

700 years before Jesus was even born. We learn that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. The Jewish scholars of Jesus time knew this prophecy well.

Joseph and Mary came to find themselves in the little town of Bethlehem thereby fulfilling ancient prophecy about the Messiah. They had not planned to go to Bethlehem, it was ordered by the government of the day. The government needed to count its citizens so that it could then tax its citizens. Has God changed your plans lately? It just might be that God is orchestrating your life the same way he did in the lives of Joseph and Mary. You may not think you are on track with your plans or that you are headed in the right direction. But if you are truly trusting God you can know that the baby born is for you. You may not have planned it that way but there is nothing you can do to change the arrival date. Are you ready to receive Jesus this Christmas or does his soon coming birth put you into a panic mode?

b. Began at creation .

Relax - what God has put into place for you is what he has planned long ago. It should, therefore, not surprise us our God is a planner. He began planning the coming of His Son before the world was formed. Following creation and in the history of man we find all sorts of indications of His planning and preparation. There's the virgin conception of Christ written of by Isaiah (7:14) some 700 years prior. As we just said, His birth in Bethlehem was spoken of by Micah (5:2) 730 years before. And then there is the one we just read about in Mark 1, the coming of a forerunner to the Messiah, spoken of in both Isaiah (40:30) and Malachi (3:1).

2. Mary and Joseph's preparation.

One of my favorite parts of Christmas preparation is putting up the Nativity set. Each year, like many people, you may pull yours out of storage, dust it off and set it somewhere in your home. Ellen has one she leaves up all year long. It has to be dusted more often than once a year. The decorative Nativity Scene has become one of the staples of Christmas. No scene would be complete without the three figures at the center.

Obviously, Jesus Christ is front and center, in a manger. But two other indispensable figures are those of Mary and Joseph. As we look at a Nativity scene, it's hard to ignore that the Christmas story is wrapped around people – around real life men and women we think we know, but who have never taken on much of a life of their own.

How well do we really know Joseph and Mary? If you were going to make a list of the great loving couples of history, who would be on your list? Romeo and Juliet? Anthony and Cleopatra? And if you turn to the Bible maybe you would add the names of Abraham and Sara, Boaz and Ruth. Mary and Joseph might not be on your list, for when we think of them we don't normally think of them in that way because the spotlight is on Jesus, where it should be. But I think that if we examine the love of Mary and Joseph, we would realize it was a love that stands the test of time. The love they had for each other, coupled with the love they had for God, culminates in one of the greatest love stories ever told.

Joseph moves from happy expectations to a terrible disappointment. The wife of hope becomes the one who could be breaking his heart. Joseph's experience would qualify him to write a Country & Western song. But as you know, the story doesn't end with divorce. Following Joseph's terrible disappointment was a time of joyful realization (Matthew 1:20-23). An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and assured him it was God's will. What a relief that must have been to Joseph. For over 1,000 years the Jews had been waiting for the Messiah to come. Over 300 times God

had directed the prophets to prophesy concerning Him. And the result was that the O.T. prophets had predicted almost every stage of the life of Jesus hundreds of years before it happened.

They predicted that He would be born of a virgin, that He would be born in Bethlehem and come out of Egypt, that He would grow up in Nazareth, that He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, that He would be crucified, that He would be buried in a borrowed tomb, and that He would arise from the dead. To have more than 300 prophecies fulfilled so literally cannot be mere coincidence. They were fulfilled because they are the prophecies of God and God's prophecies are always true.

Perhaps we know more about **Mary**. Mary was a chosen vessel. She was picked by God for this great task. Mary was a capable vessel in that she willingly accepted the appointment of God and joyfully did as God willed. Mary was a cherished vessel. God loved her as He does all creation.

Out of this experience Joseph and Mary learned to:

- a. Trust God .**
- b. Trust each other .**

3. Our Preparation.

You are all quite familiar with the old saying about how a watched pot never boils. It isn't true, of course. A watched pot does boil. It only seems to us waiting on it like it takes an eternity to do so.

Einstein's famous Theory of Relativity posits that time may not be the constant we think it is. Here on earth a minute, is a minute, is a minute. But Einstein argued that elsewhere in the cosmos a minute may not be a minute, at least not as we perceive a minute. Time may be relative. And there are certainly moments in our own experience where time seems relative. Take for example how time seems to stretch out interminably when we are children; it feels like an eternity between Christmases. And consider how time appears to almost exponentially contract as we get older; the time between Christmases just speeds by. Consider also the differences in time we feel when we are enjoying an activity and when we are waiting for that proverbial kettle to boil.

We must consider the difference between God's perspective of time and our own perspective—especially now as we enter this Advent season, the time when we as God's elect look for, hope for, and prepare for the triumphant and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Practically speaking then, what are we, believers living in this time between Jesus' first coming and second coming, to do until He returns for us?

- a. Watch .**

In the Gospels Jesus tells several parables comparing Himself to a landowner who goes away on a long trip and leaves the responsibility of his land and goods to servants until he returns. The point of these parables is the same: it is the foolish servant who misuses his master's things, believing he will never return; and it is the wise servant who is a good steward of his master's things, looking always for his master's return.

Watching means we must be looking in the Scriptures for the signs of His coming. Watching means we should watch the news, reading the paper, looking to world events, all with the hopeful eye to maybe seeing Jesus come today. Watching means looking forward to the Lord's return with anticipation and excitement convinced that His return will mean the judgment and eradication of evil, sin, and death, and the vindication of the righteous and the establishment of righteousness. We pray for this every Sunday, by the way. Watching means we must be prepared for Christ's return.

It means living with your spiritual bags packed, dressed in Christ's righteousness, having short sin accounts.

b. Work .

You and I are supposed to be about kingdom business, not our business, until the king comes. Jesus said that the fields where ripe for harvest, the work was plenteous but the laborers few. Be doers of the Word and not hearers only, James exhorts us. Blessed is the laborer, Jesus said, who is busy about his master's business when the master returns.

At the great day of reckoning, those who sat on their backsides and did nothing will hear the judge say the pitiful words "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire." But to those quietly, busily laboring, will hear: "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

My fear is that we have heard those words so often they've lost their scandal, and we are no longer concerned with working to please our Savior. We aren't saved by good works. But we are saved to and for good works. We are saved by faith alone, as Calvin said, but by a faith that is not alone. Working till Jesus comes means a lifestyle of worship, sacrificial giving, ministry, love, and the pursuit of holiness.

c. Witness .

The Greek word the New Testament uses which is translated into our English bibles with the word "witness" is the word marturon. It is the same word from which we get our English word "martyr." A marturon is one who testifies, or bears witness, to something. Sometimes that witness is with words. Sometimes it is with deeds. Sometimes it is by death.

We've got this Christian life thing wrong if we believe our faith is our best kept secret. If we are ashamed to testify about Him before the world, Jesus said that He will be ashamed to testify about us before the Father.

As a witness for Jesus we must order our lives around His commandments. If you sing like an angel on Sunday morning and live like the devil the rest of the week, you've misunderstood what all this is about. Your bad behavior as a believer denigrates Jesus' good reputation in the eyes of the world. Being a witness for Jesus means clearing your throat, opening your mouth, and risking a little public ridicule to share the love of Jesus with someone. The truth is, if you are striving to live righteously, the lost will notice and ask you what accounts for the change in your life. When they ask, tell them.

Conclusion

We are waiting for that sky to part, and Jesus Christ to make his promised appearance. Until then, even as Advents come and go, we are to be watching, working and witnessing. Keep watching that pot. I assure you without hesitation, doubt, or fear, it is going to boil.

"Behold, I come quickly." "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus."

Keep Watching! Come Quickly, Lord Jesus!

Thanksgiving Prepares the Way

The biggest Thanksgiving killer is the day after when Christmas shopping begins in earnest. We flip through the pages of Christmas ads looking at all the neat stuff we want when we ought to be spending more time appreciating the neat stuff we already have. We have allowed Christmas to kill Thanksgiving. We go right from Halloween to Christmas. In fact, in many stores Halloween and Christmas were up together in September. Have you tried to buy any thanksgiving decorations? Not counting those cute little pilgrim salt and pepper shakers.

The hustle and bustle of the secularization of Christmas has encroached upon the sanctity of

Thanksgiving. Christmas is not a time of peace and joy but of chaos and frantic futility. Now you must be thinking, where you going with this. Christmas is a celebration of Christ's birth. Surely you want us to celebrate Christmas. Far be it from me to suggest that we don't have Christmas. But we cannot truly experience the real spirit of Christmas without first celebrating Thanksgiving.

If you had been a Pilgrim, would you have given thanks? Consider all the men and women who broke bread together on that first Thanksgiving in 1621 had been through. They had uprooted themselves and sailed for America, an endeavor so hazardous that published guides advised travelers to the New World, "First, make thy will." The crossing was very rough and the Mayflower was blowing off course. Instead of reaching Virginia where Englishmen had settled 13 years earlier, the Pilgrims ended up in the wilds of Massachusetts. By the time they found a place to make their new home winter had set in.

The storms were frightful. Shelter was rudimentary. There was little food. Within weeks, nearly all the settlers were sick. Within two or three months time, half of their company died. When spring came, Indians showed them how to plant corn, but their first crops were dismal. Supplies ran out, but their sponsors in London refused to send more. The first time the Pilgrims sent a shipment of good back to England, it was stolen by pirates. If you had been there in 1621 – if you had seen half your friends die, if you had suffered through famine, malnutrition, and sickness, if you had endured a year of heartbreak and tragedy- would you have felt grateful?

Thursday we all enjoyed a meal that people in most parts of the world could only dream of having. We each live a life of incredible ease and luxury even though we may not think so. You would think that all these blessings would make us the most grateful people on earth. But often all this affluence does is really just make us more and more discontented and ungrateful. Often the by-product of having so much is a desire for more.

We easily get sidetracked when comes to the real meaning of Christmas. Thanksgiving prepares the way for Christmas with prayer and thanksgiving. It prepares the way for others to enjoy the blessedness of Christmas.

God Bless You!
Bro. Allan

Opportunities For Service

Living out Your Spiritual Commitment . . . and Fulfilling Christ's Divine Plan

Sunday, November 27, 2016

Choir Rehearsal..... 9:00 am
Sunday School 9:15 am
Morning Worship.....10:30 am
Nursery: Volunteers as needed

Ushers: Larry McKahan, Bill Schottel, Ken Kirkpatrick, Isaac Waters
Alternate: Ken Nice

Evening Worship..... 6:30 pm

Wednesday, November 30

Youth Study..... 6:30 pm
Prayer/Bible Study 6:30 pm
Adult Choir 7:30 pm

Thursday, December 1

G Team.....6:30 pm

Sunday, December 4, 2016

Choir Rehearsal..... 9:00 am
Sunday School 9:15 am
Morning Worship.....10:30 am
Nursery: Volunteers as needed

Ushers: John Lewis, Gary Yarbrough, Joseph Coats, Isaac Waters
Alternate: Larry McKahan

Lunch and Missions Study at Noon

No Evening Worship.... 6:30 pm

Wednesday, December 7

Youth Study..... 6:30 pm
Prayer / Bible Study6:30 pm
Adult Choir 7:30 pm

Thursday, December 8

R Team.....6:30 pm

Up-Coming Events.....

December 4 — The Ascension Quartet, 10:30 am

— International Mission Study, following lunch at noon

— Frederick and Friends Christmas 6:00 pm

December 5 — Food Kitchen

December 11—Christmas Tea with the Lanes, 2-4 pm

GROW Team

Commit to **GROW!** **Everyone make a contact!** Invite someone to Bible Study and Worship this week. ☺

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Sunday Nights

We will meet tonight for a time of study and enlightenment.

Wednesday Night Prayer and Bible Study

We will meet Wednesday at 6:30 pm. We are looking at the season of Advent in preparing our hearts for the coming of Christmas with Max Lucado's *God Came Near—Insights on the Season of Advent*. Hope to see you there!

Christmas Love Gift for Matt and Karissa Long

Matt and Karissa Long are leaving January 18, 2017 for Papua, New Guinea. Our church family has decided to give them a Christmas love offering. Please pray about how the Lord would have you give.

Frederick and Friends

Christmas
Sunday, December 4, 2016
6:00 pm
Frederick Boulevard
Baptist Church

The Ascension Quartet

There is something special about Gospel music. This group has been invited to bless us here at Calvary Baptist Church, December 4th, during Morning Worship at 10:30 am. Invite a Friend!

INTERNATIONAL MISSION STUDY AND LUNCHEON 2016 **NORWAY**

Sunday, December 4th, Noon

Come learn how God is moving in this nation.

CHRISTMAS TEA WITH THE LANES

December 11
2–4 pm

You are invited to enjoy an afternoon of Christmas Fellowship at the parsonage. Plan to come and relax for a moment during the busy holiday season. We're looking forward to seeing you!

For the Record

Attendance: November 20, 2016

Sunday School.....	53
Visitors.....	5
Total.....	58
Contacts Made.....	9
Morning Worship.....	65
Children's Worship.....	N/A
Sunday Night	N/A
Wednesday Night	7

Financial Record:

Weekly Budget	\$ 2,040.52
Offering Received ...	\$ 1,289.04

Offering Received by Mail:

December Counting Team:

Don Beavers and Jordan Lane

December Van Driver:

Mike Green

Remember to call 232-3747

before 8 am if you need a ride.

December Member Birthdays:

03 ... Brent Fortune
08 ... Madeline Swink
09 ... Allison Adkinson
11 ... George Ferbert
15 ... George Burgess
16 ... Addison Leichti
16 ... Doris Richardson
19 ... Jessica Kirkpatrick
20 ... Leona Reynolds
20 ... Brenda Burgess
23 ... Joseph Coats

December Anniversaries

Bill and Alva Lou Schottel

December 22, 1962

Prayer Requests ...

Dorothy Post—Shoulder surgery
Penny Sherlock—knee surgery
George Ferbert and Family—strength
Nellie Reynolds—strength
Troy Griswold—cancer
David Beavers—recovery
Larry Danner—cancer treatment
Cynthia Burdick—cancer treatment
Jim Winans—Laverna Village
Karissa and Matt Long
Betty Campbell—healing
Pat Puckett—eyes, healing
Marcia and Don Hart—future plans
Lisa Bowers—Jack and Flo's daughter
LoLeta Middleton—strength
Buddy Means—Mary Sharp's nephew
Ellen Blanton and Lois Ulmer—
Elvera's daughter & daughter-in-law
Stella Davis and Linda Rails—Doris
Richardson's sisters
Madeline Swink
Audrey Dugan Bob Barquist
Kathryn Beavers Ann Riddle
Louanne Laurence Keon McKahan
Jozy Winans Leona Reynolds
Kevin Duty Kenny Duty
Sue Higgins Bobby Griswold

Our Nation and our Leaders ...

Five More New Families...