



The Best Christmas Ever Part 1: The Boys of Bethlehem

Introduction: Christmas is a time of cheer, but can also be a time of mourning, for those in a difficult season of life, or who have experienced the loss of a loved one. In this Christmas series we set out to discover that it can be the best one ever – despite our circumstances.

Opener: What was your favorite Christmas gift as a child?

Key Scripture: Matthew 2:1-23

Discussion Questions:

- 1.) Complete this sentence: _____ would make this, the best Christmas ever!
- 2.) The Christmas season can seem like anything but “Peace on earth and good will toward man”. Whether it is the chaos of Black Friday, family dysfunction or all the strife on our world today. (Shootings, terrorism, poverty and unrest) How does this compare to the scene in which Jesus came on the scene? (Matthew 2)
- 3.) Consider this prophetic passage from the Old Testament: *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.* Micah 5:2

Read Matthew 2:1-2. This centuries year-old prophecy is being fulfilled demonstrating God’s sovereign plan is at work in human history. How does this change how you read and think about the story line of Matthew chapter 2?

How do the circumstances of Jesus Advent make you think about the circumstances of your own life? Can you see God at work today in the midst of all the chaos?

- 4.) We often hear the expression “Jesus is the reason for the season.” In light of what Matthew 1:21 says, is that exactly true? What does the Bible say the reason was?

Moving Forward:

Jesus came the first time in what seemed to be a dark and hopeless time of human history. He is coming again and will bring peace on earth and good will toward men. Rest in the promises of Advent.

The Best Christmas Ever Part 2: Four Unexpected Women

Introduction: Christmas can be a time of big surprises! (Think Mary when she found out she was pregnant or that time when you unexpectedly got the best gift you could have imagined.)

Opener: Do you find it hard to keep a surprise to yourself? (that special gift or big news)

Key Scripture: Matthew 1:1-25

Discussion Questions:

- 1.) Maybe you've seen the Ancestry.com commercials and wondered to yourself, "What interesting people might be in my family tree?"
- 2.) Read the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:1-17. Did you recognize any of the names? Any stories you remember involving the people listed? Any surprises in the lineage of Jesus to you?
- 3.) In ancient times your lineage was incredibly important. It determined much about your prospects for success in life. In many cases it determined privilege and opportunities. Your family history was everything. This makes the family history of Jesus so significant. In Matthew chapter one the names of four women are listed in Jesus' lineage and their placement is anything but incidental.

Tamar. You can read her sordid, rated R story in Genesis 38. Long story short this Gentile woman is deceived and left as an outcast by Judah. In response she disguises herself as a prostitute and sleeps with him – becoming pregnant with Perez. In doing so she finds herself in lineage of Jesus.

Rahab. Unlike Tamar, Rahab was a prostitute by profession. This Gentile woman lied to the authorities in Jericho to protect the Israelite spies. As a result, God graciously spares her life and she becomes the mother to a Godly man named Boaz.

Ruth. She was another gentile woman born in the pagan nation of Moab which was founded through the incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughters. Ruth was a widowed foreigner with no right to marry an Israelite – much less a noble Israelite. However by God's grace she weds Boaz and became the grandmother of King David.

Bathsheba. Although not mentioned by name we recognize her by the description "wife of Uriah". David commits adultery with Bathsheba and then murders her husband. David takes Bathsheba as his wife, but she loses her child in birth. Eventually, they have a son named Solomon and Bathsheba becomes an ancestor to the Messiah.

The genealogy of Jesus is so much more than just a list of names. It is so much more than just a record of his lineage. It is a testimony of grace. It is a message of redemption. It is proof that Jesus didn't come to 'call the righteous, but sinners.' (Matt. 9:13)

Discuss how the lineage of Jesus is a reminder of grace and redemption – the purpose of Christmas. (Matthew 1:21)

- 4.) Can God save you from your sins? Can He use you after your failures? Can God save and restore other broken people?

Moving Forward: Maybe it's the mess...the dysfunction...the pain that could lead to this being the best Christmas ever. When all hope seems to be lost – we are reminded that Jesus is the HOPE that changes everything.

The Best Christmas Ever Part 3: Mary's Song

Introduction: Christmas carols and Christmas music is a huge part of this season. You might be surprised to discover that the first Christmas Carol was sung by Mary before the birth of Jesus.

Opener: Go around the room and allow everyone to share what their favorite Christmas song or carol is.

Key Scripture: Matthew Luke 1:39-56

Discussion Questions:

- 1.) Read Luke 1:46-56. Consider the fact that this is Mary's response to God revealing himself to her. How would you describe Mary's response to God revelation? (Hint, it's a familiar church word that starts with the letter 'W'.)
- 2.) How can you relate to Mary's song of worship? What parts of it speak the most to you and why?
- 3.) Consider Mary's faith here and how similar it was to us. She had heard of the Messiah, but not yet seen him with her physical eyes. It was the Spirit of God and Word of the Prophets that inspired her faith. How does this apply to us?
- 4.) Verse 39 tells us Mary went to see Elizabeth in 'haste'. She was in a hurry. She was filled with anxiety and worry. She was overwhelmed by all that she was experiencing. Sound or feel familiar? How does worship help us fight fear and worry?
- 5.) Consider verse 47. Mary calls her unborn Son her Savior. Mary knew she needed rescue – Mary, the mother of Jesus needed rescue! How much more might you and I need to meditate on our need for rescue every day?

Moving Forward: We've asked a few times, "What would it take for this to be the best Christmas ever?" The answer is not in gifts, relationships, jobs or better New Year's resolutions. The answer is Jesus. This is all it takes for this to be the best Christmas ever.

Do you know Jesus as your Savior? If not, why not trust him today?

If you're a Christian, are you trusting Jesus as the only thing you NEED for this to be the very best Christmas ever? You can trust Him just as Mary and countless others have through all of history!