

(The Life of Jesus) His Incarnation

by Earle Maxwell

The sermon explores the significance of Jesus Christ's Incarnation and its impact on our lives, emphasizing the importance of worship, witness, and faith.

Duration: 38:27

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 8:27, Luke 1:30, Luke 2:10-11, Luke 2:25

Topics: "Incarnation Of Christ", "Sharing The Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his preparation for a series of Bible studies on the Incarnation. While attending a meeting in England, he is inspired by a song and decides to base his studies on its six verses. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding God's language and how it speaks to our hearts. He also highlights the urgency of sharing the message of Christ, as seen in the shepherds' haste to witness the birth of Jesus. The sermon concludes with a brief character study of Simeon in Luke chapter 2, highlighting his righteousness and devoutness while waiting for the consolation of Israel.

Transcript

I wonder tonight if someone asked you, how would you answer the question to describe Jesus to someone who asked you for some information about him and the relationship to your life? I just want you to keep in mind that question because I'd like to look just for a moment at Mark chapter 8 and in verse 27 and you remember that those of you who just haven't got your Bibles, let me just refresh you with the details. Jesus was speaking to his disciples and he said, whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist, but some say Elias and others one of the prophets. And Jesus said unto them, but whom say ye that I am? And Peter answered and said unto him, thou art the Christ.

I have a deepening conviction in my ministry that we need to make absolutely sure in our own faith, our own clear understanding and our concept of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. There are those in our society today who want to put Jesus on an equal platform with others. And if I might just for a moment borrow the words of another Methodist, Dr. Sangster.

He said, we do not select Jesus Christ from rivals, he stands alone. He is not the first of a class, he occupies a category by himself. He is not an adjunct to life, he is necessity for all true living.

Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ who overcame the world and as an overcomer, he helps us to be overcomers. And that's why over the period of these few days, by God's grace we'll move right through the

life of Christ to that ultimate victory which takes him right to the right hand of God.

And we'll be looking at that next Sunday morning to conclude the series. But some weeks ago I had intended and had been thinking for some time about this series and I'd started to prepare along a certain line. And one Sunday morning I was sitting in the meeting at Bromley in England and I was looking at the song which on your blue sheet is number 104.

And I looked at these six verses and suddenly they came alive for me. And I thought, thank you Lord, this will be beautiful for the Bible studies at Lake Jernaluska. The incarnation, who is he in yonder stall? The temptations in verse 2, the 3, the compassion, the sympathy of Christ, 4, the crucifixion, 5, the resurrection, 6, the ascension and the exaltation of Christ.

We've got the whole life of Christ taking us right through to victory. But we can have victory here and now by God's grace. And so I'd like us just to sing the first verse and then we'll move into our Bible study series looking first of all at the birth of Jesus Christ and answering, looking for answers in that setting, who is he? And so let's take the verse together.

You've got number 104. I think you know the melody. Let's sing it together.

When General Burroughs was the territorial commander in Sri Lanka, she was at an open air service and she decided to just leave the group of Salvationists and go around and talk to some of the people who were listening. And she went to one of the bystanders and she gave that courtesy which is expected in that part of the world and she introduced herself by saying, May I speak with you? And the man immediately said, If you want to talk with me about Christianity, I'm not interested. But if you would like to talk to me about Jesus Christ, I'm ready to listen.

Who is he? We're going into the manger scene and we're going to look first of all for a few moments at Joseph and Mary and then we'll move into different groups or individuals who were involved in order to answer the question, who is he? So that we might understand according to the scripture in a way that might help our own faith to grow deeper. So we're dependent upon Luke and Matthew as our resource material for this initial study. So if we go back to St Matthew's Gospel, Matthew chapter 1 and we look here in the first part of the chapter, verse 18.

And as we read those few verses as we get, we are introduced to Joseph, we don't find a great deal of background information about Joseph. We know that he was a descendant of King David, we know according to the scriptures that he was a carpenter. But he must have been a good man for God to have honoured him in such a way that with Mary, there you'd have the human family picture coming together, ultimately the birth of Christ would come.

And so one of the things that impresses me about early in St Matthew's Gospel is that we suddenly are confronted with a very human emotion, the first one that appears in the Old Testament as well. You run into the emotion of fear. And you know your Old Testament, how at the moment Adam and Eve had been discovered and had failed God in responding to the suggestion of the evil one and had taken of the fruit.

It said they went and hid themselves for fear. And so in the Old Testament, the first human emotion that we meet is fear. And then when we come into the New Testament and we're coming into the Nativity scene, it's very, very soon in the introduction to that setting that suddenly fear meets us again.

Because when the angel speaks to Joseph, the message has to come to him, fear not. When Mary became aware of this remarkable experience that was to be hers, the angel had to say, fear not. When the shepherds were out finding their sheep, what happened? The heavenly message came, fear not, for behold I bring you tidings of great joy.

Fear was at it right from the word go. And you know even today I find Christian people who sometimes succumb very easily to this human emotion. But the beautiful thing we learn from this initial part of our Bible study is that where God came with his message, each message was prefaced with a word which would cancel or would minimise or reduce or would evaporate.

Take it right away, take the fear away in the person's life. And you know that later in the New Testament it says that when we learn lessons by love and obedience, it's perfect love casted out all fear. And so we have Joseph that we don't know a great deal about.

And if we want to learn something about Mary, we've got to go through into the Gospel according to St Luke. And if we can just take a few moments there, Luke chapter 1. And if you look in verse 30, Luke chapter 1, the angel said unto her, fear not Mary, for thou hast found favour with God. This must have been an awesome moment for Mary.

To suddenly find that she was to be involved in a unique divine purpose, that she would host in her own womb the Christ child. She must have been a very wonderful lady. And we're careful in the Protestant church that we just keep matters in balance.

But that must not be allowed to take away from her recognition that she must have been a great woman of faith. Because you will discover that she was first of all encouraged by the angel with a special word of encouragement. And the angel said to her, thou hast found favour with God.

Now this is all leading us to the point where ultimately Jesus Christ is going to be born in the manger. But I want to pause for a moment and I want to suggest to you that there is a great recognition in this statement which challenges my own heart. If there's anything I long in my own heart is I want to find favour with God.

I want to live every day of my life so that if God calls me at any moment I am ready to go straight into his presence. And here is Mary and the angelic message comes and says, you have found favour with God. I read recently an author by the name of G.F. Pentecost.

He wrote a book and he said if that sort of word could be written on my tombstone I could ask for nothing greater than you have found favour with God. But not only was there a word of encouragement for Mary but then there was the word of enlightenment. And the enlightenment that the angel gave was that she was going to give birth to a child.

And she was a little disturbed how this would happen and she said how can it happen? I am not sharing the true marriage experience yet with my beloved Joseph. And then in verse 35 we get a first definitive statement in addition to what the angel had said to Joseph and Mary earlier on. In verse 35 the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon you and the power of the highest shall overshadow you.

Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. Who are you? The angel said to Mary, your child will be the Son of God. We heard earlier how that the angel had said to Joseph his name shall be called Jesus because he shall save his people from their sins.

But here is the strong statement coming through which says the child that you are going to give birth to is the Son of God. And so firstly tonight who is he in yonder stall? He is the Son of God. Now if we just go back again into St. Matthew's Gospel.

Please back into St. Matthew's Gospel. And this time we'll go to chapter 2. Time won't allow me to just run through the verses specifically. But I now want to introduce you to the wise men for a moment.

Now you know as well as I do that the wise men were unnamed and they were unnumbered. But we think tradition allows for three because of the three different gifts. But these astrologers were scanning the skies and all of a sudden it says here, Matthew uses the description.

He said we have seen his star in the east. And the east is always the start, that's where we look for the start of a new day, rising in the east. And the wise men it says here, they followed that star and it took them all the way to the city, the temple city, Jerusalem.

And they paused there. And you know I try to understand why they paused because the star was still available to take them on to Bethlehem. But you see they not only knew what they were looking for but they were expecting to find what they were looking for.

And they were expecting that when they discovered what they were looking for that for them would be a beautiful experience of worship. We have seen his star in the east and I've come to worship him. What better place to look for Jesus to be born if they want to worship him than to be born in the temple city of Jerusalem.

Or if they were coming as they were to worship him as the king, what better city to try and look for the king than in the capital city. But no they had to go a little further and they had to go in to Bethlehem. And when they discovered Jesus they then fell down and worshipped him and they gave to him gifts.

And so their worship is centred on Christ. Their worship was submissive to Christ because they fell down before him. And so if you and I had the opportunity to say to the wise men as you look at Jesus who is he? The wise men would have responded and said he is the focus of our worship.

To Mary the angel said he is the son of God. To the wise men as they viewed the babe in the manger they said he is the focus of our worship. And I want to tell you when your worship is focused on Jesus Christ it can be the most enriching experience that is available to the human soul.

Just a few weeks ago in London some Australian visitors came across to see us and in the course of their stay they were almost ready to go home and the young man who happened to have been a soldier of ours some years ago in Australia said to me Earl have you got any tapes that I can play to myself on the aeroplane because if you're flying from London to Australia you better reserve at least 22 hours for the job. And so he said if you've got some tapes and I went through and I managed to extricate a few tapes I didn't have too many just a few along the way. But I remember I gave him one that was based on the Emmaus road experience.

And when he got to Australia he was having trouble with jet lag and he rang me at 3 o'clock in the morning Australia time which is ok in England. But I could tell that something was wrong he wasn't sleeping too well. And he said to me Earl have you ever heard of a mercy seat at 35,000 feet? I said what's that? Have you ever heard of a mercy seat at 35,000 feet? I said tell me about it.

He said I was listening to the tape on the Emmaus road experience and he said as I sat there in the plane at 35,000 feet just with my eyes closed listening he said suddenly I became conscious of God in Christ as the theme and object of my worship. And he said I was overcome emotionally and at that very moment in the aeroplane travelling at 600 mile an hour suddenly he said God came to me in a new way and I discovered for myself a deeper awareness in worship of the son of God. God has got a thousand different ways as I've heard a Quaker say.

God has a thousand different ways of tugging at a man's sleeve. And so the wise men said he is the theme of our worship. But what about the shepherds? What about the shepherds? Because again we've got to go back to Luke chapter 2 and we've got to pick up there about the shepherds experience.

Let me just turn it over here and give you the exact verse. Verse 8 Luke chapter 2 verse 8 Shepherds abiding in their field keeping watch over their flock by night. It was an unexpected experience for the shepherds.

They were not aware that it was imminent that they were going to become involved in this remarkable announcement that would have global implications. For unto you this day is born in the city of David a saviour which is Christ the Lord. It was unexpected but it was understandable.

And I want to tell you one of the lovely things in your Christian experience and mine is that when God wants to speak to you and he wants to speak to me he speaks in understandable terms. It's not way over my head. It's right to my heart.

And God has a language which when he speaks to you and I and we are in tune to listen it's understandable and we know that he speaks to me and he speaks to you. It was understandable and it was also urgent because Luke as he records this incident he turns round and says and they came with haste to go and see what had happened. And when they found the Christ child they found that God's word had been proved.

What had come to them in the open space is that wonderful message as they stood in the presence of the Christ child they suddenly realised that just as it had been revealed to them now they discovered the Christ child was before them. And when they concluded that experience Luke said in his gospel they went on their way telling others about the Christ child. And so if you and I tonight had to say to the shepherds let's put that question, who is he in yonder stall? The shepherds would say he is the theme of our witness.

The theme of our witness. The theme of our ministry in the Salvation Army in company with other churches is not a witness to a denomination. Please, a witness is to a risen and glorified Christ.

Our witness is to tell men and women that Christ ever liveth to make intercession for us. Who says from the uttermost to the uttermost. That is our witness and it is needed in the world today and we must help people to understand that this is the Christ.

The Son of God. The focus, the object of our worship. The theme of our witness.

Some years we spent in the Philippines and I, my wife and I had some very lovely experiences. Some very challenging ones too. But I remember on one occasion coming to know of a pastor of one of the growing churches in Manila.

His father had been a pastor before him. But do you know how his father was converted? When the American troops occupied the Philippines on their way to Japan there was a group of American soldiers, G.I.s as they were affectionately known. They would hold open air meetings in Manila.

And one of those G.I.s noticed someone listening and so he went over to speak to him and he tried to share with him his own faith in Jesus Christ. And the man said, I'm not really interested. But he said, can I take your address? And the Filipino said, OK, you can have my address but I'm not interested.

And do you know that that American G.I. visited that man 11 times? And no, the man would not take notice of his witness. In fact, on the 11th time the man said to him, I tell you, if you ever come to my house again I will kill you. I am sick and tired of you coming to me to witness about your Christian faith.

And that American soldier went for the 12th time. And do you know that on the 12th time that man was converted to Jesus Christ? Because of a faithful witness whose theme was on Jesus. And that man was so moved by his new experience of God in Christ that he eventually became a pastor of a very virile church in the Philippines.

And then his son became a pastor after him. But it all traced back to someone who kept going back and back and back and saying, Jesus is the theme of my witness. And so finally tonight, let's take one more very brief character study and let's see what Simeon has to say about Jesus.

In Luke chapter 2, if you look there in verse 25, this is the only time we'll meet Simeon in Scripture. Just a few verses. But I tell you there's enough in those few verses to suddenly realise that you're in the presence of a man of God.

Luke said he was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel. Just or righteous, that speaks of his relationship with God, with other men, devout, speaks of his relationship with God. That's what he was like.

And it's interesting, I think he must have been getting on in years because when I read the Bible I often do so with a little smile. Because as I read this New Testament account in St Luke's Gospel, it says here that there was another person also who was interested in the birth of Christ and her name was Anna. And isn't it interesting that when Luke writes about Anna, he gives her age.

He said Anna was 84, but he doesn't tell us how old Simeon is. Usually when people refer to ladies in their senior years, there's a modesty about their age which we tend to protect. But not so Luke.

And Luke says here was Simeon. He knew what he was waiting for because God, the Holy Spirit, had alerted him. And you'll see it here, he was waiting for the consolation and in verse 26 it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

He knew what he was waiting for. He was looking for the birth of Jesus. And I wonder what you're looking for in your faith over these few days together.

I hope that you're looking for something more. I don't know whether in the States here, have you ever run across someone by the name of Sidlo Baxter? Sidlo Baxter did a meeting for us in Brisbane one Sunday. We were Corps officers.

And he got there a little bit before I was there and I was always rather early. For the meetings and for whatever was involved. But when I got to the Corps officers room, there was Sidlo Baxter waiting for me.

But what was he doing? He was down on his knees praying. And as I walked into my office I said, oh I do apologise for intruding. And he looked up and he said, it's alright Captain, I'm just making contact with headquarters.

He said to me, he said, have you ever seen a revival? And I said, well yes I have. I remember as a young candidate before I went to the training college. I was at a Corps where every Sunday there were people getting saved and sanctified.

It was a remarkable experience. And he said, have you seen one since? No I said, I haven't. Well he said, keep looking for more.

He said, keep looking because what God has shown you is only a minor foretaste of greater things that God will do. And He will want to show you. Here is this old man, Simeon.

He's not looking back and saying, oh the good old days, what the army used to be. But he's looking ahead and he said, God has shown me that I can look forward to seeing the consolation that has yet to bless Israel, the coming of Christ. And on one day as he entered into the temple there is the young couple with the Christ child.

They brought no lamb for an offering except that Mary brought the lamb of God that she had carried in her own womb. And she handed the child over. And in my mind I can just picture this aging man shaking with emotion and giving thanks to God and saying, God I can go home now because I have seen your promise fulfilled.

I'm holding in my hands the promise that will eventually have impact upon the whole world. The saviour of the world, Jesus Christ. Who is He? He it is who is the fulfilment of God's promise.

The consolation of Israel, the saviour of the world. And so tonight on this opening study of our Bible series and looking at verse 1, who is He in yonder stall? In spirit I stand again in the manger. And I come before Christ at that moment.

And I bring to mind the message that the angel gave to Mary. He is the son of God. And I watch the wise men demonstrate their own response to the child that is before them.

And I come away with the impression that the wise men say Jesus is the completeness of worship. And then in spirit I go out into the field and I see the shepherds overcome by the excitement of their discovery of Christ. And I listen to what they have to say and suddenly I realise that for the shepherds Jesus had become the theme of their witness.

And then I look at Simeon in the temple realising that God's promise had not failed but holding the child. He said I have now seen the fulfilment of God's promise. This is the one.

This is the son of God who will bring salvation to the world. Who is He? That is my Jesus. That is the Christ who brought salvation and hope to my life.

And tonight I want to say I give thanks to my Heavenly Father because to my heart Jesus is the son of God. He is the focus of my worship for I come to the Father through Him. He is the one who I want to tell

other people about can change their lives.

Because like Simeon I find in Jesus that He is the Saviour of the world.

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