

Jacob Hanson
12-24-2018

Sermon Title: "The Christmas Miracle"

Prelude

UMH #238 "Angels We Have Heard on High"

UMH #240 "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

Greeting

Choir Sings "Lullaby to the Christ Child"

Sharing of Blessings and Concerns (None Christmas Eve)

Prayer of Affirmation: UMH #889

Children's Message: (None Christmas Eve)

Apostle's Creed UMH #881

Lord's Prayer UMH #896

Advent Readings/Music:

Isaiah 9:2-3a, 6;

UMH #211 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" vs. 1-2, 4

Luke 1:26-31;

UMH #219 "What Child Is This"

Luke 2:1-7

UMH #217 "Away in a Manger"

Luke 2:8-11

UMH #224 "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice"

Sermon: "The Christmas Miracle"

Sermon Hymn: UMH # "The First Noel" vs. 1-3

Offering

Doxology: "Glory Be to the Father" UMH #71

UMH #239 "Silent Night, Holy Night"

Sending Prayer

Benediction

Announcements/Dismissal (None Christmas Eve)

Postlude

Questions:

- 1) Why do we celebrate Christmas each year? Is there more to it than just Jesus's birth?
- 2) How do you and your family incorporate worshipping the Lord into your Christmas festivities?
- 3) As we approach 2019, how are you planning to follow the Lord in this upcoming year? Does God have a place in your future plans?

Memory Verse: Luke 2:11 "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."

Christmas Eve Isaiah 9:2-3a, 6, Luke 1:26-31, Luke 2:1-7, Luke 2:8-11

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

"Praise be to God, for today the Messiah comes to us. From prophecies of old His birth has been foretold. The one who takes away the sins of the world."

Sing UMH #211 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" vs. 1-2, 4

"In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendent of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord be with you.' Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus.'"

"Praise be to God, for today the Messiah comes to us. From the virgin's womb He is born, fully God and fully man. Jesus the Christ, our Savior, the one who takes away the sins of the world."

Sing UMH #219 "What Child Is This"

"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to his own house to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

“Praise be to God, for today the Messiah comes to us. Born in a humble stall and laid in a manger, Jesus came to save us, to take our place. Jesus the Christ, the one who takes away the sins of the world.”

Sing UMH #217 “Away in a Manger”

“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.’”

(Light Candle)

“Praise be to God, for today the Messiah comes to us. Proclaimed to all by the angels as the Savior for any who would call on His name, Jesus the Christ, the one who takes away the sins of the world, has come.”

Sing UMH #224 “Good Christian Friends Rejoice”

Pastor Jacob Hanson
"The Christmas Miracle"
12/24/2018

Opening Prayer

Welcome to Kasson/Pleasant Corners UMC. My name is Jacob Hanson, and I am blessed to be the minister here. A warm welcome to you if you are from out of town visiting, if you haven't been here in a while, or if this is your first time in our church... we are thankful to join with you in worship this Christmas Eve. What a great time of the year! It is Christmas Eve! Following service many of us will head home to spend time with our families, partake in a million traditions, and prepare for the big day tomorrow... Christmas Day. I don't know about you, but other than deer hunting season in Wisconsin, this is easily my favorite time of the year. But before we go and spend time with our families, before we partake in our own traditions, and before we open a bunch of gifts, it is really good for us to be here together this evening. It is good for us to recognize that the ultimate reason we celebrate this season is because God came to us in human flesh, so that you and I might know our Creator personally. I am of course talking about the birth of Jesus, the true Christmas miracle.

In our scripture that we heard read today and the songs that we sang with it we get an idea about who Jesus is and why we celebrate His birth. One of the names for Jesus is "Emmanuel," which means "God with us." In our first reading we heard about the prophecy from the Old Testament book of Isaiah that a child would be born who would be God, and that He would come to lead His people. In other prophecies, if you were around during this last month for Advent (which means "coming") we talked about how God had given the news to His people that a Messiah, a Savior, was going to come. They would know this

Savior, this “Emmanuel,” by a few different things. He would be born in the town of Bethlehem. He would be a descendent of king David, and He would be born from a virgin’s womb. These prophecies, and many more, were fulfilled in Jesus’s birth that wonderful night 2,000 years ago. This wonderful fulfillment of prophecies, we read, was proclaimed to Mary by the angel Gabriel, and later came in a dream to her husband to be Joseph. (Thank goodness they got a heads up first!) It was also proclaimed to shepherds tending their sheep out in the fields. The proclamation to the shepherds in particular holds a key piece for us today, on Christmas Eve.

Luke 2:11, the verse where the angel proclaims to your average hardworking people of the day (shepherds), reads “For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” I hope you caught in that verse that the angel says the Savior was born “for you.” This wasn’t something just for the shepherds, but also for us. We can honestly say that Christ was born for us, so that we might have salvation. Again, our shepherds weren’t special or different, they were regular people like you and me. What a relief to know that the Savior was born for us regular people too. But as amazing as Christ’s birth is, all by itself it doesn’t mean much. The truth is that the Christmas miracle of God coming to us in human flesh was not finished in the manger, but rather at the cross. It was on Good Friday and Easter Sunday that we see that Jesus is not just a king who has come, but also truly the Savior.

Christmas and Easter are inseparably linked. If you pay attention to the verses in many of your favorite Christmas hymns you might notice that salvation is a recurring theme. That is because Jesus came down to us as a baby in a manger not just so that we would worship Him, but so

that He might take our place and become the sacrifice needed for us. The truth is that we are all sinners. We all go against the Lord in our actions, lying, cheating, stealing, being disrespectful, using the Lord's name in vain, etc. These are all sins, and because the Lord is perfect, He cannot tolerate sin. As Romans 2:12 reads "for all who have sinned by the Law are in judgement under the law." That would be all of us, because we know the difference between right and wrong.

Furthermore Romans 6:23 states "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The love and care that the Lord has for you knows no bounds. That fact is proven through the truth that the Lord would come and be born and die for you. That Jesus would take your place. Think about it. The almighty, the Creator of all, came as a human baby born to a young virgin in the middle of nowhere. Jesus could have been born in palaces the world over, to rulers and kings and religious leaders. He could have been heralded straight out of the womb... but instead God chose to come and dwell among us in humble estate. Emmanuel, God with us, isn't just a nice sounding title for Jesus that we use on Christmas, but its an accurate name describing God's presence being here with us in physical human flesh. Continuing in this same vein, when Jesus was grown He could have gone to teach in the nicest of places, could have performed untold numbers of miracles to force folks to worship Him, and could have prevented His own eventual crucifixion. But that was not God's plan. Instead, the Lord Himself humbly went from the manger to the cross, raising Himself of the third day truly proving who He was and accomplishing the impossible... saving us from our sins, so that we might have a personal connection with our Creator. That is the beauty of the Christmas story. That is why we celebrate. The birth of Jesus is the beginning of the fulfillment of God's wonderful plan to save you and me. That is the Christmas miracle.

So as you leave here today, as you go home to a wonderful Christmas Eve feast, and as you celebrate Christmas Day joyfully, don't forget that the reason we celebrate in the first place is because of the Christmas miracle. That God Himself would be born to a virgin in a manger, and would come to one day save all who call on His name from their sins. That is how much God loves you. I would encourage you as you go about your wonderful Christmas plans to take just a little time to ask yourself if you have accepted the Lord's free gift, the salvation that is given to you. If you call on Christ as your Savior, if you accept His plans for your life, then you already have the joy that is eternal life. Thank the Lord for it. If you haven't made that step yet of asking the Lord to come into your life, what better time is there than now? He came as a babe in manger for you too, He loves and cares for you that much. To all of you, have a Merry Christmas, Christ is born. Let us pray.

Closing Prayer

Advent Reading: Isaiah 9:2-3a, 6-7 (The King is Coming)

“The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them. You shall multiply the nation, You shall increase their gladness; they will be glad in Your presence.”

“Praise be to God! The time is coming where the King will join us, where His majesty will come and dwell amongst us. Through Him our sins will be forgiven, by His stripes we are healed.”

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.”

“Praise be to God! The King is coming, may we be prepared in our hearts for His arrival. For He will be the one who will take our sins and make us right with God.”

Advent Reading: Matthew 1:18-21, 22-23 (Joseph’s Dream)

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.’”

“Praise the Lord, the Messiah has come! Shown to be true by the miracle of the virgin birth, we honor our Lord Jesus, the one who takes away the sins of the world.”

“Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with Child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which translated means, ‘God with us.’”

“Praise the Lord! Christ Jesus, Immanuel, has come to dwell amongst us as was prophesied long ago, may we heed His call.”

Advent Reading: Luke 2:1-7, 8-12, 13-16 (God’s Revelation to the Shepherds) (What Child is This UMH #219, It Came upon the Midnight Clear UMH #218, O Little Town of Bethlehem UMH #230,

“Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up to Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

“O little town of Bethlehem, blessed are you among cities of men, for in you is born the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. What a humble birthplace for the Savior of mankind, wrapped in swaddling clothes next to common livestock in a manger.”

“In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find the baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’”

“The Lord be praised for His love of all people! The announcement of His Son’s birth could have been made to kings and queens, rulers and religious leaders... but it was instead made to the common men, shepherds tending their flocks. A shepherd is whom first heard of Christ’s birth, a fitting announcement since Christ would be the shepherd for all of God’s people.”

“And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.’ When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, ‘Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.’ So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.”

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men! May His name be praised.”

Advent Reading: Matthew 2:1-4, 5-9, 10-12 (The Visit of the Magi) (UMH 245, The First Noel; UMH 254, We Three Kings;

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born of King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.’ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.”

“Praise be to God that Christ has arrived among men!”

“They said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: And you, Bethlehem of Judea; land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.’ Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.’ After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was.”

“Praise be to God, that those who are faithful and alert will see the Messiah, Christ Jesus.”

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshipped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.”

“Praise be to God, Christ is here. While Herod tried to kill the Messiah, the Lord had other plans in mind. Jesus Christ, God in human flesh, fully God and yet fully man, was to be the Savior of His people. He will come to take away the sins of the world, to redeem His people.

He will give sight to the blind, free the prisoners, and release us from our sins. Praise be to God!"

Isaiah 9:2-3a, 6;

UMH #211 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" vs. 1-2, 4

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“Praise be to God, for today the Messiah comes to us. Proclaimed to all by the angels as the Savior for any who would call on His name, Jesus the Christ, the one who takes away the sins of the world, has come.”

UMH #238 “Angels We Have Heard on High”

UMH #239 “Silent Night, Holy Night”

UMH #346 “Joy to the World”

The Parable of the Sower of Seed

Get to Know You Game: Describe Yourself

You will talk to three different people who you likely did not know before very well, and will ask them different questions. If you can repeat the answers to all three folks when randomly called on, then you can win a prize. Also have to do something random with said person.

-Find someone who goes to a different school (high school/mid school counts). If you had to describe yourself in three words what would they be and why? Make up a handshake with person.

-Find someone who likes totally different music than you. Why do you like the music you do, and who is your favorite artist? Make up a great rapper sound. (Burr! Gah Gah Gah! Etc.)

-Find someone you haven't really talked to before. Find something that you two have in common. This is your partner for the Bible lesson, sit next to them... you will be discussing some of these questions for the topic with them.

Pre-Questions:

-What is a sower? (Old time farmer who spreads seed.)

-What is a parable? (Anecdotal story used for teaching... understandable by those who actually want to hear, but impossible for those outside to understand.)

After Reading:

-Seed by the Road

-What happens to this seed? (It is taken immediately by Satan)

-Do you think that we have any say in if the word gets taken from us? (We do, must stay alert and away from the dangers of the enemy)

-Where do we have the word stolen from us? (Before church, before good things are set to happen, when we don't choose the Lord over all else)

-Seed in Shallow Soil

-What happens to this seed? (Withers under the sun)

-How is this seed supposed to strengthen itself? Can it? (Grow deep roots, don't stay at that shallow level so that it might survive trials and temptations)

-Seed in Thorns

-What happens to this seed? (It is choked out by the garbage of this world)

-How does this seed find itself in this situation? How does it get out of it? (It doesn't care for the more important things. Can escape by setting its sights on higher things)

-Seed in Good Soil

-What happens to this seed? (Grows and Reproduces)

-If this is the Christian life and ideal, what should be happening as a part of our faith? (Growth in us and spreading the word!)

Game:

-Since our scripture topic had to do with spreading deceit and/or goodness and stuff, we are going to be playing mafia...