**The Christmas Experience –**

**Week Four**

**Big Idea #1:** **Israel** waits for a Messiah: Christmas reminds us that God keeps His promises

**Big Idea #2: Mary** is chosen for her humility: There is no better place to be then in God’s favor.

**Big Idea #3:** **Joseph** is chosen because he is faithful: In times of stress we love, we pray, we obey.

**Big Idea #4:** **Jesus:** The humble birth of Jesus is more than the story of Christmas, it is the **purpose** of Christmas.

**I) Joseph, not Caesar**

 “*In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered*.” Luke 2:1

1. Christmas is full of pictures, memories, and stories that make it a picturesque scene in our minds. If we’re not careful, the stable, the animals, and the manger become a stylistic afterthought or unfortunate set of circumstances. In reality, though, the **humble beginnings of Jesus have a much larger role to play in the Christmas story**. What was it like?

“*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 4:13-16

1. Caesar issues this decree, and Mary and Joseph have to make the long journey to their home town. It makes it painfully obvious that **Jesus was not born into comfort, power, authority.** Jesus did **not inherit power** from his family, He was given power by God. And the difficult beginning of his life—the long journey for his parents—reminds us that **Jesus’ Kingship is completely different than any earthly ruler’s.**

“*And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*.” [Philippians 2:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2:8&version=ESVUK)

**Life Point:** What family heritage you leaving? Is it helpful or harmful?

**II) Bethlehem, not Rome**

“*This was the first registration whenQuirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,to be registered with Mary, his betrothed,who was with child*.” Luke 2:2-5

A) Jesus was born in the small town of Bethlehem. This would not have been a wealthy town, not a particularly exciting town, and not a town of influence. All the powerful, influential, socially significant people were Roman or Jerusalem—not from Bethlehem. But our king was not born into social prominence or exceptional wealth. **His influence came from His words, not his earthly home.**

B) The power of God is in His Word. If you want God’s power you must be in God’s Word and Gods word must be in you.

“*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my* ***word****s will not pass away*.”

“*Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the* ***word****s of eternal life,*” John 6:68

“*If you* ***abide in my word****, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*.” John 8:31-32 “*Sanctify them in the truth; your* ***word*** *is truth.”* John 17:17

**III) A Manger, not a Throne**

“*And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn*.” Luke 2:6-7

1. Jesus’ first crib was a manger, not a throne, he was not royal by birth, not powerful as a baby. He was born humbly, in a lowly way, in a stable outdoors. This Jesus *is* a king, make no mistake, but the *kind* of king He is stands out in the manger—because he never really left the manger. When he died on the cross, the same humble beginnings come back to mind as we realize that **this king is willing to die for His subjects.**

“Jesus was not a king like any earthly king. Jesus was born in a manger to show God’s plan and purpose—to save through sacrificial love.”

1. He was laid in a manger, a feeding trough, **because he is the bread of life.** We need to feed on his words, be fed by Holy Communion which he gave us.
	* *What is the Sacrament of the Altar?* It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself.
	* *Where is this written?* The holy Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul*. “Take*, *eat;* ***this is My body***, *which is given for you. This do in* ***remembrance of Me.*** *. .*  *Take*, *drink ye all of it. This cup* ***is*** *the new testament in* ***My blood***, *which is shed for you for the* ***remission of sins****. This do ye*, *as oft as ye drink it*, ***in remembrance of Me*.”**
	* *What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?* That is shown us in these words: *Given*, *and shed for you*, *for the remission of sins*; namely, that in the Sacrament **forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words**. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.
	* *How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?* It is not the eating and drinking, indeed, that does them, **but the words** which stand here, namely: *Given*, *and shed for you*, *for the remission of sins*. **Which words** are, beside the bodily eating and drinking, as the chief thing in the Sacrament; and **he that believes these words** has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

**IV) So Now What? You ARE a Servant not a Master.**

 “*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy*.” 1 Peter 2:9-10

1. God’s plan and purpose were clearly on display at the first Christmas. Jesus’ birth stands in stark opposition to the power, position, and manipulation of Caesar. Jesus was born into poverty, not privilege. He was born into humility, not power. He was born into obscurity, not prominence. And that was on purpose.

“The manger is an invitation to live a life of humble service and sacrifice. What specific ways do you senses God moving you more toward a life of humble service and sacrifice? For whom are you being called to serve or sacrifice.

1. Jesus’ humble beginnings aren’t just for the sake of a beautiful story, they serve notice to everyone on Earth that Jesus’ way of doing things is completely different than anything they had seen before. God’s plan and purpose were on full display in the Christmas story—every detail of it.

 A couples ideas to think about as president. Can we meet ASAP

 #1 We will be ending this year with a projected $20,000 in the black. The church staff would like to propose to spend very rough est. $5,000 of that to it this year to fix two problems.

1. Give Children’s ministry people a good place to prepare for their ministry. We have gone from 4 volunteers working with kids to 30 volunteers working with kids and they need a space for their supplies and to prep for their class. This group is asking for this with a strong voice.
2. Make our office more inviting. It looks cluttered and things are lying all over the place because of a lack of storage. We want a more professional look to our church center.
3. We have more volunteers in the office and only have one work station, we are in need or three work stations in the office for volunteer office work.

DCE Bob working with Deacon Jim and the church staff have a plan to redo the church office. We would like to do the work over the Christmas break. I can give you a copy of the plan that we have. . We can use Facility/repair replacement fund to do the work. Might need a quick meeting with the church council to see if OK.

 #2 When we get the Nov. church financials if we are still in the black, send the PSWD $2,000 from our church. Also if you want to give the church staff a bonus for this year that would be helpful. We have not received raises this year, or last year, but last year got a bonus.

 #3Send $200 to Lutheran Bible Translators for our missionaries in Africa.

 #4 Next year gets the money Sheila owes the church off the books. We will never get it and it just messes up our view of reality.

 #5 With the new church budget taking over paying for AWANA and our website I have some money from my Money for Ministry fund to pay for a helper 2-4 hours a week to do some work that I do. What person would: Write and send in the weekly Mt. New articles, follow up on visitors to church, oversee hospital callers, helping the poor, help organize big events at the church with volunteers. I would pay this person $20 to $40 a week for helping me. I have a church member who is a single disabled mom with a lot of talent that would do a great job at this and it would help her as she works to get through college.

 #6 Here is the Master plan for our church that is in the back of my mind.

1. Expand and redo our parking lot if we get enough money from the will.
2. If that happens then Fund raiser to expand the back of the church for fellowship area, and extra seating for big events like Easter, Christmas, Broadway, and a nice area for fellowship after church.
3. Build out the back of the church when we have the funding.

 #7 Other crazy ideas: Offer Mission trips through our church in years ahead.

 Look for a bill board in the Arrowhead Village area to advertise our church.

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