



The Christmas Story

The Action

Matthew 2:1-23

Message #3 of 3 – S669

Sermon given on December 27, 2015



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

The Christmas Story - The Action

Matthew 2:1-23

Opening Comments

- Today, we conclude a three part series **The Christmas Story**
- In March of 1957, baby boy Richard Dean was born in the little town of Enumclaw, Washington
- With the exception of a small circle of people, the world didn't notice, and didn't really care
- I would like to say that I am bothered that no one thought my birth was important enough to tell the whole world, but I'm not
- My birth was unnoticed by most of the world
- Two days ago, we celebrated Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ – Savior of the world
- Even though Jesus came from the little town of Nazareth and was born in the little town of Bethlehem, in humble circumstances to humble parents – His birth did not go unnoticed
- Now that our celebration of Christmas is over
- The presents are unwrapped, the leftovers are put away
- What does the birth of Christ say to us today and moving forward
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **The Christmas Story - The Action**
- Turn to **Luke 2**
- At the Christmas Eve Service we looked at the birth of Jesus
- We looked at His unique birthing story
- As this is a Christmas message, I thought it would be good to read that text again
- **Luke 2:1-7**
- God the Son was born to a poor couple from a small town in the barn of another small town
- It was a pretty humble way to start out in this world, by any measure
- This was so monumental of an event, that heaven acknowledged it
- **Luke 2:8-14**

- As I mentioned last Sunday, this is the only place that we know such a thing like this happened – the hosts of heaven praising God on earth
- It happens all the time in heaven
- It was right for it to happen here, because God was on the earth in human flesh in a manger
- **Luke 2:15-16**
- The shepherds wanted to see what all the excitement was about
- Turn to **Matthew 2**
- There was something else going on at about the same time
- Jesus has been born and the census is over, but they didn't go back home right away
- That makes sense – Mary needed time to recover from the delivery, and the baby was very small
- Because this is not their hometown, I can imagine Joseph getting odd jobs as a carpenter to provide for their needs
- Meanwhile from a far country, Jesus' birth has been noticed by an unlikely group of people
- **Matthew 2:1-2**
- Very little is known about these 'wise men'
- All we know is what is recorded in these 12 verses in Matthew 2
- We cannot be dogmatic about where they come from, or even how many of them there were
- We make the assumption that there were three because of the three gifts
- Three is as good a number as any, otherwise it will mess up everyone's nativity scene
- They come in to Jerusalem, the capital of the nation of Israel
- At that time Herod the Great is king of Israel, and he was a wicked, paranoid man
- These wise men say things that feed his paranoia
- They are looking for the recently born King of the Jews
- Herod would tolerate no competitors, even murdering his own sons
- The wise men have come to worship this new King
- This is what Herod wanted more than anything else, to be worshipped

- These wise men have just placed a huge target on Jesus
- Herod needs to find this baby and get rid of Him
- **Matthew 2:3-6**
- The religious guys in Jerusalem quote Micah 5:2 saying the Messiah would come from Bethlehem
- **Matthew 2:7-8**
- Herod knew enough about the people of Israel to know that if this were a king, maybe like David, it would be a threat to his power and influence
- Herod worships only himself – his intentions are far from good
- **Matthew 2:9-10**
- There are many spectacular aspects of the birth of Christ
- This is one that is often overlooked
- There is something peculiar about this star
- In verse 9 says the star ‘went before’ the wise men
- The Greek word infers motion – the star led them to Jesus
- Then verse 9 says that the star ‘came and stood over’
- The star moved until it was over the house where baby Jesus was
- Then it stopped moving – in case you are wondering, stars don’t do that
- It could have been a star, or it could have been an angel that shined as brightly as a star
- Whatever, it leads them to Jesus
- **Matthew 2:11-12**
- What a shock this must have been
- We don’t know how much time has passed since Jesus was born
- Some say it could be as much as two years, most believe less than that
- Here they are sitting around watching the Golf Channel with chips and salsa, and there is a knock at the door
- Joseph opens the door, and there stand these guys who are probably dressed in their wise guy uniforms
- They are here to worship the King of the Jews
- They didn’t come in jeans, t-shirt, and flip flops
- They worship Jesus, give gifts to Him, and then leave

- But they don't go back to Herod like he wanted, they are warned to go back a different way
 - Warned by whom? By God, probably through an angel
 - Joseph also gets a visit from an angel
 - **Matthew 2:13-15**
 - This is the second time God speaks to Joseph
 - He takes his family and goes to Egypt, with the gifts they just got from the wise men
 - This would give them the resources they needed to live in Egypt for about two years
 - Herod then goes on a rampage
 - **Matthew 2:16-18**
 - Herod was a madman – Jesus was never a threat to him
 - His was an irrational fear fueled by pride and paranoia
 - He died within two years of this
 - And then Joseph had his third message from God
 - **Matthew 2:19-23**
 - Now Joseph and Mary are back where their love story started, in Nazareth, with their precious baby Jesus
 - Jesus' life from then was relatively quiet, until He was about thirty and began His public ministry telling the world about the Kingdom of God
 - Then the action picked up again, and three years later culminated with Him dying on a cross for the sins of the world
 - And then He rose from the grave on the third day and passed His ministry on to His disciples
 - Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Christ is more than just a cause for rejoicing; it is a call to action
 - Jesus was born so that He could be the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world
- Romans 6:10**
- For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God.**
- And because of that we can live a different life – a life like Jesus
 - Before Jesus left to go back to the Father He gave the disciples a commission **Matthew 28:18-20**

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

- That was not just for the disciples but for all who would follow after them
- It is awesome to celebrate the birth of Christ – do it with exuberance
- But this thing we call Christianity is not a once a year event
- It is meant to be a moment-by-moment adventure
- Throughout our text we have seen examples of people responding to the voice of God
- Because they were listening and responding – they did things they would never have done on their own
- Joseph and Mary are great examples to us of how to live this Christian life
- When God told them to do something, they did it
- Even when it went against their culture and their natural instincts
- Even when they didn’t understand, they listened and followed
- God is still speaking
- Jesus’ story is still being written in the lives of every person who has received Him as Savior
- I would like to leave you with three quick things
- Three words that will help you to live out the Christmas story in your own life
- The first word is **Conviction**
- Last Sunday I shared the reason for the season
- Jesus had to come in the way that He did because all mankind had been lost to the slavery of sin
- He came to set us free
- The very first word that Jesus spoke in His public minister is “repent”
- That means He wants us to turn away from all the sin in our lives

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

- The call to action: get to know God and His Word better
- If God shows you sin in your life – repent
- Second word is **Communication**
- On Christmas Eve, we talked about unique birthing stories
- Everything about the conception, pregnancy, and delivery of Christ was unique
- Every single one of us has a unique birthing story
- Not about the day we were born, but about the day we were born again **John 3:3-6**

Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

- You have a Christmas story of your own, about how Jesus has worked in your life
- God wants you to communicate that message
- And also to be prepared to give them Jesus’ also
- Third and final word **Connection**
- Joseph and Mary were connected to God
- So much so that when He asked them to do something they didn’t understand, they just did it
- The Christian life is meant to be exciting – adventure
- But to experience it, we need to stay connected to God
- We do that through prayer, through the Bible, and through the gathering of the church
- God gave the world the most precious and valuable and powerful gift that can ever be given
- He sent His only Son
- And by receiving that gift, we can live lives that no one else can by:
- **Conviction** – dealing with the sins that prevent us from that life
- **Communication** – telling others why we can live this life
- **Connection** – Connecting with God through His word and His people so that we respond to God in this life
- The reason for the season is the birth of Jesus, the Savior of the world

- Celebrate Jesus' birth every day by living the life He gave you, for Him
- Amen

- **Pray**

May the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever.

Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21