



Sermon Series – God Is Lining That Thing Up (Part 1)

Preached at Cloverdale, VF, Maxwell FPC, Dec 2024

Luke 2:1-7

And it came to pass in those days *that* a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

⁴Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. ⁶So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. ⁷And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

It came to pass in those days.

Caesar Augustus, the first emperor of Rome ordered a census for several political and administrative reasons. To help solidify the tax base, determine population, and demonstrate authority. Because of what the government did, it caused Joseph and Mary to move. Because of what this world leader did, it caused Joseph and his family to move.

Joseph and Mary were expecting the birth of Jesus. How did they know this? There was evidence because Mary was pregnant. Because in they were both told by the angels. They both heard a word and promise from God. In Matthew it says Joseph was told a son representing God with us is coming and that he would name him Jesus. All these messages of hope were given at Nazareth. So, Jesus was conceived and being formed, but the actual arrival had not happened yet.

However, even though they know about Jesus and had evidence that he was coming, Jesus wasn't going to show up there yet like that. Mary is pregnant in Nazareth but the Bible says the delivery of the savior was to be in another place.

Micah 5:2-3

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth:

The prophesy of the OT said he would be born in Bethlehem; prophesy said he would come from the line of David. He had the right lineage but his folks were not in the right place to see the manifestation of his coming. Only fitting that the place called House of Bread would be the birth place of the Bread of Life.



Come on now. The Angel came to Mary when she was living in Nazareth. The prophesy came to her when she was in Nazareth. She was blessed and highly favored in Nazareth. Good news came while she was living in Nazareth. The Holy Ghost came on her while she was hanging out in Nazareth. God put something on the inside of her when she was staying in Nazareth. Nazareth was home, but as long as they stayed in Nazareth, what they were expecting to happen wasn't going to happen in that place. You may start there...but it ain't gonna end there.

That was then, this is now. See, you can hear the word in one place; receive a promise and blessing from God in one place; receive the Spirit of God in one place; hear good news about your future in one place; receive the favor of God in one place.....but you might have to relocate before you get to realize in the natural what He put in your spirit. You might need to bust a move before you get to actually hold the blessing. Just because you got your word there, you started there...doesn't mean your destiny or blessing or break through will happen in that same place. We gotta make a trip.

Now, it doesn't look like they were going to move on their own so God had to line things up for them to get them in position to bless them. He had to line that thing up.

It wasn't an easy move. They had to go through some stuff to get there. They had to travel about 80 miles and Mary is pregnant. There was no interstate highway, no car with comfortable seats, just their Hush Puppies and a donkey. Would have been easier to just disobey, stay there and not move....but then they might have missed the move of God. It would have been much easier if they had stayed in Nazareth, but then they would have missed the coming of Jesus.

Okay, let's join Joseph and Mary on this journey. We know about Jesus. We heard about Jesus. We can see some evidence around us. But we are in Nazareth. A country town. A humble place. Nothing great is coming out of Nazareth. But that's home.

- We get some bad news, we have to go to Bethlehem. That ain't an easy place to get to.
- I don't know about you but I'm going to start praying. Lord, keep me from having to go to Bethlehem. I don't want to make that trip.
- However, the government says you have to go. The rulers say you have to go.
- It takes a rough ride to get there.
- The whole time, you asking God, upset with God, because He doesn't seem to have answered your prayers. You still making a trip you don't want to take, to a place you don't wanna go.

Big Question: knowing what we know today...what would we tell Joseph and Mary? Perhaps we could say:

- Be encouraged, God is still with you and getting you in position for a blessing.
- Don't give up, this is in accordance with the scriptures.
- God hasn't forgotten you, when He brings you through this, it will be worth it.
- Something great is coming after this....we know how this story will end.



The very same thing I would tell Mary and Joseph back then, is the same thing I could tell someone today who is going through a tough time or difficult journey in their walk...when you follow this process, it will turn out fine. Greatness comes behind this problem.

Check out what happens when they get there.

⁶So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. ⁷And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

When they get there, Jesus shows up. When they get there, what they were waiting on and expecting is finally released. However, it doesn't happen the way they expected. Notice the circumstances:

- Swaddling clothes were strips of cloth used to wrap around the baby to protect and keep them warm. Not Calvin Klein, not Banana Republic, not J Crew, not Alex Mill.
- Laid in a manger. What's that? It was a feeding trough used to hold food, such as hay, for animals like cattle, sheep, or donkeys. Wait, the bread of life was placed in a platform used to hold food for animals.
- Must have been in a stable or barn because that's where you often found mangers. Why are they there? Because there was no room in the local hotel.

So, let's run through this quickly. They leave home in Nazareth, where they must have had some comforts like a bed and a house. They leave that place and show up at this place.

Clothes ain't that great, food ain't that great, housing ain't that great, bedding ain't that great, and surrounded by animals.

I'm pretty sure, they didn't expect these conditions when they got there. However, while things were missing that they used to enjoy, while some support they expected is not there, they still had Jesus, so they had what they needed and that is still enough today.

That was then, this is now. Let's join them in that place today.

I heard about Jesus, but nothing great was coming out of me just yet. Nothing significant was being produced for the Kingdom yet. Then something happened in my life, circumstances caused me to move from where I was comfortable and making it, to a place and on an uncomfortable journey. I prayed to God to not let this happen to me.

- Prayed I wouldn't get injured or have that health crisis.
- Prayed I wouldn't get caught.
- Prayed I wouldn't lose that money.
- Prayed my parents wouldn't die.
- Prayed I wouldn't lose my job.



It wasn't easy. Things didn't turn out the way I thought they would. Some things I expected to be in place for me were missing. The journey was hard. Getting there was hard. Some of the things I thought I needed to make it were not there and I found myself in need in Bethlehem.

When I look back now, the move was worth it. The trip was worth it. What was missing was worth it. Something great came out of this experience. Salvation came out of this. A better season followed this. Some folks asking for my autograph behind this. It never would have happened, if I had did things my way.

God had to line it up for me to get me in position for something great to be released in my life.

Look at how it turned out for Joseph and Mary. Some folks didn't have room for them but soon visitors will come and worship with them. They made the manger scene great. I ain't seen an Embassy Suites, Holiday Inn, Marriott or Hilton holiday display in anybody's front lawn. There stay in Bethlehem was temporary....they would be back in Nazareth after a while, but changed and coming back with power. Coming back home holding salvation, holding hope, holding joy, holding peace, holding Jesus!

Why did God allow all of this to happen to them? Because He was lining everything up according to the prophesy and the word of God. When they got lined up with God's plan, things got released that they were looking for.

That was then, this is now. The process is the same. It begins when you recognize you are in need. It begins from a humble place. Nazareth was a humble place. Step two, you have to turn from staying where you are, and turning to where God wants you to be. What God said about your future, will be released when you get to Bethlehem. Where is your Bethlehem? Where is that place where God is trying to bring Jesus and greatness out of your situation.

One observation: The journey and the trip they must take, is not just about them. The whole world will be impacted by their successful move from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Likewise today, what we may be going through may not just be about us....a testimony may be coming out of this problem that helps others seek and stand on the promises of God.

Sermon Series – God Is Lining That Thing Up (Part 2)

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And it came to pass in those days *that* a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

⁴Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. ⁶So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. ⁷And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

When you get to Bethlehem, make sure you make room for him in your heart. You cannot achieve greatness in the Kingdom without Jesus.

- I know many of us may already be saved and received Jesus in our hearts. But this is not a one-and-done process.
- In every life situation and transaction that you face, you still need Jesus to be born again.
- Everybody still needs to make a trip and bust a move to Bethlehem in order for Jesus to be released into your situation.
- Don't start tripping on the trip, He's got you.
- Don't start tripping when you get there and finds things missing that you think you need, if you have Jesus, you have what you need.
- Remember, there is a word and prophecy about you. Your story has already been outlined. God still allows things to happen in order to get us back on track and/or in alignment with something greater that He wants to do in our life.

Oh, it happened in Bethlehem. They received it there. The promise was made in one place but they received it after they moved to another place.

- Abraham received the promise in one place but Isaac didn't come until he had moved.
- Children of Israel received the word and the promise in Egypt, but they didn't enjoy the land of milk and honey until they moved.
- Jacob received the blessing in one place, but he didn't get rich until he moved.
- Joseph got his dream in one place, but his dream didn't come true until he went through some hard times during his move.
- A woman with an issue of blood heard about Jesus in one place, but she wasn't healed until she moved.
- Wedding ran out of wine...until somebody obeyed and moved.

- Lazarus still dead until somebody moved a stone away.
- I received the word in one place, but when I moved and got better in line with God's plan....I'm starting to see things happen I never thought I would, enjoy things I never thought I would enjoy.

All I got is a word....but you have to move.

He is the same God today that He was yesterday. We have the same promises and prophesy. The word and the plan is that Jesus is coming again. He was promised to come before, but God had to line that thing up before the Savior came down.

But just like he did before....God has to line that thing up. He will once again work through world leaders to get things lined up for the second coming of the King.

The things of the world can't stop the plan and blessings of God....He uses the world to accomplish His plan. He is still on the throne.

- Verse 6 – while they were there, she was delivered. She was facing a season of pain and discomfort, her condition caused her great discomfort, but when she got to this place called Bethlehem, she experienced deliverance.
 - Even though you've been going through some hard times, even though you may have been carrying some stuff, you can still experience a season of deliverance
 - While she was there, her time had come, your time has come.
 - Her break-through was tied to an ugly place and ugly season. Your best season may be locked into your ugly season. In fact, had your ugly season not happened, you wouldn't be experiencing a break through now.
 - Don't trip about the season you're in; you're best season may start here.

- The manger symbolizes Christ's humble entry into the world. Though He is the King of Kings, His birth occurred in poverty, not in a palace or luxurious setting. This reflects His mission to identify with the marginalized and the poor (Philippians 2:6-8).

- It illustrates that Jesus came for all people, especially the lowly and those who feel excluded from society.

- A manger, associated with feeding animals, subtly hints at Jesus as the "Bread of Life." In John 6:35, Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry."*

Manger application:

- What serves as the manger for us today? Where does God place the spiritual food for His sheep to feed off?
- The church is the manger, we are the church, so the Word of God is placed inside of us. We are the manger today.

- Question, would you ever want to hang around or eat out of a manger today? Probably not. The spiritual application is no one will want to receive anything from us if we don't allow the word to cleanse us.
 - More damage is done to the Kingdom by Christians who may have the Word but their lives are dirty and few people will want to receive the word from a hypocrite.
- Jesus started out in the manger but he didn't stay there, likewise we should not stay in our sins, we need to let the Word wash us.
- Note, the manger even today doesn't appear gold plated or fancy or expensive. The manger is famous but still looks humble. Likewise, as we experience greatness in the Kingdom, remember to stay humble. Trips to Bethlehem are still needed to ensure we remain in alignment with God and His plans.

Have you room for Christ? I have room for Him, but I am not worthy that he should come to me.

- We make room for other stuff, but do we have room in our daily lives for Jesus?
 - We made room for Johnnie Walker, Jim Beam, Jack Daniels, and Captain Morgan
 - But do we still have room for the Captain of our salvation?
 - Room for Crown Royal, but do we have room for the one crowned in Glory.
 - We made room to talk about people and gossip, but can we find room to add Jesus to the conversation.
 - Ah, I did not ask about worthiness; have you room for him?
 - Manger was a foul thing but Jesus still hung out there and brought the place glory. Manger wasn't fit for him, yet he laid there.
 - The past didn't matter. What had been laid in that nasty manger before didn't keep Jesus from it. If you have room for Him, He will come. Even if your present state is unclean and undesirable, that is not a show stopper or deal breaker with God....the question remains, do you have room for him?

Can you imagine the opportunity this inn missed when they didn't make room for Jesus. People would pay big money and come from all over just to sleep in the Jesus Suite. But they missed out.

- Inn was full; didn't kick anybody else out so that Jesus could have a room.
- So don't think it strange if they don't receive you. You can be walking around full of the word looking for someplace to deliver it, but don't be surprised if folk don't have room for you.

Let me ask you today, do you have room for the King?

- In order to have room for Jesus, you might have to kick some stuff out of your house/life.
- Rev 3:20
 - Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.



- Today is the day of salvation. Today is the accepted time and place...do you have room. There's room at the cross for you.....the question is do you have room for the cross. May have to shift some things around. Get rid of some stuff in order to be able to make room for Jesus.

Until you get rid of some stuff, you may never have room for your miracle.

What next? Born in Bethlehem, but ruled in Zion. Started out in Bethlehem but his best season was in another place. Going back to Nazareth but going back changed. That was then, this is now.

- When you follow the steps of this process. You return home changed. Go back to work with hope, go back to your relationships changed, go back to the house with new power and hope, because you are going back where you came from with Christ.
- It was never designed for me to stay in Bethlehem. I just go there when I need Jesus to be born again and then I leave to experience His greatness and His peace....daily.