

Intro: At Christmas there is usually a difference between what we WANT...and what we GET!!!

- We WANT the ideal Christmas (Pic on Screen or Stage Set)
- What most of us GET is the Charlie Brown Christmas tree!

Despite our best efforts things don't usually work out the way that we want them to.

All kinds of problems come our way to destroy that picture we have in our mind and heart.

- Family: Extended Family: Crazy Relatives
- Health issues: Medical problem or struggle
- Loss: If we have lost someone important to us at this time of the year...impacts us
- Relational: Marriage, Children, Friends, Work
- Financial: Just not in a position to do Christmas the way you want

Don't be discouraged if your family is celebrating Christ-Mess this year instead of Christmas. None of us lives in a Norman Rockwell painting.

BUT: Here is the Good News! The Good News is that God works through our Christ-mess to help us celebrate a true Christmas regardless of the mess in our lives. You don't have to be in the picture to have a wonderful Christmas. When you realize this: *"God is Present in the Messiness of Our Lives"*

Reality...That first Christmas was MUCH more of a CHRIST-MESS than we realize...but God was there and redeemed it! And...He will redeem OUR MESS if we will learn how to find Him in the middle of our mess.

Look with me at the first Christ-mess and let's see where God is at work to redeem, restore, renew and bring Hope!

Six "Messy" Issues We See Taking Place That First Christmas.

a. Crazy Ancestors and Relatives!

Mt 1:1-7

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- Look at the genealogy: Like most of our families there is a mixture: The good, the bad and the ugly!
- Good ones: Of course...not all bad
- "Unusual" ones: We all have some of those, right?
 - ~Females included: NEVER done! Yet, the lineage of Jesus is traced here by including some women!
 - ~Rahab: Canaanite Heathen and a Prostitute!
 - ~Ruth: Not Jewish: Moabite! NEVER DONE!
 - ~David: Great King: Awful father; Murderer and an unfaithful spouse
 - ~Solomon: Amazing King Might say he had a problem controlling himself: 700 wives and 300 concubines
 - ~Ahaz and Amon: Two of the most wicked kings in the history of Israel!

But: Yet in the middle of it all, and running like a silver thread through dark cloth you see hand of God revealed in the lives of all of the ancestors of Jesus, Good and bad alike. God is present to use them and work through them despite their mess.

Illus: Rahab: A foreign prostitute, one of the most unlikely ancestors possible to find in the genealogy of Messiah Yet God used her in amazing ways to bless the people of Israel as they were leaving the desert and entering Land Joshua 2, she protects and provides for the spies that were sent to check out the promised land. In their most dangerous and dire circumstances God was present...using Rahab to provide for His people

b. Infertility:

Luke 1:5-23

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- Elizabeth and Zechariah:
 - ~Faithful OT saints: 5-7
 - ~Yet they had no children 5-7

Illus: But God was present Elizabeth's conclusion: 23-25 The Lord has done this for me
God stepped in and acted 8-18 Angel: John Baptist Jesus said greatest man born!

c. Unplanned teenage pregnancy:

Luke 1:26-38

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- ~Mary struggled with it 29: Greatly troubled! Lit = "Agitated"
- ~No mention of parents! Imagine THAT discussion You know they had to have been through the roof
- ~Joseph struggled He doubted He didn't believe her at first
- ~People talked: Rumors started and Tongues wagged Jesus whole ministry

Illus: But, God was present! 35ff Angel explained: Sent her to Elizabeth...Someone believe

d. Divorce Discussions:

Mt 1:18-24

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- ~Joseph didn't believe: vs 19
- ~Do it quietly
- ~Imagine the pain: Mary, following God in obedience: Joseph, wants break it off
How must it have felt to do what God wants...and still lose Joseph
Do you know that pain? Following God paying a price
Imagine Joseph's struggle afterwards...No one believe...How to explain

e. Unplanned Trip @ 9 mths Luke 2:1-7 Pg 724

~Imagine the discussion that took place when decree came out!

~Approx 100 miles give or take:

~What must that journey have been like?

~God, WHY did you allow this to happen NOW?

~This week was one of "those weeks" for our staff and our Elders

Illus: But, God was present:

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Micah 5:2

We are going WHERE?

Depending on Route: 8-10 days walking

Awful for Mary, Difficult Joseph to watch

Have you ever prayed that prayer?

Everything happening at once Good and Bad

Messiah HAD to be born in Bethlehem

f. No Place to Stay:

~Frustration:

~Lack of support fm family

~Lack of people to rejoice with

Illus: But, God was present!

Luke 2:7

"No room for them in the inn"

God I have done EVERYTHING you asked...This the best you got for me?

Joseph went to his "own town" Why didn't a relative take them in?

Illus: See this all the time in Cuba: Before they could stay in guest house

When you have a baby...you want someone to come tell you how awesome!

Got no one!

Provided a place in the manger (may have been better than inn!)

Provided people to come and admire baby! (Shepherds...strangers!) OK

Here is the point that I want you to see this morning. That first Christmas...wasn't that different than our Christ-mess We love the little nativities, with the animals standing around and gazing attentively, shepherds in awe and wonder I'm betting...it wasn't like that at ALL! I think it was probably a MESS!

And that's Ok! Because right in the middle of that mess...God was at work!

And He will work in YOUR mess as well! If you will look for Him. If you will let Him. If you will be open to what He does

If you are living in the middle of a Christ-mess this year, I want you to be encouraged. God is right there with you!

You aren't alone...and He can redeem, and He can restore, and He can bring something wonderful out of your mess!

But you have to do your part!

1. Trust that God is bigger than your mess.

Rahab, Ruth, David, Solomon: All had a mess, God used it

2. Remember that God sees your mess, and your pain.

3. Pray and ask God for help...and don't stop!

Zechariah Lk 1:12 "don't be afraid, your prayer has been heard."

4. Continue to walk with God and obey Him, even when you don't understand.

Zechariah and Elizabeth:

Lk 1:6 (Upright, Observing, Blameless)

Mary

May it be to me as you have said

Joseph

Went back and took Mary as his wife

5. Wait in hope for God to move in His time:

Z & E Waited years

Mary, waiting 30 years to be vindicated!

We want to see results now...and often we can't

God is laying foundation...long before we understand

Ruth, Rahab: They may NEVER have understood all God was doing

6. Know: God has a purpose for allowing the mess:

Elizabeth was being prepared to support Mary: Her pain, her struggle, her dealing with wagging tongues...mean something

That stupid Journey: Essential for the prophecy of Messiah to be fulfilled; Not random!

Know this: God has a purpose for allowing your mess as well.

You may be the support someone else needs. You may be the fulfillment of someone elses prayers

God may use YOU to perfectly fulfill His plan and His purpose!

CONCL: You if are celebrating Christmas this year...don't be discouraged. God is in charge. He is at work to bring about the perfect outcome. And when He is done He will take every single piece of the mess...and if you will put it in HIS hands and trust Him...and Pray...and walk with Him in obedience...He will bring Christmas...our of your Christ-mess.