

Intro: This morning I want to finish our Christmas series that we have called: Christ-mess. What we have said...

- We want and Imagine the perfect Norman Rockwell Christmas
- What many of us GET is a Charlie Brown Christ-Mess!
- And, that's OK: Because God can take our Christ-mess and turn it into a real Christmas!

He does that in a couple of different ways:

~ He is PRESENT with us in our mess: We aren't alone! We don't have to despair. If we reach out...He will be with us
~ He WORKS in unexpected ways: If we are paying attention, and looking...and trusting...We will see His hand at work
~He REDEEMS our mess: That's what I want to talk about with you today:

Lit = *To compensate for the faults or bad aspects of (something); to gain or regain possession in exchange payment*
That is the Good News of the Gospel...and the meaning of Christmas

1. God compensates...makes sense out of our mess...He brings something good..meaningful...significant from it
2. God gains possession of our mess....by the payment of a price: Through the Birth, Death, Resurrection: Paid!!!

Here is what I want you to notice in each of the situations we look at this morning that first Christmas. Every single time something was a mess...God USED it to accomplish His purpose. It wasn't random. It was never arbitrary. Not just life Every time God was present, God was working in unexpected ways, and God BROUGHT SOMETHING GOOD OUT OF IT! He redeemed every single BAD thing that happened. He didn't always take away the pain. Didn't make them exempt But...in the middle of each situation God was at work...and when all was said and done.. He made it worthwhile! Each One of these "BAD" situations: Was a fulfillment of an OT prophecy! God was working! He purpose fulfilled!

4 Ways God Redeems Our Mess

1. God Has A Purpose In Pain Of Our Mess. Mt 1:18-24

It has been said... *"God never wastes a hurt!"* He uses it to accomplish something of worthwhile significance.

Joseph was HURT: From his point of view his fiancé has been unfaithful

Can you imagine the pain that he must have felt.

Evidently he loved her...because he didn't want to make a spectacle, risk stoning, OT Law. Quietly set her aside

How must it have felt to him, as he is lying awake at night, trying to determine the right direction, right response.

- Joseph was upset: Vs 19: *To ponder, to be perplexed, to turn something over in your mind*
- Joseph was afraid: Vs 20: *To be fearful, apprehensive, afraid:* That she had betrayed him, might would again

Yet: Here is what I want you to see. God Had a purpose in his pain. He allowed it...because He was doing something bigger than Joseph! He allowed Joseph to walk through the pain, struggle, uncertainty of thinking Mary was unfaithful. PURPOSE

- Vs 22: *Because He will save His people from their sin!*
- From the very beginning of this story God had a purpose!
- Every step along the way, every tear, every sleepless night, every step of the journey, every doubt and with every fear
- God KNEW where He was headed. He had a PURPOSE IN THE PAIN!

Applic: And, He has a purpose in your pain as well! If you will trust Him with it, if you will place it in His hands

If you will come to Him, and ask Him to walk with you through it...He can Redeem your mess and accomplish His purpose! Whatever you are going through, it isn't random, it isn't arbitrary, God can redeem and restore! USE IT!

2. God Delivers Us THROUGH Our Mess! Mt 2:13-15

~Notice Through...not always FROM!

~What we want is for God to take it away

~What we often GET is GOD walking through it with us...making us stronger...helping us have victory!

- We see that happen with Joseph and Mary that first Christmas

Mt 2:13-15

The Story: Run for Egypt!

~REALLY? We haven't gone through ENOUGH! Baby, Trip, No Room, Angels, Misunderstanding: STOP!

~Yet...God was still at work! He was delivering them from the wrath of Herod

~He COULD have simply changed Herod's heart, right? "Prov: *"Heart of the king is in the hands of the Lord~"*

~Yet, God chose to deliver in a very different way. He sent them down to Egypt!

~There was a reason for God working that way: Hosea 11:1 "Out of Egypt I called my Son!"

Applic: Here is what you have to see. It HAD to be this way. Could God have changed Herod's heart? Yes

But in order to fulfill OT prophecy, God used the wrath and ugliness of Herod to accomplish His purpose.

Applic: If you will let Him...God will do that in your MESS as well! It's not random, It's not arbitrary, God is at work

You may not see it right now, you may not understand it right now. You may not like it NOW...or EVER

But God's purpose is being worked out in your life. He doesn't HATE you, not IGNORING you, not CARELESS

He loves you with an undying love...enough to send His Son. And He has a purpose and meaning...if you will seek it!

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him who have been called according to his purpose."

3. God Guides and Directs In the Middle Of Our Mess. Mt 2:19-23

- Joseph, Mary and Jesus stayed in Egypt until Herod died
- Started back to Israel at the direction of an angel
- Along the way...he was REDIRECTED by God...to Nazareth
- And again...God is at work to fulfill another OT prophecy.

Here is what I want you to see. Joseph and Mary must have been feeling like a PingPong ball by now!
Journey to Bethlehem, Journey to Egypt, Out of Egypt back to Israel, no, not this place in Israel...Nazareth!

Yet EVERY single one of those moves was under the control and direction of God. Every one of them necessary for OT proph
God was at work every time, in the middle of what must have seemed to Joseph and Mary to be an arbitrary Mess
He was directing, providing help, protection...and all the while fulfilling His purpose not just for them...all of Mankind!

Applic: He will do that for you. He will direct you, He will lead you, He will guide you...if you seek Him and His will
God redeemed every single move, every single step, every single mile of the journey...to accomplish His purposes
And...Listen...If you will bring Him your mess...He will do that with you as well. He will guide you one step at a time

4. God Redeems and Restores Our Mess. Mt 2:16-18

Now listen to me. This is a hard one. Sometimes we don't understand, agree with or like what God ALLOWS.

This for me is one of those times. It's hard for me to wrap my mind around it...even when I get it intellectually, heart struggles

- The slaying of the innocent children by Herod is one of those difficult things. If God is loving...how can He allow it?
- Why didn't he intervene? Why didn't He stop it...Why doesn't He intervene now with some of what we see?
- These are hard questions...I don't have a perfect answer...but I do have some insight.

1. We underestimate the impact and significance of sin. (Mistake, error, Misjudgment, Oversight)
2. We underestimate the holiness of God. When His holiness is offended, as it is when we sin... justice demands satisfaction
3. We underestimate the value God places on individual agency and free will. (He does not force us...even to do right!)
4. We devalue and downplay the cost of redemption. The cost of OUR freedom from sin...was the life of His innocent Son
And what we see happening in the slaughter of the innocents brings all those pieces into focus...

Sin, Holiness, Freewill, Cost of Redemption

LET ME BE CLEAR. God did not DO this...Herod did. And Herod is responsible.

But God, in his infinite Justice and Holiness REDEEMED this awful tragedy...

~ Fulfilled OT prophecy Jer 31:15

~ Taught us the price for sin Rom 6L:23 *For the wages of sin is death:* Sin is present, so is death: Herod's sin...Death

~ Showed us how far God would go. NOT A SINGLE ONE OF THOSE PARENTS WILLINGLY OFFERED THEIR SON
BUT God...Seeing the depth of our sin...and how far we can sink...what we will do with our free will OFFERED HIS SON
FOR OUR PARDON: REDEMPTION IS COSTLY! THIS FORESHADOWS THE HEART OF GOD AT THE CROSS!

Applic: Listen to me. God can do that with your mess as well! As ugly as it is, as horrible as you think it might be, there is no
place, no act, no attitude, no sin that is so great that the shed blood of Jesus Christ does not cover it when we come to Him and
ask for forgiveness! God GAVE His Son! So that your sin would be forgiven. Those innocents snatched: His freely offered!

So today, if your Christ Mess is a disaster, and you think it is so far gone that it is beyond redemption...lie from Hell!

God LOVES you...He demonstrated that Love at the Cost of His son's life...Don't walk away from that love

He can redeem, He can restore, He can renew, He can use the worst tragedy in your life...for a redemptive purpose!

He wants to do that for you this morning. If you will simply bring Him your mess...He will redeem it!

CONCL:

4 Steps To Having God Redeem Your Mess

1. People: People Help: You don't have to go it alone: Mary...Had Elizabeth! God will provide if you look
2. Time: Time provides perspective. Maybe not today...or Tomorrow...But time helps. It was 33 years before Mothers
Of the slain baby boys saw the fulfillment of what God was doing and teaching through their pain.
3. Purpose: Softens the pain. Doesn't make it go away. Doesn't always heal it. But it helps. Redeems. Restores
4. Faith: Learn to trust...even when you don't "get it" Joseph "*He will save his people from their sins*"
From our perspective...We see it, we understand it...We get it. Joseph had to wait in faith...and believe it
BEFORE he ever saw it. God wants that same faith from you.

Here is the Good News. God can Redeem our mess. If you will bring Him what you have...He can find purpose in the pain

Here is MORE Good News. God takes our mess where it is...and works with what we bring him. We often say to
ourselves...I'll wait. I'll get things in better shape. I'll get this right and that fixed, and the other in place...THEN I will come
to God. Don't fall into that trap.

God takes the gift of our life...kind of like my Christmas presents...Not very nicely wrapped...paper torn...corners a mess,
crooked and all messed up...and makes it what it should be.

TAKES YOUR CHRIST-MESS...JUST AS IT IS...AND TURNS IT INTO A BEAUTIFUL CHRISTMAS!