

O HOLY NIGHT
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12/24 & 12/26/2021

The night we have all been waiting for has finally arrived. It's Christmas Eve, and families far and wide are gathering together to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. This is the time of year when we remember the hope, peace, joy and love that the Christ child brought on that first Christmas. That moment changed everything because it truly was a holy night.

You see, the very first Christmas set in motion something beautiful that continues even to today. Christmas celebrates our God who loved us so much that He sent His Son to save us from sin and everything that is broken in us.

My sermon is called O Holy Night and it's based on Luke 2:1-20.

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world... And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

That truly was a holy night.

But who or what was holy about this night? Were Joseph and Mary holy? Were the shepherds or the angels holy? We'll talk about that, but first know this:

1- It was a holy night because God is holy

God planned this night out and God caused it to happen. And everything about God is holy.

When we say God is holy – we are saying that He is morally perfect, sinless, completely righteous, pure and good, without any flaw or evil. It is the opposite of that which is evil, profane, common or ordinary.

Holiness means that God never has any evil action, thought or intent. Therefore, God is always blameless for any evil.

The Greek word translated “holy” in the Bible is *hagios* (hag'-ee-os); which means sacred (physically pure, morally blameless or consecrated to God. That means to be set apart and devoted to God.

So, the word holy is used to describe God, the only One who is totally pure and sinless and worthy of worship.

But the word holy is also used in the Bible to describe things that are set apart for God and totally devoted to Him.

Holiness is what separates God from everything else. It's what makes God different and distinct from any person or anything in the universe. He is infinitely above and beyond us. Exodus 15:11 says:

Who among the gods is like You, O Lord? Who is like You — majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?

God is not ten times or a hundred times holier than us. He is not a better version of the best holiness we know. He is infinitely holier than us.

For anything else to be holy means it is set apart and devoted to God. Think about the things that the Bible calls holy:

The Sabbath is holy. That means that a day of our week is different from the others. It's holy – it's set apart – it belongs to God – it's dedicated to God.

The tithe is called holy. A percentage of our money is different from the rest of our money. What's different? It's holy – it's set apart – it belongs to God – it's dedicated to God.

The night Christ was born was a holy night because a holy God had a holy plan to save unholy people! Aren't you glad for that?

2- It was a holy night because angels are holy

Angels had key roles in the Christmas story. In fact, this story is full of angels all the way through. Other than the Holy Spirit, angels are the most pivotal players in the Christmas story. Their role has been immortalized by our hymn writers. Think of the hymns we hear at Christmas time:

Angels from the Realms of Glory... Angels We have heard on High ...
The First Noel the angels did say... Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.

Without angels, the Christmas story would not have happened in the same way. By the way - let me dispel a false belief that many people have – angels are not people who died and went to heaven. Believers who die do go to heaven – but they don't become angels. Angels are not human beings; they are spirit beings created by God. They were created by God to be angels.

We know angels are holy, because Jesus said in Mark 8:38

If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels.

Angels are holy because they are totally devoted to God – devoted to worshipping Him and obeying Him. And on that first Christmas, they were devoted to worshipping a holy God and delivering a holy message.

3- It was a holy night because the message was holy

The angels did not come with bad news. They brought good news that in the city of David, a Savior had been born.

The Israelite people had been waiting for this birth announcement for as long as any of them could remember. The arrival of the Messiah meant that they would be rescued. No longer would they have to live in bondage to sin. They would now experience peace and joy, even in the midst of oppression and struggle.

This newborn baby was the hope they had all been waiting for. The message that He had finally arrived was holy, set apart, and sacred. This message was holy for many reasons.

But mainly, it was holy because of who was giving it. This holy message came from a holy God through His holy angels.

4- It was a holy night because the people involved were holy

Many people believe Mary was holy, but they're not so sure about Joseph or the shepherds.

That's because of all the people who would have been in line to receive news of the birth of God's son, the shepherds would have certainly been last in line. The fact that the angels came to them first seems to suggest that this good news is truly for all people. From the least to the greatest, from the poor to the rich, from the nobodies to the somebodies, Jesus was born and is Savior to all. And that good news is still the same message we believe and preach today!

By the way - there are many wrong beliefs about Mary that are not found in the Bible. For example –

Some people believe that Mary was conceived without any trace of original sin and she never sinned in her life. Not true – because in her own prayer Mary called Jesus her Savior. She would not need a savior if she was sinless.

Some believe that Mary is a perpetual virgin and never had children. Not true because the Bible lists her children by name.

Most notably – many people pray to Mary. Nowhere does the Bible tell us to pray to Mary or the saints. We pray to the Father in the name of Jesus in the power of the Spirit!

Another unbiblical practice is asking Mary to intercede with God for us. We do not need another intercessor with God. Christ is the only intercessor we need. 1 Timothy 2:5 says:

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.

Prayer to anyone other than God is unbiblical. Praying to Mary or petitioning her to pray for us is against the Scriptures.

Let me be clear – Mary was an amazing, faith-filled, godly woman of God! But she was born in sin like all humans are and she needed a Savior like all sinners do. Mary was an ordinary human whom God used in an extraordinary way.

While Mary was certainly a godly young woman who was greatly blessed in that she was chosen to bear the Savior of the world, she was not in any way divine. Nor was she sinless, nor is she to be worshiped, revered, or prayed to.

But – having said that – Mary was holy and so was Joseph. And so were the shepherds. And so are you if you are a believer in Jesus Christ. We are not holy in the same sense that God is holy. 1 Samuel 2:2 says:

There is no one holy like the Lord.

No one is sinlessly perfect like Him.

God alone is holy – yet He said in 1 Peter 1:16

Be holy, because I am holy.

He did not say “Be holy AS I am holy” because that would be impossible! We cannot be as holy as God because absolute holiness belongs to God alone! But we must deal with Bible verses like Hebrews 12:14 which says:

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Holiness means to be separated unto God – totally dedicated to God. Notice this is something we pursue – it takes effort and time.

You need to know that one of the ways hagios is translated in the Bible is the word “saint.” Most people have the wrong view of what a saint is. They believe that a saint is a dead holy person officially recognized by the church, or a really, really good person. Like people talk about their grandmother, “She was a real saint.”

On the contrary, the Bible teaches that every single person who accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is a saint. 1 Corinthians 1:2 says:

To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The word for saints here is hagios – holy. Saints are not just the really holy people who do really righteous acts. God says if Jesus is your Lord, you are a saint.

5- It was a holy night because the Child was holy

Jesus was not some ordinary child. He was sent to earth with a divine mission. Though that mission began in the cradle, it would culminate at a cross.

Jesus’ sacred assignment was to come and live a perfect life and then die on a cross as a holy sacrifice for the sins of the world. Our forgiveness, redemption and new life are all made possible by this holy child.

We know he is holy because the Bible says this in verses like Acts 4:30

Stretch forth Your hand to heal; that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Your holy child Jesus.

Jesus is holy and He came to make us holy.
Yes, He came to save us from the consequences of our sin.
But He also makes us righteous.

Philippians 1:11 says:

May you always be filled with the fruit of righteousness produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.

Jesus produces holiness in us as we are conformed to His image. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says:

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

Christ – who is righteous – clothed Himself in sin – our sin – so that we might clothe ourselves in His righteousness. Satan wants to keep us from believing we are saints of God. He wants us to have a false humility that says, “I’m nobody, I’m nothing, I’m worthless, I’m a no-good sinner.” That’s not what God or the Bible say about us.

We must start believing what God says over what Satan or people say. God calls us saints. God calls us righteous. When we are born again, we change from being guilty before God to being forgiven.

I know we might not feel any different at first - that’s why we need our minds renewed to stop thinking like the old man – the sinner – and start thinking like the new man – the saint. Ephesians 4:22-24 says:

... with regard to your former way of life, put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man which was created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

We need our minds renewed so we can put off the old and put on the new.

We are no longer who we used to be – we are new creations in Christ.

We once were not a people, but now we are the people of God.

We once had no mercy, now we have obtained mercy.

We once were lost, now we’re found.

We once were sinners, now we are saints in the kingdom of God!

We are no longer who we used to be. Thank God for that!

So, all eyes are on Jesus tonight. He is the reason we celebrate because He is the true meaning of Christmas. He is our hope of new life. Will you, like those on that very first Christmas, open your heart to Jesus so He can heal your hurts, transform you, and lead you into a new life?

The name “Jesus” literally means “Jehovah is salvation” or “God saves.” That’s why Joseph was told in a dream these words in Matthew 1:21

Give Him the name Jesus because He will save His people from their sin.

Jesus wants to save you FROM your past, from your sin, from your guilt, from everything that's against you. He wants to make the most amazing exchange of gifts you could ever imagine.

Christmas is Jesus Christ saying to you:
 Give me your sin and I'll give you salvation.
 Give me your empty heart and I'll give you meaning and purpose.
 Give me your worry and I'll give you peace.
 Give me your fear and I'll give you faith.
 Give me your addiction and I'll give you freedom.
 Give me your depression and I'll give you joy.
 Give me your discouragement and I'll give you hope.
 Give me your guilt and condemnation and I'll give you forgiveness.
 Give me your impurity – and I'll give you holiness!

Don't miss the purpose of Christmas.
 It's not about what's under the tree.
 It's about the man who hung on the cross.
 Don't miss the greatest gift you can ever receive.

In history's greatest miracle, God became a human being. The King of King and the Lord of Lords - the creator of the universe - chose birth in a stable and death on a cross.

That's why we celebrate Christmas: On this holy night, Jesus came to earth to die for our sins and give us His gift of eternal life and relationship with God. And He did it all for you. To save you from your sins. Are you saved? Are you sure? You can be sure today.

Romans 10:9-13 says:

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.