, leading them to flee to Egypt to escape the grasp of King Herod. We see him next at the temple when he goes missing for days and, when questioned, gives a reply that foreshadows more changes, more bombs, to come: "Shall I not be about my father's business?"

6. These small glimpses have frustrated readers for 2000 years. Quite a few "gospels" were written later to try and fill in the gaps but they were all fantasy. The fact is that daily life with the reality of Jesus in the family changed everything all the time.

7. In Mark 3:20-21, 31-35, Jesus's family tried to intervene to get him out of the public eye, fearing he was losing his mind. In John, we find his brothers in conflict with him, not believing in him.

8. Jesus even told us that his arrival, his presence would cause family division. Luke 12:49-53. This seems to go 100% against the announcement at the birth of Jesus: Peace on earth. Yet, the fact of Jesus, his identity and his arrival, breaks apart people based on how they respond to him. "What will we do with the baby?"

9. Let's rephrase the question: What will YOU do with the baby? You know the stories. We've been doing Just Jesus Stories for quite a few months and are now working our way through the Gospel of John. Most listeners and viewers of OSHC would be able to tell me the basics of any story I might mention: healing of the 10 lepers, the meeting with the Samaritan woman, the raising of Lazarus, etc.

10. Knowing the stories isn't the point of the stories. NavPress, the Navigators and other groups started issuing inductive study guides back in the 1980s (as far as I know). These guides were not standard teacher materials. They weren't designed for a teacher to use as lecture guides but, rather, for the group to read together and then answer questions about the text and about its application.

11. This sometimes devolved into “what does it mean to you?” Frankly, that is a misuse of scripture. It isn’t about what it means to you, it is about what you will do with it. Now that you have the story, what next? If a story doesn’t change your life in some way, why have the story at all?

12. Try this: open the Gospels and read a Jesus story. They are short, some lasting only a verse and only rarely going over a dozen. Now, sit back and think about the story for a while. Really give it a good look. Visualize it as much as you can. Then, ask this question: What difference does this make?

13. Each story is an encounter with the God who came to earth. Each story was considered important enough by the early Christians to write it down for later generations to read. The Apostle John tells us that there wasn’t enough paper in the world at that time to write down all the stories but we have THESE stories. That should make us go “hmmm.”

14. I took an accounting course once. That was the hardest two weeks of my life. Yes, I dropped out. I couldn’t grasp the concept of

an entry being either a credit or a debit according to what you wanted to measure. (“What would you like for it to be?”)

15. I think all of us need to do an audit of our lives and realities. List your challenges and your abilities. Seriously. Do that. What better time of year than at a time when we naturally review the last year and anticipate a new one? Your challenges might include limited funds, limited health, overwhelming responsibilities, etc. Your abilities could be anything: business sense, speaking ability, intelligence, skills, affectionate nature, etc. ad infinitum.

16. Now…go back and read the story again. What difference will it make now that you have read a story that was so important, they wrote it down and the Holy Spirit protected it for 2000 years? Men and women died to get this story to you in your own language so that you could read it for yourself. Blood was spilled so that you could read these few verses.

17. So….what difference will that make, taking into account your challenges and abilities?

18. The New Year is coming. In editorial cartoons, the old year is generally pictured as a cloaked figure with an hourglass and the new year is portrayed as a baby wearing a sash with the date written on it. The new year is a baby. What will we do with the baby?

19. I think this goes far beyond new year’s resolutions. This is a continual, daily reset. When a baby arrives, every day is a reset! This new year is coming and we need to meet it and adapt, improvise and overcome every single day. Read the stories, absorb them, remember them, and adjust your life to the baby – Jesus the Christ and the new year he is giving you.

20. So…what will you do with the baby?