

Title: Room in Our Inn  
Date: December 20, 2020  
Subject: The mission of the Son of God as revealed through his birth names  
Scripture: Matthew 1:20 - 23

Call to worship: Jesus was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village. He never went to college. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never had a family. He had no credentials but himself. He came to give his life. 20 centuries have come and gone and today he is the central figure of the human race. All the armies that have ever marched, all the navies that have ever sailed, all the parliaments that have ever sat, and all the kings that have ever reigned, put together have not affected the life of mankind upon this earth as powerfully as has this One Solitary life. Let's join in worship of the Lord who has come, who is and will come again.

#### Sermon

The assembled crowd was growing antsy. More than antsy, they were downright rowdy. This was far from a peaceful protest. They were sick and tired of not being listened to. They were demanding that their voices be heard. They were angry with the inaction. They felt like they were left hanging in midair and there was no potential resolution coming.

They really didn't have a leader and they didn't need one as they were united and propelled by a common cause. It seemed like humanity was rising up as one. Some of the more vocal agitators sought to stir things up. The crowd didn't need much stirring as they were full of venom, spewing their hatred through shouts and curses. They didn't know how much more abuse and suffering they could tolerate. They had more than enough.

They levelled accusations of being unconcerned for the common man while living a sheltered existence in luxurious ivory palaces. They claimed there was a disconnection and uncaring attitude toward those who lived with fear and hatred.

The accusatory screaming continued, it seemed like forever, accompanied by raised fists and obscene gestures. Why wasn't anything being done? Why wasn't something, at least a little something, being done to bring a resolution? Why don't you show yourself, answer the questions? Aren't you man enough?

Meanwhile, in a tiny, isolated village, the first faint cry of a baby was heard. God was working. God was revealing himself.

You can turn to the Scripture passage Anita, Jennifer and Vilma ended with - Matthew 1. There we find the account of the angel of the Lord appearing to Joseph and telling him that what God was doing in Mary's life and his was going to be okay, more than okay. The Lord had a unique purpose for this couple. It

was showcased by the names used for the child that was to be born. We'll look at the second name first. It comes in v. 23 and is a fulfillment of the prophecy given to Isaiah 700 years earlier. READ Matthew 1:23.

The son of the virgin would be called Immanuel which means "God with us." The imaginary crowd I concocted is representative of what people throughout the ages have demanded of God. They wanted him to show himself, to prove himself, to be more than just a concept, more than just a figure of morality. They wanted flesh and bone.

God gave them the answer. Over 2000 years ago, God took on flesh and bone. He left the ivory palaces of heaven to become a human. He could have easily burst on the scene as an adult King. He could have appeared simultaneously in numerous places -- China, South America, North America, Europe, Australia. That would have been absolutely impressive. He could have announced his entrance with trumpet fanfare heard all over the planet. A little secret -- he's saving these for his next entrance when the trumpet of the Lord will sound and every eye will see him come as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Instead, he chose to come in one location as one person, a person without power, ability, or position. He came as a baby. Here was someone people could see, someone with the limits of humanity forced upon him, someone people could relate to as everyone was a baby at one time. The baby who was born in a manger was Immanuel -- "God with us." God was now with man residing.

He showed he isn't a God who lives way out there in a distant galaxy far, far away. He isn't a God who shied from human contact and interaction. He isn't a God who is untouched by human need. God came near for you and for me. He who by his own power and will is limitless, invisible, lives forever and is infinitely beyond us -- shows himself in this way so people could get to know him, to understand him, and know they're able to have access to him.

When Jesus was an adult, he offered himself as proof. "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say show us the Father? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own, rather it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves" (John 14:9 - 11). "Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness" (John 12:44 - 46).

The second name for the Bethlehem child is back in verse 21. The angel tells Joseph that Mary will give birth to a son and he is to give him the name Jesus. Mary was told the same thing -- give the child she would bear the name Jesus. It was a common Hebrew name coming from the word Yeshua and has variations including Joshua.

The angel of the Lord gave background for why this child should have the name Jesus. He said, "Because he will save his people from their sins." This is the heart of the meaning of the name - The Lord saves. It's the heart of Christmas.

Though other children received this name in biblical times, they all were pointing to the one who would be the true namesake. The others were all wishful thinking by their parents that one day God would act to save people and deliver them. It was different with Joseph and Mary and the words they heard from the angels. “This child will be the one who will save people from their sins.”

This truth involving Jesus was recognized by an old man named Simeon. He was waiting for God to act through the coming of the Messiah. He’d been informed by the Holy Spirit that he wouldn’t die until he’d seen the Lord’s Christ, the Messiah. He was moved by the Spirit to go into the temple courts where he found Mary and Joseph on the day Jesus officially received his name. Simeon took the baby in his arms and praised God, “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel” (Luke 2:29 – 32). The old man knew that even though on the surface it seemed like little had changed -- evil King Herod still ruled, the Roman Empire still wielded an iron fist, life was still hard and cruel -- that somehow everything had changed with the birth of Jesus.

The song 2000 Decembers Ago (by Joy Williams) tries to capture the hope and excitement: “Did it feel like a night any different, Then at least a million before? Was there any rare expectation, Like there was some kind of somethin' in store? Did the sky have to hold back the thunder? Did the moon find new reasons to glow? Could the children somehow sense the wonder 2000 Decembers Ago? Were the sheep as amazed as the shepherds, At the new star that lit up the sky? Did the willow trees whisper excitement, To the rivers and streams passing by? Did the joy ricochet off the mountains, 'Til it filled up the valleys below? Did all the world sense love abounding 2000 Decembers Ago?”

“Was anyone able to look at the stable, And not see a child but a King? I wish I could hear back over the years, As heaven & nature sing, heaven and nature sing. Did the walls of the barn start to tremble, With a glory they could not contain? Did anyone wake with the feeling, Of peace that they could not explain? Oh the love must have been overwhelming, As it warmed everyone in its flow, For all of the earth is still telling Of 2000 Decembers ago.”

The purpose for Jesus being born is summarized in these words in another Scripture: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). Jesus explained his mission, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31, 32). The “righteous” Jesus referred to were those who considered themselves to not need help in getting to heaven. They were wrong. A person needs to recognize their spiritual condition before they will receive help.

The plot line around the birth of Christ is that people can be transformed. This is not some type of self-enhancement. The transformation requires a person admitting they have no power to transform themselves. They find no power from any human source. They need to go completely outside of themselves, outside humanity to find the One and Only who can affect the transformation. It involves an admission of being a sinner who has no power to save himself. It includes an admission that God acted 2000 years ago to

become the one and only method for us to come into a right relationship with him. Jesus said, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, who you have sent" (John 17:3).

The Lord confounded people by his action in coming as a baby. Mary and Joseph were uncertain of the plan and what it'd mean for them and how it was going to be fulfilled. After all, what they were told and what was happening was far from normal. They asked questions and special angelic messengers appeared to them to reassure them they could proceed with what they'd intended -- a normal marriage. But now it was all out of order with Mary being pregnant, then giving birth and then coming together as a married couple.

Malcolm Muggeridge was a brilliant thinker and profoundly influenced Ravi Zacharias. He commented on Mary's situation in the context of what likely would have happened in the world of the late 1900's. "It is, in point of fact, extremely improbable, under existing conditions, that Jesus would have been permitted to be born at all. Mary's pregnancy, in poor circumstances, and with the father unknown, would have been an obvious case for an abortion; And her talk of having conceived as a result of the intervention of the Holy Ghost would have pointed to the need for psychiatric treatment, and made the case for terminating her pregnancy even stronger. Thus our generation, needing a Savior more, perhaps, than any that has ever existed, would be too humane to allow one to be born."

Even with the reassurances of the angels, it still had to be confusing for the new parents. Max Lucado pictured this in his book *In The Grip of Grace*: "The light of the universe entered a dark, wet womb. He whom angels worshipped nestled himself in the placenta of a peasant, was burst into the cold night and then slept on cows' hay. Mary didn't know whether to give him milk or give him praise, but she gave him both since he was, as near as she could figure hungry and holy. Joseph didn't know whether to call him Junior or Father. But in the end called him Jesus since that's what the angel had said and since he didn't have the faintest idea what to name a God he could cradle in his arms. Don't you think...their heads tilted and their minds wondered, *What in the world are you doing, God?* or, better phrased, *God, what are you doing in the world?*"

Interesting traditions have sprung up around Christmas. Children in Holland put out wooden shoes on Christmas Eve and fill them with roses. It's in anticipation of an old woman named La Befina who arrives on a broomstick to give presents for good children or ashes in the shoes of bad ones.

Other countries developed a custom of hanging presents on the Christmas tree. Must be for small presents. It wouldn't work for gifts like 10 speed bicycles or exercise equipment...unless you use a redwood as your tree. Somewhere along the line my parents got the idea of putting some of our gifts on the tree. There were plenty of things underneath like a train set, sports equipment, clothes or cowboy hats. When we were older, it may have been when out of college or married, they started putting envelopes with cash in the tree. They continued the tradition when grandkids came along. They enjoyed the grandkids looking and searching.

God was the originator of hanging his gift on a tree. It would be 33 years before Jesus perfectly fulfilled his saving mission for which he came to earth. He would die on the cross to bring forgiveness of sins to any and all who place their trust in him as Savior - the one through whom the Lord saves.

More of the promise of Jesus: “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent...All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day... I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die” (John 6:29, 37 – 40; 11:25)

The question comes to every person who has ever lived: what are you going to do with the one who was born in the manger, the one who is named Jesus, the one who came to save people from their sins?

Charles Spurgeon in a sermon *No Room for Christ in the Inn*: “Have you room for the Christ? As the palace, and the forum and the inn, have no room for Christ and as the places of public resort have none, have you room for Christ? *Well*, says one, *I have room for him, but I am not worthy that he should come to me*. I did not ask about your worthiness; have you room for him? *Oh*, says one, *I have an empty void the world can never fill!* Ah! I see you have room for him. *But the room I have in my heart is so base!* So was the manger. *But it is so despicable!* So was the manger a thing to be despised. *But my heart is so foul!* So, perhaps, the manger may have been. *But I have been such a sinner; I feel as if my heart had been a den of beasts and devils!* Well, the manger may have been a place where beasts had fed...Here is the Son of God made flesh - have you room for him? Here is he who can forgive all sin - have you room for him? Here is he who can take you up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay - have you room for him? Here is he who when he comes in will never go out again, but abide with you forever to make your heart a heaven of joy and bliss for you - have you room for him? Tis all I ask. Your emptiness, your nothingness, your want of feeling, your want of goodness, your want of grace- all these will be but room for him. Have you room for him?”

With closing prayer

Joel Smallbone of *For King and Country* (in Christmas Monologue) “It's remarkable, To think that a baby boy born in a stable, No prestige, no privilege, No social media or social status, Political campaigns or private airplanes. And yet, He turned BC into AD. He flipped the world on its head. He's the most famous name around the globe, Inspired the most read book ever written. He reconnected us to Heaven and, in turn, brought Heaven down to Earth. And now, He offers us redemption, A fresh start, Freedom, So that we can hold our heads high and march through this life knowing that we are never alone, That every woman and man, boy and girl, To all of us who feel like we have nothing left, Nothing to bring. We can know that God is smiling at us, That He's loving us, That we are enough. So light up that Christmas tree. Stand under the mistletoe. Surround yourself with the ones you love the most. And, together, let's celebrate the greatest news this world has ever known.”