

In a Moment

Pastor Ken

Week 3, December 22, 2024

Jesus took on our face, and He took on our disfigurement.

Jesus took on our form, and He took on our failures.

³⁹ At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1-NIV)

Yesterday, after a busy weekend in KC, I was focusing on the final notes for today. Suddenly, I heard Danice say,

"Do you want to finish the puzzle there are only 6 pieces left," It was Saturday morning, I had not yet showered, but at least I had my Chiefs hat on.

After the puzzle question, I was suddenly transported **In A Moment**, to how much I love Christmas. **In a Moment**.

And this has happened to you throughout the Christmas season. You will hear a song and think, **In A Moment** about your past where that song was meaningful.

You see a nativity in a store window, and **In A Moment**, you are transported to your past as a child when you used to move the animals around in the family nativity.

I looked at the puzzle we had been working on this Christmas and had a warm fireplace-like thought, **In A Moment**, I was now thinking, how much **I love Christmas**.

And while many puzzles puzzle me, I am not puzzled about how much **I love Christmas**. No fog there. No need to generate excitement. Perhaps a few less sweets are in order.

This simple question, do you want to finish the puzzle? Triggered In A Moment, a reminder of **how much I love Christmas**.

I love Christmas. I love the red and green, the green chilis and the red candy. The Christmas music, O' Holy Night and Grandma got run over by a reindeer. I love Bing Crosby and his tunes and children with balloons.

I love Christmas. I love the trips to Union Station, KC. The cardboard cutouts of Andy Reid. And the Christmas displays of Darth Vader. And while Danice and Rebekah were at the Nutcracker in KC, the boys were shopping for their girls.

I love Christmas. My normal impatient self seems to disappear for a few weeks, and a much kinder and gentler person shows up, as I wait patiently for a dinner reservation at a local restaurant. For a grocery store line to thin out. Or a produce department teenager returning from the back of the store with the answer to my question, **we are all out!**

I love Christmas. Mistletoe kisses. And giant Hershey kisses. I love winter clothes and Rudolph's nose. And I love all the giving that goes on at Bethel Life Center. What does that look like? Let me read it from a Bethel Facebook post made by Pastor Karen thanking everyone for their Christmas giving in 2024.

To say we are blown away is an understatement. We provided gifts for over 162 children. Each child receives 3 gifts. Almost 500 gifts were given. That is 174 more gifts than last year.

Hawaiian rolls. Hams. Turkeys. Green beans, mashed potatoes and 81 bags of apples. Each family was the recipient of this Christmas feast, offering the tastes and smells of Christmas. Bethel Life Center family, thank you for your generous giving. Whether you bought a gift or provide money, thank you. Whether you wrapped it, or we wrapped it for you. Thank you.

As the hands and feet of Jesus you blessed Enterprise Elementary School, Tribe of Levi recovery, Teen Challenge recovery, Celebrate recovery. Our renewed hope family and children whose parents are incarcerated received your love. Missionary families. YMCA employees and families from school district USD 261.

Plans are in the making for be bigger, better and bolder in 2025. And you are the heroes. And this is why **I love Christmas.**

I love Christmas, because somewhere someone is contemplating the real meaning of Christmas. They are making plans to attend one of many Christmas Eve services, (like ours) and they will hear the gospel...

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. (Matt 1:21-NIV)

Someone is attending church for the first time and asking, what does this child's birth have to do with me? Young people are singing Christmas songs at a local Haysville Jr High concert, like this past week, and a teenager is not just **mouth**ing the words, but thinking about the **meaning** of the words.

O holy night! The stars are brightly shining. It is the night of our dear Savior's birth.

A soldier stationed far away asks himself, will I talk to my parents this Christmas? A young mom holds for the first time their newborn on Christmas Eve, asking herself will I be a good mom? The Christmas season prompts questions like these and so many more.

Because of Bethlehem, we know the shepherds listened to an angelic choir, and Wise Men gave some gifts and heaven offered up a Savior. I have a Savior in heaven. I have a Savior in my heart. I have a Savior in my home.

Jesus did not tell me to clean up my act, clean up my room before I came to him.

He offers once again this Christmas the real gift of Christmas, the only gift that will last after the tree is down and the bills are arriving...

Jesus offers once again, this Christmas an opportunity to come in and clean you up.

It is not my hold on him that counts, it is his hold on me.

It is not my grip on him that counts, it is his grip on me.

1 Peter 2:24, He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness: by his wounds you have been healed.

We need this message more than ever. God gets us and God saves us.

The puzzle was almost fully complete, there were just 6 pieces left and in like fashion there are just a few hours left this Christmas, so let's revisit Joseph and Mary and turn over the remaining minutes to the gospel of Matthew and Luke and **return once again to the most life changing Christmas story ever told!**

Here we meet a young unmarried couple, parents to the savior of the world, puzzled about how all this is going to play out. God is clearly at work, even if it is not clear to Joseph and Mary what God is doing.

God asked Joseph, in a moment, to be the recipient of an assignment that would *grow on him*.

And learning how to be a dad will have to grow on him.

What does Joseph in Jesus birth narrative really know about being a dad? Joseph is more carpenter than cuddler. He works with tools, not toddlers.

And what do we really know about faith? We are more frail than faithful.

God has given us some good news this Christmas not only is a baby born in Bethlehem, but this child's salvation is available to all who request it.

Christmas begins what Easter celebrates. The child in a cradle became a Savior on a Cross. And because Jesus did, my past is removed.

As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:12-NKJV)

Look at Joseph helpless, as Mary is in labor. Oh, Joseph knows about labor, he labors every day in a carpentry shop. This is delivery labor, not door making labor.

Look at Joseph over there, he has sawdust in his beard, and he doesn't even know it. And he is still carrying nails in his pocket.

Heaven is asking, "the God of the universe is going to dinner each night with this common laborer. Jesus is going to call this guy, dad"?

How is a guy who spends most of his time in a shop, ever going to see the big picture? Just like Joseph, you can't see the big picture.

Will he know how important Jesus Torah lessons really are? Will Joseph be too tired to tell Jesus the ancient stories of Abraham, Joseph and Moses?

And what if Joseph loses his temper? Carpentry can leave even a master craftsmen frustrated as one attempts to plane an angle. Set a two by four.

The good news for Joseph is God is really more interested in our trust than in our trade.

God told Joseph to take Mary home to be his wife, and while it doesn't make sense, yet, in this pregnancy story Joseph chose God's plan.

After all, it was really the only option. Joseph knew the only thing worse than an unknown future, was the thought of denying God's word. If you are wondering like Joseph wondered, why not obey like Joseph obeyed.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (Matt 1-NIV)

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

A final question in the Joseph portion of the story. Who was the angel of the Lord, visiting Joseph in a dream? **Gabriel**. When word got out that God was going to become a baby, a boy, a bundle of emotions as a teenager and then a bible teacher, Gabriel was entrusted and enthused.

When Gabriel was handed a slip of paper with a Nazareth address, he quickly read, **God will become a baby**. Tell the dad too take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived is from the Holy Spirit.

Gabriel was shocked, but he had his orders. On the way to earth he must have thought, the heavens can't contain, how can a human body? And when you think about what comes out of babies, is that fitting for a king? Let me just put it on the real. This is a real head popper.

Imagine Joseph burping Jesus on his shoulder-why that is more than even Gabriel could imagine.

Now, I want to shift theological gears. While the story of Joseph and Mary has several angelic visits, our story, yours and mine also has Holy Spirit visits. But not just a word given, but a Holy Spirit dwelling. Remaining. Indwelling. Filling.

What is true and timely of angelic messengers in the Old Testament has been replaced with Holy Spirit messages that come from within.

Angelic messengers then, the Holy Spirit now.

You see for each believer that trusts Christ, they receive sins forgiven and an indwelling relationship God himself through the person of the Holy Spirit. God not only comes to you. God not only forgives your sins in Christ. But God also comes to dwell in you. Just two verses, there are many more.

¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. (Eph 1-NIV)

¹⁹ Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies. (1 Cor 6-NIV)

Perhaps I can make this even more clear, by looking at the Holy Spirit's activity in the life of Mary and her cousin, Elizabeth.

God asked Mary, in a moment, to be the recipient of a miracle that would *grow in her*.

You have a friend who is going through a difficult time, but they do not tell you. No call. No text. No email.

You see them a few weeks later and ask how they are doing, and they tell you about this really horrible time they just went through.

You look at them. Pause. And ask why didn't you text me? I love you. I would have been there for you. I could have prayed for you.

You have been there for me, why wouldn't you let me be there for you? Doesn't our relationship mean more than that?

Suddenly and surprisingly your friend says, "I did reach out to you." I reached out to you a number of times. Then you look at your phone, and you find the text and it said, "**want to come over?**"

And you ask, "how do **I know** that is a cry for help?" Or just another time you asked me over. How do I know this is different? This happens more than you realize. A cry for help, and yet no one hears.

A study was done about how much time people need to right size their problems. To get them back on track. To keep them from doing something really bad.

People need 8 minutes of help to get them back on track.

As Simon Sinek reminds us you have to create a code so people can tell the difference between, do you want to come over. Or, I am desperate, can you come over? Can you call? Here is the code. In a text you this: do you have 8 minutes?

That means I need you. I am in a bad space. Can we connect? Now, think this through with me. Any of us, when we hear that cry for help can within a reasonable time, step out of a meeting for 8 minutes.

Stop what we are doing for 8 minutes. Give a friend our life-giving time, support and prayer for 8 minutes.

Do you agree? Can you do it? Ok, why not write that in your notes? In your phone notes. Or on your notes handed out today.

Mary faced such an occasion. She needed her cousin Elizabeth to make sense of the unsensible. To explain the unexplainable. And so, while she is pregnant, she heads off to her cousin Elizabeth's house to receive 8 minutes of counsel, support and love.

Mary takes her first of two road trips during her pregnancy. Mary's journey takes her to the home of her cousin Elizabeth. Why does Mary make such a journey? She hurries off for a 50-mile overland trip by ancient means of travel.

Pregnant. Morning Sickness. Unsure of the future. Fearful of having to explain her present pregnancy status. This part of the Christmas narrative can easily be overlooked. When you include it in the journey that Mary is making, not a physical journey alone, but one of faith...it takes on new meaning.

Mary goes at the prompting of Gabriel,

Luke 1:36-37, "even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who is said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

This word from God seems enough motivation to send Mary scurrying off for a 3- or 4-day journey with Joseph.

Mary has received a Holy Spirit inspired conception and Elizabeth has received a Holy Spirit inspired revelation of a wonder in the making.

Now, listen to what I am about to say, because it was God who was about to show Mary, through Elizabeth's intuition...that yes, someone does understand what is happening.

Look at verse 41, when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit"-Luke 1

⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1-NIV)

In order to explain to Mary, the revelation that God had given Elizabeth, about Mary's supernatural pregnancy and its sources, she proclaims: "*as soon as I heard your voice, the baby inside me leaped.*"

Long before Mary could sit down with her cousin and explain the circumstances of her pregnancy and let her know that it was not like what she heard or thought, God was already letting Elizabeth in on His plan.

Mary was overjoyed and overwhelmed, all at the same time. How about YOU?

As Mary approaches Ein Karem, the home of John the Baptist, she struggles with how to explain what has happened. Who will believe me?

From heaven the answer was already being delivered and dropped off as a letter of congratulations.

Mary had come to Elizabeth for refuge and Elizabeth was already rendering love long before Mary could open her mouth. God wants to deliver from heaven, during hard-to-understand circumstances of life, ready-made revelations.

Mary is being relieved by Elizabeth of the burden to describe the indescribable or explain the unexplainable.

Now, listen suffering saint, who has been mistreated at the hands of others, "God was showing Mary that he could make people understand when Mary would say,"

"I'm pregnant but, please let me explain...I didn't do anything wrong."

When you find it hard to understand what God is doing in your life, through his Sovereignty, go ask for 8 minutes of help.

Ok, with the final minutes of our time, I want to give you a reader's digest version of the Holy Spirit at work in ancient times and our times.

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1)

⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit remained on Jesus at His baptism. (John 1:33)

³³ And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'

Notice, the text tells us that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus and remained. This is Jesus' baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is God giving Jesus a power source to do the supernatural while in a human body. Question, if Jesus needed the Holy Spirit, do you need the Holy Spirit?

Jesus' first disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. (John 20:21-22)

²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

At Pentecost, 120 disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2)

³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues^[a] as the Spirit enabled them.

You can be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18-19)

¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,

Everywhere you go is some place Jesus wants to be. And he wants to be present in the full power of the Holy Spirit. And the only way Jesus can get there is through you.

Only by the reproducing of his life in the power of the Holy Spirit can somebody be present at a place where the Supernatural is called for in Wichita. Valley Center. Mulvane. Andover.

Somebody on the job is going to confess to you their child has cancer. Will you pray for healing?

Somebody at your gym is going to open up about their stronghold of addictions. Will you boldly witness and direct them the delivering power of Jesus?

Somebody is going to grieve because a child took their life, and they cannot go on living. Somebody needs to walk with her. You may be the one that will be there.

And Jesus wants to be there in the FULL power of the Holy Spirit, if his disciples will let him fill them with the Holy Spirit. So, you are not just there, you are there in the FULL power of the Holy Spirit.

With the fullness of Jesus person, presence, and power to do what Jesus would do in that moment.

*Sometimes to provide supernatural deliverance.

*Sometimes to offer supernatural healing.

*Sometimes to offer supernatural faith recommendations concerning God's promises.

*Sometimes to offer supernatural words of knowledge, wisdom.

This world needs Jesus' activity in the **Full** power of the Holy Spirit. This world does not need a tame Jesus, who is prohibited from working supernaturally in the lives of his disciples.

In fact, the only hope for a world gone mad, is a Christ follower full of the supernatural book of Acts-like power in the Holy Spirit.

Broken lives are everywhere. And Jesus wants to be there, just like we read in the book of Acts. Hey, if you are not ready for that kind of faith and activity in Jesus, that doesn't make you any less of a disciple. Don't be embarrassed. But would you be open? Open the Holy Spirit's filling today?

The fullness of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit is given so Jesus' life can be replicated in each of us. We do not come to church for some type of emotional spiritual experience or high. We don't come for **casual inspiration**, and to listen to a good sermon. We do not come out of **tradition**. In A Moment- come for a refueling. In A Moment- come for a refilling. In A Moment come for a rebaptizing.

But a refilling once a week is not enough. You and I need to receive every day a fresh flow the rivers of living water. Rivers of power. Rivers of praise. Rivers of prayer. Jesus wants to be where you are going to be in the power of the Holy Spirit. So, why not use this prayer and to dedicate yourself to such a Moment.

Heavenly and Holy Father,

I receive today, a fresh flow from the river of heaven. I open my heart and hands to say, "fill me with the Holy Spirit." Today and daily, I ask for the Holy Spirit's infilling.

I need you Holy Spirit to release the gifts of the Holy Spirit into my life. I am asking you Jesus; to be everywhere I am in the power of the Holy Spirit. Fill me Lord, so the chains of darkness are broken in my life. By your power. For your glory.

Amen.