

“Incarnation - Jesus, You Are Savior”

Scripture: Luke 2:8-14; Matthew 1:18-21

Graphics: manger, cross

Big Truth: Just as we desire physical contact and closeness to others, God desired for us to know Him physically and relationally close. God sent Jesus to earth in the form of a child so that we could know Him. He taught and suffered and died so we would know Him. He rose again, bodily, so that we would know Him. All that, also, so we would know ourselves. Jesus is King. Jesus is Savior. Jesus is Emmanuel. Jesus is the Light of the World. Jesus is the Word.

Focus Phrase: Jesus, You Are Savior of the world and my life.

1. Introduction

- A. PRAY!
- B. Excited about Christmas, a little boy was finishing a letter to Santa with a list of the Christmas presents he badly wanted. And then just to make sure he had covered all his bases, he decided to send his Christmas wish list to Jesus as well. The letter to Jesus began, *“Dear Jesus, I just wanted you to know that I’ve been good for six months now.”* Then, it occurred to him that Jesus knew this wasn't true. After a moment of reflection, he crossed out “six months” and changed it to “three months.” He thought some more, then crossed out “months” and replaced it with “weeks.” *“I’ve been good for three weeks,”* his letter now read. Realizing Jesus knew better than that, even, he put down his paper, went over to the Nativity set sitting on a table in his home, and picked up the figure of Mary. He then took out a clean piece of paper and began to write another letter, “Dear Jesus, if you ever want to see your mother again...”
- C. I think there’s a little naughty in all of us! We tell our kids to be nice in order for Santa to bring them gifts.
- D. What we’re really getting at is not just a list of naughty and nice things that we’ve done this year, but in a real sense, in our lives, every day, we’re talking about our inclination or tendency to sin and the sin we actually engage in...the things we think, and do, and say, that reject the goodness of God in our lives and dismantle God’s plan for OUR salvation and others’.
- E. That may seem like a heavy topic for this Advent Season and Christmas, but it’s EXACTLY the reason for the season. We often say that, “Jesus is the reason for the season.” Yet, without SIN, there’d be no reason for Jesus and thus no reason for Christmas...no reason for the Incarnation of God in Jesus.
- F. So, in very practical terms, SIN is the reason for the season...or better still... sin is the reason we need a Savior.
- G. Last week, we began this worship series with a confession (say it with me if you know it): “Jesus, You Are King!” Jesus is our forever King, ushering in

His Kingdom that will finally be here fully when He returns and will be without end.

- H. But, the Incarnation - the embodiment of God in human form in Jesus - is not just to fully solidify Jesus as King, as awesome as that is!
- I. The Incarnation is also to fully identify Jesus as Savior, Emmanuel, and the Light of the World.
- J. The great hymn-writer Charles Wesley, brother of John, wrote these words in "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing,": "Christ by highest heav'n adored, Christ the everlasting Lord!; Late in time behold Him come, Offspring of a Virgin's womb; Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate Deity..."
- K. In a world that's especially distanced and disconnected right now, due to a global pandemic, God continues to remind us that Jesus is near to us...and, in fact, is IN US, by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.
- L. Advent is all about Jesus. Let's IMMERSE ourselves in Jesus as we prepare for Christmas in 19 days!
- M. Today, our second confession is: "Jesus, You Are Savior" Not only do we need to be saved, but we need a Savior. And God was please to dwell in human form in order for Jesus to sacrifice his life as an atonement for our sin.
- N. Let's grab our bibles and get into it this morning in Matthew 1:18-21 and Luke 2:8-14. The first story is the birth announcement of Jesus to Jesus' earthly father Joseph, and the second is the birth announcement to the shepherds watching sheep in a field outside Bethlehem one night.

2. Scripture

A. READ Matthew 1:18-21

B. READ Luke 2:8-14

C. By both of those accounts, we learn a few things:

- i. A baby was going to be born...a boy, in the small town of Bethlehem.
- ii. He would be miraculously conceived and born of a virgin.
- iii. No one was to be afraid, thank goodness; and,
- iv. Mary and Joseph were to specifically name him *Jesus*.

D. Now, that last point is significant for many reasons. The name *Jesus* has its most recent origins in Greek. But the original Hebrew is *Yeshua*, a shortened version of *Yehoshua*. It comes from the personal name for God in Hebrew, found throughout the Old Testament, *Yahweh*, combined with the word for 'to save' or 'to deliver' *yasha*. *Yeshua*, therefore, means, 'God saves' 'God delivers' or 'God helps.'

- E. Names were very important in the 1st century culture...and your name was an indication of the role you would play in the world and in your family.
- F. For Jesus, *Yeshua*, it was pretty clear from the angel's announcement to Joseph that Jesus would be the One to save his people from their sins.
- G. The angels that showed up in that field outside Bethlehem that night said the baby boy would be Savior, Messiah, and Lord. Savior is obviously someone who saves. Messiah was the term used to describe the promised deliverer of the Jewish people...the one that God told King David would come to reign forever without end.
- H. And so, **Jesus is Savior**. Of the Jewish people. But not just of the Jewish people. Jesus came to save all people from their sin...including you and me.
- I. 1 John 2:1-2 reminds us, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."
- J. But, before we find out a little more about HOW Jesus saves, we have to spend a little time taking about SIN. Because those who have no sin need no Savior.
 - i. To do that, we need to go all the way back The Beginning. To Genesis 1, 2, and 3. In Genesis 1 and 2, we read the account of Creation...that God made the heavens and the earth and all things in heaven and on earth. And on the sixth day God created humans, male and female.
 - ii. In the beginning, all was perfect. No sin. Adam and Eve were in God's presence and had all things, even everlasting life.
 - iii. They also had a command from God not to eat the fruit from one specific tree in the middle of the garden.
 - iv. Yet, in Genesis 3, we see sin enter the world through the single act of eating from that tree - the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And, when they ate it, tempted as they were by the devil, their eyes were open to all manner of evil, sin, and deception. And from that day on, not only was sin a part of THEIR lives, but it became a part of every life through all generations...and not just sin, but the result of sin, which is death.
 - v. That Genesis account is meant to tell us about US...about our OWN propensity to sin and our willingness to say, do, and think things that reject God's good news and plan in our lives.
- K. Susanna Wesley, the mother of John Wesley wrote this: "Take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind,

that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself." — Susanna Wesley (Letter, June 8, 1725)

- L. **We are all sinners.** We all have the inclination in us to sin, AND, at times are sinful in thought, word, and deed.
- M. Sin can be described as shooting an arrow at a target and missing the mark. It's not that you aren't trying or that you don't care. The bullseye is there, yet when you release the arrow, it misses the mark.
- N. And only Jesus, the Savior, the Yeshua, can cover the gap between where your attempt ended up and the center of the target.
- O. Sin has been, is, and will always be a devastating problem in our lives. It is in mine and it is in yours. Sin ruins lives, relationships, and communities. There may be different consequences and we can train ourselves and others to hit the center of the target, but sin is here to stay.
- P. AND YET! Church, here's the Good News! **We have a Savior!**
- Q. Pastor and author Adam Hamilton writes: "The Good News about Jesus is not that we're sinners, but He is our Savior."
- R. Our confession is "Jesus, You Are Savior" of the world and of my life!

3. Application

- A. I need a Savior. You need a Savior. Our church needs a Savior. The world needs a Savior.
- B. Why? Because sin - any sin and even the inclination to sin - separates us from our holy God. God cannot be in the presence of sin.
- C. And, so, if we're to connect with God through the Holy Spirit, we need a Savior who will bridge the gap between our sinful lives and our holy God.
- D. Jesus, You Are Savior!
- E. How does that work? How are we saved from our sin?
 - i. Romans 5:6-11 answers that for us: "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."
 - ii. Jesus Christ died on the cross so that your sin doesn't condemn you to a life apart from God. Period.

- F. Let's get a little more personal. We now know how Jesus saves and that it was His sacrifice on the cross that paid the price for our sin.
- G. But how has and is and will Jesus save YOU? Because, even one sin in your life is the reason why Jesus came to earth and Christmas and died for YOU on Good Friday.
- H. Three ways Jesus is Savior:
- i. **First, Jesus HAS Saved You from Sin.**
 - a. The announcement to Joseph was, "He will save his people from their sins."
 - b. Every sin you commit - every time you have or will miss the mark - past, present, and future, has already been covered by the blood of Jesus on the cross.
 - c. And, I know, it doesn't seem fair or just. It doesn't seem like you deserve it. We don't. But because God loves you so fiercely and passionately, He sent his only Son to die a murderous death SO THAT you would be saved.
 - d. That's not ever something to take lightly. By the undeserved favor of God for you, He is offering you salvation from sin. Not only does that compel you to be grateful, but to also DO something to reject every sin that rears its head in your life.
 - e. 1 Peter 2:21-4: "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."
 - f. Jesus HAS saved you from your sin. And,
 - ii. **#2 Jesus IS Saving You from Hopelessness and Despair**
 - a. We all go through times profound loss, depression, and despair in our lives. Maybe for you, 2020 has been one of the worst due to separation or loss or fear or just the lack of motivation.
 - b. A few times over the years, as a pastor, I've had someone in my office or on the phone who is seriously considering ending their life. I've found the best thing to do is listen and then say, "You matter to God. Your life has meaning. God isn't done with you yet."
 - c. Jesus came to not only save people from their sins, but to save them from hopelessness, and from meaninglessness, often caused by your sin

or the sins of others. He healed the blind and the lame and lepers, who had lost all hope. He forgave sinners and shared meals with them to show them that **THEY ARE LOVED!**

- d. **YOU ARE LOVED.** Jesus not only saves you from your sin, but saves you in order to give you hope, and meaning, and life!
 - e. John 10:9-10 is clear. Jesus said, “I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”
 - f. When you find yourself hopeless or life seems meaningless, fixed your eyes on Jesus, the One who **IS SAVING YOU** every day from the despair of this life. He’s giving you hope and a future today.
 - g. Jesus **HAS SAVED** you from sin, **IS SAVING** you from despair, and...
- iii. **#3 Jesus WILL Save You from Death**
- a. Possibly the biggest crisis in our lives is death itself...something we all will experience.
 - b. Maybe the most incredible promise of the Incarnation is that Jesus’ birth leads to His death, which then leads to His resurrection and future return. We sometimes tend to focus on the first two - his birth and death - and not the last two - his resurrection and return.
 - c. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus not only defeated sin, hate, and evil, but He defeated death itself!
 - d. And because death was defeated, Jesus is alive and He’s coming back.
 - e. You’re living into the reality today that you will never die, spiritually. And, that when Jesus returns, you will rise from the dead like Jesus did!
 - f. Again, this is an incredible and mysterious promise that Jesus told Lazarus’ sister Mary about in John 11:25-27: “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”
- iv. Jesus **HAS** saved you from your sin. Jesus **IS** saving you from hopelessness and despair. Jesus **WILL** save you from death.
- v. All of that is freely given to you and me when we faithfully confess, “Jesus, You Are Savior.”

4. Conclusion

- A. In a world that says there is no good, there is only despair, and that at the end of life, we will cease to exist, King Jesus, who is our Savior, has the final

word. We don't need to take the figurine of Mary captive from the manger scene to get what Jesus wants to give us. Jesus has, is, and will save us!

- B. And, in this life, when there's a little naughty in all of us, we are saved from all those things, but in saving us FROM them, Jesus is saving us TO something else: a life of worship, community, openness, obeying, service, and sharing.
- C. The author of Hebrews nails it, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (Heb. 12:1-3)
- D. As we prepare to come to the Table, I want us to, with one voice together, lift up the confession, "Jesus, You Are Savior!" As his people, this confession doesn't come from here (head), but from here (heart).
- E. So, let's look up, and three times, confess together: "Jesus, You Are Savior" (3 times). Confess this with me... "Jesus, You Are Savior!"
- F. Let's also pray together (words on screen)... "Jesus, I need you to save, rescue, deliver, and heal me. I trust in you as my Savior. Save me from my sin and from myself. Save me from you and your purposes. Save me by your love and for your love. save me from despair and give me hope. Help me to trust in your resurrection, that I might face death not with fear, but with hope. In your name, Jesus, Amen!"