

What Does Christmas Bring?

Christmas brings Faith

Part 2

Intro: When we hear the word faith, what words come to mind? How do we describe this word we read about in the bible? It's not just a biblical word though. Everyone demonstrates faith in some way. Fishermen have faith. Hunters have faith. Athletes have faith. Parents have faith in their kids. You all had faith in your vehicle that it would start and get you here. I had faith today that you would show up. We all demonstrate faith every day. But what kind of faith is God asking us to have? What kind of faith does the Christmas story bring to our lives?

- Today we are going to look at the faith in Mary and Jospheh in the Christmas story and then ask ourselves if we can demonstrate this kind of faith as well. If there was a word that would describe their faith it would be trust. They had tremendous trust in what God told them. In fact, their faith is a great example for us today.

Summarize the story: The story begins in an insignificant town and with an insignificant teenage girl. BUT everything changed when an angel showed up and changed her life forever.

Luke 1:26-38 – Angel visits Mary

Matt. 1:8-25 – Angel visits Jospheh

Luke 2:1-7 – Journey to Bethlehem

1. How did Mary and Jospheh demonstrate faith?

- Mary had faith in what the angel said was true

Luke 1:38 "Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her." (NLT)

- I find this pretty remarkable. The simplicity of her trust in what she was just told. She is going to become pregnant supernaturally – her son would be the promised Messiah – and her response is; "I am the Lord's servant."
- I'd be asking a host of other questions. How am I supposed to tell Joseph? How do I tell my parents? When can I tell anyone? What do I do when people don't believe me?
- She simply humbled herself to this unbelievable news and trusted. Maybe this is an example of childlike faith Jesus would later talk about?

- Mary had faith to trust her fate in God's hands

- Why do I say this? Because she is a single pregnant teen. She's pregnant out of wedlock. The consequences could have been extreme. She could have been cast out – sent away – rejected by her family – and of course lose Jospheh forever. (And that almost happened.)

- Was she scared of what would happen? I'm sure he hid the fact of her pregnancy as long as possible. She had to trust God with all the "what if's" she had no control over.

- Joseph had to trust what the angel said to him in a dream was true

Matt. 1:24 "When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife." (NLT)

- Can you imagine the conversation Mary and Joseph had when she tried to explain to him she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit? Angels showing up...the Messiah being born.... Can you imagine how hurt and wounded he must have felt? Mary cheated on him. Who was the real father?
- Joseph was stopped from sending Mary away in a dream by an angel. That must have been some dream because I've never made a life altering decision because of a dream. This dream made him do a 180!
- He had to believe that this pregnancy was of supernatural origin...so much so that he was willing to take her as his wife.

- Joseph had to trust God going against cultural norms by taking Mary as his wife

- By taking Mary as his wife, he is almost admitting the child is his. At least, that's what people would be thinking. Taking a pregnant woman to be your wife was going against the norms of the day. Why? You're not marrying a virgin.
- His trust is remarkable since going against norms of culture could have consequences. Joseph was a carpenter. Would this affect his business? Would people not seek him out for work? Would he be avoided? Could he provide for them?
- And yet...he simply did what the angel said.

- Mary and Joseph had to trust their reputations to God

- Can we say scandal? Nazareth was a small village. What are small towns like? Everyone knows about everyone's business. I'm sure Mary and Joseph were the talk of the town. Yet, they had to trust their reputations to God.
- We know this reputation- this story was well known and followed Jesus into adulthood. Here's how we know..... (explain context)

John 8:41 "You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born as a result of sexual immorality; we have one Father: God." (NASB)

- The critics of Jesus knew the story. They threw this back in Jesus' face. Can you imagine? 30 years later some people are still talking about it.

- Mary and Joseph had to have faith traveling to Bethlehem while she was nine months pregnant

Luke 2:4-5 “And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David’s ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. ⁵ He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child.” (NLT)

- Could the timing of all this be any worse? Nine months pregnant and now you are forced to travel 90 miles south to Bethlehem. This journey would take at least 5-7 days in Mary’s condition.
 - I wonder what was going through their minds? What were their conversations like? Did they question why God would allow them to be forced to travel at the same time she was ready to give birth? Couldn’t God have stopped this for the Messiah?
 - All we know is they did it. They had the faith and trust to travel to Bethlehem.
- Mary and Joseph had to have faith that their circumstances in Bethlehem were not a punishment but provision from God.

Luke 2:6-7 “And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. ⁷ She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.” (NLT)

- What did they truly think about their circumstances? Wouldn’t it be easy to complain about this? Maybe even wonder if you made the wrong decision traveling to Bethlehem with Mary ready to give birth? Did they even know the prophecies that Jesus needed to be born in Bethlehem?
- Were they wondering and asking God what they did wrong to not be blessed at least with a room? BUT...a stable with animals?
- BUT, we never see them complain or question God because of their circumstances. They just trusted God even though I’m sure, this did not meet their expectations.

Now, what about us?

2. How can we demonstrate this kind of faith?

Faith is rather important in our relationship with God.

Heb.11:6 “And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.” (NLT) Mary and Joseph had this unshakeable trust in God. They believed God would reward them – take care of them if they obeyed what they were told. How can we trust God like this?

- Will you trust what God says is true?

2 Tim. 3:16 “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true...” (NLT)

- Mary and Joseph did. Will you? This is a foundational issue for our faith and trust in God. Do we believe what God says in His word is true. Because if we do not, we will never trust it. We will never stake our life and decisions on it.

- Is God's word your absolute truth to follow or is it one of many options? Is it a book filled with various opinions or is it the truth on how human beings live life on planet earth in relationship with God?
- We live in a day and age where it is difficult to know who or what to believe and who to trust. And yet God has given us His truthful, trustworthy, unchanging word to follow.
- Just like Mary and Joseph, they had to believe things that were hard to believe at the time. God's word says some pretty amazing things. It makes some remarkable claims. It explains to us amazing promises from God. But it is all for nothing if we never believe it's true. Will you trust what God says is true?

- Will you trust your future is in God's hands?

Jer. 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." (NLT)

- Mary and Joseph had to. Do you realize God has a future for you? God has plans for you in this life and He has prepared a future for you in eternity.
- How can you experience this future? It all begins with a relationship with God. His plans for you and His future for you are tied to relationships.
- The story of Christmas is not just a story about faith. It is a story about faith and trust in a person and that person is Jesus. If you want to trust your future is in God's hands, then you must put your life in His hands.
- How? By choosing to believe and follow Jesus. We'll talk more about this next week but this is why Jesus came. He came for relationship. He didn't come to start a new religion. He came to show people how they can have life through Him. Your future begins and ends with Him.

- Will you trust God and go against cultural norms?

Rom. 12:2 "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think..." (NLT)

- As followers of Jesus, we must go against the norms of culture. We are called to be different. We are not supposed to blend in. Our faith and trust in God makes us stand out. This is why we are called "salt of the earth" and "light of the world".
- Maybe you've been blending in too much. Maybe you've been letting the world make you look like it instead of like Jesus? Following Jesus means we go against the flow. We swim upstream against culture.
- We must live different values – because we represent a different Kingdom. Mary and Joseph went against the cultural norms of the day. Will you trust God enough to do the same?

- Will you trust your reputation to God?

Prov. 29:25 “Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the Lord means safety.” (NLT)

- I think about how much Mary and Joseph had to do this. But following Jesus in this life requires us to do the same. If we fear what people think about us we allow them to control us. If this fear of others is controlling us, this means we’re not following Jesus. We’re following our fear.
- For some of you, this is what is keeping you from being free to follow Jesus. You know He is asking you to be different – not blend in – maybe even take a stand for Him and you are paralyzed by the fear of what others may think of you.
- It’s time to trust your reputation to God. It’s time to be more concerned about what He thinks of you than your co-workers, your neighbors, your relatives, or any other person who creates this fear in you. Will you trust your reputation to God?

- Will you trust God with circumstances that are out of your control?

John 16:33 “...Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” (NLT)

- Mary and Joseph certainly had to do this. I’m sure there were times they wondered what God was up to...yet they kept trusting.
- Jesus tells us that this life will be filled with many trials and sorrows. Our relationship with Jesus and trust in Him does not remove trials and sorrows from us. We must stop believing this.
- It is our relationship with Jesus that empowers us through the trials and sorrows. Don’t let the painful circumstances erode your trust in God. (It’s easy to let this happen) It’s when things are hard and painful we need to trust God even more.
- We sometimes demand understanding and explanation from God when things are painful. Most of the time, God doesn’t give that to us. He simply wants us to lean in and trust Him.
- Sometimes this is a prayer I use. “God I don’t understand...I don’t like this...my heart is broken...the pain is intense...BUT I trust You!
- Maybe this is a prayer you need to say today. I believe Mary and Joseph lived this way. This is the kind of faith we need. This is the kind of faith that Christmas brings.

Today, many of you would say you believe in God, but will you trust Him? If we are going to have the kind of faith Mary and Joseph had, it requires the kind of faith that trusts.