

Sunday, December 15, 2019

Isaiah 9:2-7

Luke 1:39-45

Luke 2:1-7

A Child is Born

Did you know that worldwide there are about 360,000 babies born each day? And with every 24 hours that go by over 151,600 people die. This is according to Ecology Global Network and UNICEF who are monitoring these numbers very closely. These numbers are based upon an average per year and with differing circumstances taken into consideration including births and deaths that are not properly recorded in some areas of the world. When we think about this further, there are a lot of people who begin to grieve every day due to the death of a loved one. At the same time there are almost double the number of people who will experience the joy of welcoming a new baby amongst them. In fact if we divide these numbers up on a per second rate, we would learn that every second that goes by 2 people die and 4 babies are welcomed into this world. Four babies every second are welcomed into this world today. But what are we celebrating in these next few weeks? The birth of one baby over 2000 years ago.

Mary and Joseph were engaged to marry and they learned of her pregnancy through the angel Gabriel. They became expectant parents because God chose Mary to carry the infant to full term and give birth. Joseph was to be Mary's partner as they raised this child and other children with which God blessed them. But they and generations before them believed that God would enter the world in some way because the prophets taught this.

Micah and Isaiah wrote hundreds of years before Jesus was born about the one who was to be born King of the Jews. In Micah 5 we read "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village in Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past." And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea to register for the census. This requirement for registration for Joseph meant that the couple had to travel even though Mary's due date was very soon.

Isaiah (7:4) also foretells the circumstance of the Messiah's mother- the baby will be conceived by the Spirit, "The Lord Himself will choose the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call Him Immanuel – 'God is with us.'" Then in Isaiah 9:6-7 we read: For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest on His shoulders. These will be His royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His ever expanding, peaceful government will never end. He will rule forever

with fairness and justice from the throne of His ancestor David. The passionate commitment of the Lord Almighty will guarantee this!"

A Child is born. And this child is Christ the Lord. When Mary and Joseph first held their baby they knew that this baby as opposed to all those who were born before, and all those who came after was the messiah for which generations had prayed and hoped would come. People did not know what or how God was going to answer the cries of his people but they knew One would come and He would change the course of human history forever. And Jesus did. This child that was born was just as dependent, defenseless, and vulnerable as any baby. He was born not in a place of royalty but out back behind an inn where animals used for transportation were being housed for the night. And this baby became known throughout the world because of the alignment of stars, through God's messengers (angels) and because God put into place the plan for Jesus' human life which would fulfill all prophecy. Jesus life would also be the way in which the gift and promise of eternal life would be offered. For it is through this child who was born under these circumstances and moments that people would be given the gift of reconciliation with God. People then and now have the ability to re connect with God because of this child. The separation that occurred between God and his human creation was sin. And it is this child who enabled sin to be taken away; who brought forth God's grace and mercy in order for forgiveness to be experienced. And it is this child who was born to save the world.

Songwriter Fred Jacobson reflected on Jesus' birth as he wrote "When a Child is born". Because of Jesus birth, everyday events which seem ordinary are changed forever. In Jacobson's words, "A silent wish sails the seven seas; the winds of change whisper in the trees, and the walls of doubt crumble, tossed and torn- this comes to pass when a child is born." A rosy hue settles all around; you've got the feel you're on solid ground. For a spell or two, no one seems forlorn- this comes to pass when a child is born." All of this happens because we are waiting- and continuing to wait anew- for this one child to again bring about change. –tears to laughter, hate to love, war to peace, everyone to love others, and misery and suffering being forgotten... but we have to have faith for this will come when a child is born.

God's Son is Jesus and he was is and will be born for us anew—each Christmas celebration calls us to see Jesus not only as baby but as the Saviour born to set all those who believe free. But we must tell the world this story. For this baby was born over 2000 years ago and his life death and resurrection changed the world. This baby started out vulnerable and defenseless and dependent upon his parents just like every other baby ever born. But this child— is the Son of God. But as Jesus said in John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that

in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." A child was born in Bethlehem to change and overcome the world. How will you see the baby? The Christ of the cross, and the resurrected Saviour? Do you have the joy of Christ Jesus and are you excited to celebrate his birth and to know that when this child was born- God fulfilled the promise to send a Messiah. It is up to us now to respond to Him so that we might fully live with the joy of Jesus in our hearts and minds. All this is possible because a Child is born.

PRAYER: Loving God we thank you for the joy that comes with Jesus, the child who is born for us. Open our hearts to receive this joy knowing that all things are possible through him. Hear our prayers for we ask them in faith and in Jesus' name. Amen.