2024 Christmas Message

**His Kingdom Will Never End**

Luke 1:26-38

Key Verse 1:32-33

**“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”**

**Merry Christmas! Happy Holidays!** Which greeting do you prefer as Christmas approaches? In recent years, I’ve noticed that more people tend to say, “Happy Holidays” instead of “Merry Christmas,” even on Christmas Eve. Do you think this shift reflects that people don’t want to celebrate the birth of Jesus and just want to enjoy the holiday season? I think so!

Now, let’s look at some numbers. 385,000—can anyone guess what this number represents? It’s the approximate number of children born globally every single day. In 2024, about 130 million babies were born worldwide. Among them was baby Ezra, born this year, bringing joy to his family and to our ministry. But imagine asking someone from Russia or England to celebrate baby Ezra’s birth. Their response might be, *“Oh, it’s good news for his parents!”* Similarly, when Jesus was born in the small town of Bethlehem in Israel over 2,000 years ago, many might wonder why we should celebrate his birthday so joyfully every year.

From today’s passage, let’s discover the reasons why the birth of Jesus is a cause for joy and celebration for all mankind—which is the true meaning of Christmas. My message is in three parts.

**Part 1. You who are highly favored (1:26-31)**

Let’s read verses 26-27 **“In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.”** This story is the continuation of the last week’s story about the birth of John the Baptist. In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God had sent his angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a small town in Galilee, to a girl named Mary. Who was Mary? (Not Mary Lee or Mary Lim) She was pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. While we don’t know her exact age, it’s assumed she may have been around 16 or 17 (like a “sweet sixteen” girl).

According to Jewish customs of that time, the marriage process was consisted of three steps. The first step, **engagement**, was a formal agreement arranged by the fathers. The second step, **betrothal**, involved a formal ceremony with a witnessed agreement to marry, along with the giving of a bridal price by the groom’s family. At this stage, the bride legally belonged to the groom and could be called his wife. About a year later, the actual **wedding ceremony** took place, and the groom took his bride to his house. It was during this second stage that the angel Gabriel visited Mary, who was already the legal wife of Joseph.

What was the angel’s message and Mary’s response? Look at verse 28-29. **“The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.”** Mary was stunned and was greatly troubled at the angel’s words. Mary really liked Joseph as Rebeccah Shin loved Nick. To her eyes, Joseph was a nice, gentle, able and hardworking man. His face card had never been declined; in other words, he was the best good-looking man in the town. Mary had made a personal commitment to Jospeh. So, Joseph meant everything to her. She was full of dreams and hope for the future with Joseph. She didn’t need anyone else’s favor.

But the angel continued, saying, look at verses 30-31 **“But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.”** Before delivering the main message, the angel Gabriel repeatedly emphasized that Mary was highly favored and had found favor with God because she was chosen to give birth to Jesus, the Savior of the world.

**Why was giving birth to Jesus considered such a great favor to Mary?** After Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden and sentenced to death for their sin against God, God promised to send a Savior who would break the penalty of sin and restore our broken relationship with Him. To fulfill this promise, God chose the nation of Israel to pass down the seed of salvation. God established the tabernacle and the offering system to help us understand His work of salvation and used prophets to prepare the way for the Messiah. This Messiah, prophesied to come as a baby, would be from the descendants of King David. After a long period of waiting, the time finally came for God to send the Messiah into the world. And a young girl named Mary was chosen to give birth to this child.

According to the ChatGPT, roughly 30 to 40 billion mothers have existed since the time of Jesus. Do you remember the name of President Lincoln’s mother? It’s Nancy Hanks Lincoln! It can be hard to remember the mothers of famous people. Yet the world remembers one mother’s name above all: Mary, the mother of Jesus. Though Mary had to face many challenges, she was chosen and used by God in his redemptive work.

**In the same way, we are also favored by God and have found favor with Him, as we are being used in His work of salvation today.** I was born in the middle of the mountainside. There were only five students in my grade, and I had to walk more than an hour to school every morning. Growing up in such an environment gave me a strong desire to live a successful life. Two years ago, at the age of 45, I finally discovered what true success is. It is not about being rich or holding good titles. **True success is found in whether we have received God’s favor.** Like Mary, I have found favor with God and have been called to be His servant. I realized that the title of God’s servant cannot be replaced by anything in this world. I would not trade this title for even a billion dollars in cash.

Our God is mighty and powerful, yet He always desires to work with us and through us because He enjoys fellowship with His beloved children. So, when God offers His favor, let us not respond with, "I’m okay" or "Not Me” or “Please wait for me to get ready”. **Instead, let His favor rest on our lives and allow Him to bless us abundantly**. I pray that our missionaries continue to live as his favored servants. I pray that our young generation chooses to receive God’s favor and be used by Him preciously. **There is no greater favor than God’s favor in this world!**

**Part 2. His kingdom will never end (1:31-33)**

Let’s think more about the baby Jesus—the meaning of his name and what His kingdom would be like. Let’s read verse 31 together! **“You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.”** The angel gave the baby the name Jesus. When a baby’s name is given by their parents, it carries meaning and hope for that child. Jesus means **"God saves"**. For many of us, we hear the word ‘save,’ but we don’t always realize its full meaning. Think about it: when do we usually use the word ‘save’? We get sick sometimes, but we don’t say, “I was saved from flu”; instead, we say, “I got better.” Now, imagine you were in a situation where you were almost dead—perhaps in a car accident or while swimming in a lake—and you were miraculously rescued. You would probably say, “**I was saved**.” After Missionary Grace Park was miraculously recovered from the coronavirus in the hospital, we can say that she was **saved** by God’s grace.

So, the meaning of the name baby Jesus—**‘God saves’**—indicates that we were destined to die or death was inevitable. John 3:16 says, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** If God had not saved us, we would have perished. However, God sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to save us from sin and death and grant us eternal life in His Kingdom.

Then, what would Jesus be, and what would His Kingdom be like? Let’s read verses 32 and 33: “**He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.””** Jesus would not be called the Son of Mary and Joseph, or "Joseph Jr." Instead, Jesus will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, which means that Jesus will be the King. And he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.

I have meditated on verse 33 for several days to understand why it gives us a reason to celebrate the birth of baby Jesus. Verse 33 says: **“Jesus will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; Jesus’ kingdom will never end.”** Do you sense that this has come true, and that it is still ongoing even after more than 2,000 years have passed? Over the last two hundred centuries, there have been powerful nations or organizations, like the great England, UN, EU and NATO. There have also been charismatic leaders like Hitler, or great leaders, like Lincoln. But no one can say that Hitler still reigns over us, or President Lincoln’s kingdom lasted until now.

**However, what about Jesus’ kingdom?** After Jesus died on a cross for our sins and defeated the power of death through his resurrection, people began to experience Jesus’ kingdom. Unlikely worldly kingdom where people hurt one another and even kill each other, Jesus’ kingdom was filled with forgiving love, accepting each other, and living hope for the kingdom of God. Once people experienced such Jesus’ love, they could tell that Jesus reign over them and his kingdom is real. They can testify that Jesus is ruling their hearts and their lives as a true king.

Jesus' kingdom began to expand from Jesus' disciples to every corner of this world. In our ministry many missionaries experienced Jesus' kingdom in South Korea and decided to come to the USA. And even though they live in the USA, they are spiritually living in Jesus' Kingdom. In Nigeria, one young man experienced Jesus' kingdom, came to the USA, and married Sh. Angela. Living in America does not guarantee a problem-free life, but because they live in Jesus' kingdom, they experience love, joy, happiness and hope for the enteral kingdom of God every day.

We do not need to search for reasons or theological explanations to understand the value of celebrating Jesus at Christmas. **We are simply the people of Jesus' Kingdom, both on earth and in heaven, brought to us by the baby Jesus.** Without Him, after death, there would be nowhere to go except a cold casket in the ground. But for those who are ruled by King Jesus, there is a place to go—a heavenly Kingdom, a new Jerusalem that will never end.

**What a hopeful message: Jesus’ Kingdom will never end for those who belong to Him!** Let us pray for those who do not know the gift that baby Jesus has brought to come into His Kingdom. Let us pray for Rutgers University to become a part of Jesus’ Kingdom. Let us also pray for the people of the United States to live in His Kingdom.

**Part 3. The holy one to be born will be called the Son of God (1:34-38)**

Look at verse 34. **““How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?””** Mary still had difficulty comprehending the angel’s message. She asked, *“How will this be?”* She had learned AP Biology at Nazareth High School, and she knew that it would be impossible to conceive a child since she was a virgin. It was a good question.

How did the angel answer her question? Let’s read verses 35-37**. “35 The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail.””**

The angel explained to Mary that it was the work of the Holy Spirit. God’s creative power would overshadow her, and she would conceive the baby. The angel pointed to the life growing within the womb of Elizabeth. Elizabeth was barren in her old age, but by the grace of God, she became pregnant. In this passage, the author repeatedly emphasizes that Mary was a virgin.

**Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary through the work of the Holy Spirit.** Let’s consider why Jesus was born in this way**. Firstly, it was prophesied beforehand by the prophet Isaiah.** Isaiah 7:14 says, **“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”** As I mentioned in Part 1, the birth of Jesus was foretold several times in the Old Testament. It wasn’t like a man-made fantasy story; it was a plan set by God and was fulfilled by God through the virgin Mary.

**Secondly, God wanted to save the world through His Son, Jesus who could be the 2nd Adam.** In Genesis, God created the first human beings, Adam and Eve, to have fellowship with them. But through Satan’s deception, Adam disobeyed God and ate the one forbidden fruit. Then sin entered the world and passed down from generation to generation. When my children did something wrong, they would sometimes say it was because of me. They said they inherited this sinfulness from me. Although it sounds not good, it is true that they were born with a sinful nature. Romans 5:12 says, **“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—”** If Jesus had been born to biological parents—father and mother—He would have inherited the same sinful nature as all human beings. He would not have been qualified to be the Savior of the world, but just a great man.

However, because Jesus was not born with inherited sin, He was qualified to be the perfect Lamb of God. According to Hebrews 9:14, through His sinless blood, our destiny was changed from death to life. 1 Corinthians 15:22 says**, “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”** Jesus, who was born through the power of the Holy Spirit, became the second Adam, opening a new destiny for all human beings.

**Thirdly, Jesus became the perfect and eternal mediator by being born through the body of Mary.** We need a counselor or mediator in our relationships with one another, and especially in our relationship with God. The way Jesus was born revealed that He became a human being, even though He is God's Son. In order to be a good mediator, humility is required to understand and embrace us. How much did Jesus humble Himself? Philippians 2:5-7 says that **“Jesus who was in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”** By being born in the human body, he understands what we feel every single thing. He felt cold in winter. He felt hungry. He felt sleepy. He felt sorrow and fear also. By having such understanding over mankind, he is able to intercede for us toward God. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, **“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,”** Hebrews 7:25 says **“Therefore he is able to save completelythose who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”** For those who do not believe in Jesus, the way He was conceived and born may be difficult to understand. However, it is surely God's great work and a perfect plan to bring His salvation to mankind.

**Today, I focused on the Baby Jesus and why it is worth celebrating His birth every Christmas. Jesus was born as written, planned, and prophesied. Jesus' kingdom is not a fantasy or illusion. It is real, and we can feel and experience it every day. His kingdom has lasted more than 2,000 years. It has spread throughout the whole world, and His Kingdom Will Never End. Jesus is able to understand you and will always intercede for you to complete your salvation. On Christmas, this Jesus has been born to us.**

So, my last question is that is it worthy to celebrate the birth of Baby Jesus every Christmas? If it is, let us say **“Merry Christmas”** with loudest voice!