

It's Really Christmas

(The Reality of Christmas)

Sunday before Christmas 2019

This year the “reality of Christmas” is on my heart and mind

The world is so busy and intent and purposeful on not saying “Merry Christmas”
Or if it does, it's lumped in with other “winter holidays”

Have a good “holiday” ... well, which one? National Donut Day? Sure, that's a great holiday.
Winter solstice?

Jesus birth not really on Christmas. Probably in late September in reality.
Catholic church took over Pagan Roman Holidays and Christmas today is really on the day of Saturnalia.

But I digress...I think a lot of this obscures the reality of it.

- We don't celebrate it on the real day.
 - We don't call it Christmas anymore, just some generic holiday time of year.
 - Christ certainly isn't allowed (manger scenes removed, kids manger play interrupted)
 - Somehow you're doing something wrong by wishing someone a “Merry Christmas”
 - When we do celebrate it, we talk about Santa...someone who is not real (sorry for anyone listening who still thinks he's real)
- *Story of telling Mike Struck on the bus*
 - *Random people we meet asking the kids if Santa is coming*
 - *Kids meeting neighbors the other day*
 - *Am I totally against it? IDK. I knew as a kid but pretended a few years when Uncle Chris would come visit*
 - *We enjoy watching the Santa Clause movies and it's sort of becoming a tradition*

But at the end, we know it's not real, and it's just something fun to do as long as it doesn't distract from Jesus.

But where is that line? That line is probably farther from “happy holidays” “ho ho ho” and much closer, like the star in the heavens, leading us to, corralling us into a little manger in Bethlehem some 2025 years ago.

We know the reality of Christmas. The truth of it. The real reason we celebrate. The real reason we're thankful.

We say “merry Christmas” because we want people to truly have joy. To have the joy that Christmas brings. Whether you believe in it or not, we’re not trying to exclude you, but rather include you, in one half of the greatest pair of holidays ever. Christmas and Easter.

But as we celebrate, as we open a million gifts delivered by Santas in brown and white trucks who work tirelessly this time of the year...

What REALLY happened?

We tend to glamorize these stories and compartmentalize them into something special...which they are. And truly, it is the most glamorous story of all. But we forget the earthly connection and reality that these were the lives of real people and God was really doing something amazing and intimate and special ... something he had promised long ago he would do.

Luke 1:26-45

Six month of *Elizabeth’s pregnancy*

Mary who was engaged to Joseph (betrothed for a year then married)

She was troubled at the saying

She was a real girl. A young woman. A teenager. Who loved God. Who knew her frailty.

Promise of the Messiah

She asks how can this happen since I’m still a virgin?

She, like many other Jewish people of her day, were expecting a political messiah. I think they forgot or didn’t realize how divine he would be. That he would be half man, half God.

Nephilim, breath of life in garden, “overshadowed,” raising from the dead/laying body on body. Shekinah glory.

Told of another miracle in Elizabeth, her relative, being pregnant.

She went to the hill country with haste...probably partially out of excitement. But also due to the circumstance.

Here she was, about to get married...and pregnant. And not because she had done anything wrong. In fact the opposite, like Noah, she found grace in the sight of God.

That God’s plan for salvation of the human race was put into the hands of a normal person, but a normal person who LOVED God.

She has a safe place to run to. An “aunt” who loves God. An Uncle who’s a priest.

My family

Someone she can confide in, trust in, rejoice with, someone who knows and believes the truth of what’s happening. The Messiah has been conceived and will be born in a few short months.

But what about Joseph during this time? What must be going on with him?

Matthew 1:18-25

Is he thinking about this while Mary is away? KNowing full well he loves her. Knowing full well the baby is not his.

But not sure about what she told him. Leaning more towards the fact that she cheated on him and was not faithful.

But he loves her. He doesn’t want her judged by the town, possibly facing stoning or other punishment.

He’s struggling. Wrestling with what to do. Probably not sleeping well.

God sends an angel to him in a dream. Tells him the truth. Assures his heart. Tells HIM to name him.

That even though this isn’t your son physically Joseph, he is your boy in a way too. You get to give him the “name above all names” Jesus

God is salvation

Immanuel God with us

That you will raise him, love him, watch out for him, teach him things...be his earthly dad.

But he will grow up to comfort you, teach you, and ultimately save you from your sin.

Joseph would presumably die before that day. Sometime between Jesus being in the temple as a young boy and his embarking into public ministry.

Luke 2:1-7

The year of the Census 2020

Don't the rich and powerful in this world love to utter decrees? Laws that affect the rest of us, sometimes in totally inconvenient, expensive and burdensome ways? Just so that they can feel powerful, like they've done something. Although they're not beholden to the decree.

If we had to travel back to NJ, NY or anywhere. Others around here back to California, and stay there! JK.

What a burden! What an inconvenience. Let alone when 9 months pregnant. No chariot. No first class air fare.

Most expensive plane seat...three rooms!

But a donkey. Side saddle for miles upon miles upon miles through rough country.

No hotel room. No place to be comfortable.

In a stable. In the city parking garage. Dirty. Cold. Alone except for the animals. No doctors. No medicine.

Poor. Forgotten. In a back alley so to speak. Not in a kingly palace. Not in the most advanced hospital where those who make decrees would bare their children.

But the Most High has His Only Begotten Son born here. In the lowest of places. To a lowly couple with no worldly worth or influence.

But to a couple whose lives would bear great spiritual significance in raising the Messiah for us all.

What does this say for you and me? That Christmas isn't a fairytale.

It's not made up. It's not make believe. It's not even what we sometimes see portrayed in Nativity sets.

It was grim, gritty, real. Full of personal anguish, lack, being an outcast, worry, dirty, burden and tiresome.

But in that vessel of earthen reality

Luke 2:8-14

[Luk 2:14 NKJV] 14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

That in all of this. It was the most glorying event in heaven and in all of this, this is what truly brough peace to the world.

Not the movement of the sixties. Not the modern humanistic globalism.

But through a poor young couple, in a poor old town, in a forgotten place of the world, where their worth was just a number to an elite, God birthed his precious Son into the world to save us. To be with us. To love us.

To let us know, we're not a number to him. We're not an accident. We were planned, just like the Messiah, and we have a royal destiny, no matter our earthly predicament.

That he gave us the greatest gift, his son, who would die, that we might receive peace and joy and eternal life.

Something that we've fought for our entire existence on earth but can never truly attain apart from this beautiful little miracle born on that first Christmas day.

So when you say Merry Christmas.

When you celebrate every year.

When you buy last-minute gifts anxiously checking to see if they'll arrive in time.

Know that Jesus arrived just in time.

That the gift of peace with God is real.

And no amount of modernity can obscure the simple truth that

God is love. He loves you. And He sent his Son to make sure we know that "God is with us" Immanuel.