

EMBRACING THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS – PART 2

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“²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. ²⁸ Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!^[e]” ²⁹ Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. ³⁰ “Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!” ³⁴ Mary asked the angel, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin.” ³⁵ The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ What’s more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. ³⁷ For the word of God will never fail.” ³⁸ Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.” And then the angel left her.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

³⁹ A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town ⁴⁰ where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ At the sound of Mary’s greeting, Elizabeth’s child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, “God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. ⁴³ Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? ⁴⁴ When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. ⁴⁵ You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said...

¹ At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ² (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. ⁴ And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David’s ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. ⁵ He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. ⁷ She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

The Shepherds and Angels

⁸ That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. ⁹ Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, ¹⁰ but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. ¹¹ The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! ¹² And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.” ¹³ Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.” ¹⁵ When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” ¹⁶ They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. ¹⁷ After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. ¹⁸ All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished, ¹⁹ but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. ²⁰ The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.” Luke 1:26-45 & 2:1-20

I. WHAT IS THE TRUE SPIRIT & MEANING OF CHRISTMAS?

1. IN ONE WORD: _____

“¹⁶ For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.” John 3:16

“⁹ God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰ This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.” 1 John 4:10

“³² Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won’t he also give us everything else?” Romans 8:32

II. HOW DID JESUS SHOW US HIS AMAZING LOVE?

1. HE LEFT HIS _____

“³⁸ For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will.” John 6:38

“¹³ No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven.” John 3:13

2. HE CAME _____

“¹³ Then Isaiah said, “Listen well, you royal family of David! Isn’t it enough to exhaust human patience? Must you exhaust the patience of my God as well? ¹⁴ All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’).” Isaiah 7:13-14

“¹⁰ He came into the very world he created, but the world didn’t recognize him.” John 1:10

3. HE CAME _____

“¹⁴ Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—Jesus also became flesh and blood by being born in human form. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the Devil, who had the power of death. ¹⁵ Only in this way could he deliver those who have lived all their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.” Hebrews 2:14-15

“⁶ Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. ⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.” Philippians 2:6-7

“¹⁴ So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.” John 1:14

4. HE CAME _____

“¹⁸ This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. ²⁰ As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet:

²³ “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’” Matthew 1:18-23

5. HE CAME TO _____

¹⁴ So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵ This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.” Hebrews 4:14-15

¹ Jesus left that part of the country and returned with his disciples to Nazareth, his hometown. ² The next Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. They asked, “Where did he get all this wisdom and the power to perform such miracles?” ³ Then they scoffed, “He’s just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us.” They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him.” Mark 6:1-3

⁹ As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector’s booth. “Follow me and be my disciple,” Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him. ¹⁰ Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. ¹¹ But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with such scum?’ ¹² When Jesus heard this, he said, ‘Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.’” Matthew 9:9-12

6. HE CAME _____

⁷ Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good. ⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.” Romans 5:7-8

¹⁵ For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed.” Hebrews 9:15

¹ In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He existed in the beginning with God. ³ God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. ⁴ The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. ⁶ God sent a man, John the Baptist, ⁷ to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. ⁸ John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. ⁹ The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He came into the very world he created, but the world didn’t recognize him. ¹¹ He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. ¹² But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³ They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. ¹⁴ So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.” John 1:1-14

III. HOW CAN I TRULY EMBRACE THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS?

1. MAKE LOVE _____ OF MY LIFE

¹¹ Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. ¹² No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us. ¹³ And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. ¹⁴ Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. ¹⁶ We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. ¹⁷ And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.” 1 John 4:11-17

IV. HOW CAN I LOVE LIKE JESUS & PAY HIS GIFT OF LOVE FORWARD?

1. ACCEPT THE GIFT OF GOD'S LOVE: _____

"¹² But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12

"⁷ Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. ⁸ But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love." 1 John 4:7-8

"³⁵ Make sure that the light you think you have is not actually darkness." Luke 11:35

2. LOVE GOD _____

"³⁰ And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength." Mark 12:30

"¹ And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him." Romans 12:1

"⁷ You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, ⁸ 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁹ Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.'" Matthew 15:7-9

3. COMMIT DAILY TO _____

"¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony." Colossians 3:14

"¹¹ Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. ¹² No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us." 1 John 4:11-12

HOW?

i. _____ Them

"¹ I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. ² Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. ³ This is good and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth." 1 Timothy 2:1-4

ii. _____ Them

"³ Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too." Philippians 2:3-4

iii. _____ Them

"¹⁸ Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions." 1 John 3:18

"²⁸ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28

"²⁸ If you can help your neighbor now, don't say, 'Come back tomorrow, and then I'll help you.'" Proverbs 3:28

iv. _____ Them

“¹¹ John replied, “If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry.” John 3:11

“²⁶ Some people are always greedy for more, but the godly love to give!” Proverbs 21:26

v. _____ Them

“⁴² All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer. ⁴³ A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴⁴ And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵ They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. ⁴⁶ They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— ⁴⁷ all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.” Acts 2:42-27

vi. _____ Them

“¹² This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. ¹³ There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” John 15:12-13

vii. _____ Them

“¹² Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³ Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.” Colossians 3:12-14

“⁴ Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵ or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-5

4. _____ WITH EVERYONE I POSSIBLY CAN

HOW?

i. By _____ God Continually

“¹ Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim his greatness. Let the whole world know what he has done. ² Sing to him; yes, sing his praises. Tell everyone about his wonderful deeds. ³ Exult in his holy name; rejoice, you who worship the Lord.” Psalm 105:1-3

ii. By Sharing _____

“¹¹ Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others... ¹⁸ And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. ¹⁹ For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.” 2 Corinthians 5:11 & 18-19

iii. By _____ Lovingly

“¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.” Matthew 5:13-16