

3 - The Servant Love of Jesus
Pastor Deborah Oakley - Dec. 10, 2023

As we approach Christmas it's good to be aware that Christmas is the fulfillment of hundreds of years of prophecy about the coming of the Messiah who would change the world. God's people waited for a Savior who would come to save and restore a broken creation.

As we've seen in previous sermons, they held onto the hope that God would stay true to His promise that a savior would be born. And they had joy in anticipating His arrival.

But **Jesus came into the world in the most humble and unexpected way.** They expected a king to free them from the tyranny of Rome, but Jesus came to earth as a humble servant.

As a vulnerable baby, He displayed His humanity and sacrificial love. He loved all whom He encountered from the cradle to the cross. And the world will never be the same.

My sermon is titled "The Servant Love of Jesus." We will focus on:
 The way Jesus came into the world.
 The way He lived.
 The way He died.
 We will see that He was a loving servant through it all.

We begin today in the Gospel of Luke, where a single event dramatically altered history, as Jesus' birth takes place. Luke 2:1-7 says:

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. And everyone went to their 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.

So, let's talk about:

1. The Way Jesus Came Into The World.

Think about the woman God chose to bring Jesus into the world.
 He didn't choose a queen.
 He didn't choose the daughter of a rich man.
 He didn't choose someone famous.

He chose a young girl from a small town.
He did not choose flashy, He chose humility.

Mary did not expect to give birth to the Savior of the world. It was especially surprising because she was a virgin about to marry a man named Joseph. We can assume that Mary didn't plan to have her baby anywhere other than her home, surrounded by loved ones, and certainly not in a dusty stable. But God had a different plan...as He so often does.

Do you ever feel that way: like wait a minute God...this isn't the way things were supposed to go? However, Mary felt, she was destined to have baby Jesus far from home in a dusty stable, surrounded by dirty animals.

And, the Son of God also had a destiny:

1. He was born in a manger – dirty, unsanitary
2. He was born in Bethlehem – small and insignificant
3. His lineage included– Rahab the harlot
Jacob the cheater
Judah the womanizer
David the adulterer and murderer
4. His birth was announced to shepherds
5. He grew up in Nazareth. Nazareth had a bad reputation.
6. He was average looking
7. He had no possessions
8. He had a motley crew of disciples
9. He died a shameful death on a cross

There is no greater act of love and humility. The King of King and the Lord of Lords. The creator of the universe. The one who sits on a throne chose birth in a stable and death on a cross. **The degree of His humility was determined by the height from which He stepped down.**

The Bible teaches that our attitude should be the same as Christ's. Philippians 2:5-8 says:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!

Our attitude is to be like that of our Lord. Although He was God – He humbled himself and became a servant. Mark 10 says Jesus came to serve not to be served.

It should be so natural for us to want others to serve us. Pastor Joe and I just had new floors installed in our home. I was so excited I could hardly sleep.

I would get up at 4:00 in the morning to work. Joe wasn't too happy when I woke him up hammering nails into the wall.

For months Pastor Joe went above and beyond. Every morning I greet him with my checklist of honey do's. Did he want to get up early and work in the evenings after studying and doing church work all day? No. But he did it anyway. I'd like to say he didn't ever complain but I don't want to end up like Ananias and Sapphira. The truth is he only complained when I went extremely overboard.

For several months he did all my projects. To me that is a great example of loving servanthood. He died to himself, and He did it for me. He had the same attitude that was in Christ Jesus. And here's what happened: I felt so loved by Joe serving me, it made me want to serve others. Matthew 10:8 says:

Freely you have received, freely give.

So, when I found out my dear friend Trudy needed help painting her house, I instantly offered to help her. I heard my mouth saying, "I'll help you." I was so blessed by Joe serving me that I wanted to serve Trudy. **Since Jesus came to earth as a loving servant – we should also serve others in love.**

Now let's consider:

2. The Way Jesus Lived

Jesus came into the world with the heart of a humble, loving servant, and that was who He was throughout his life.

In the four Gospel Accounts in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – eighty-nine chapters of the Bible – there is only one place where Jesus reveals His heart. In these four gospels we learn of His birth, His teachings, and His ministry. But amongst all of this – Jesus speaks some of the most amazing words ever written in Matthew 11:29.

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Jesus didn't say He was demanding in heart. He didn't say He was elevated or exalted or superior. He didn't even say that He was generous, or wise or all knowing, even though He is. No, He said he was gently and lowly in heart.

The word gentle in this passage occurs 3 other times in the New Testament. In Matthew 5:5 it's translated *meek*. In Matthew 21:5 Jesus is quoting Zach. 9:9 saying that He is coming to us *humble* and mounted on a donkey. In 1 Peter 3:4 wives are told to have a *gentle* spirit.

Meek, humble and gentle. Not harsh, reactionary, impatient, unkind, or mean. He doesn't point a finger; He opens His arms.

He was also lowly in heart. The meaning of lowly overlaps with the meaning of gentle and is usually translated “humble.” This word is used in Romans 12:16 when Paul tells us to not be haughty, but to associate with the lowly.

The point is that Jesus was and is a humble servant to all. To the least and the greatest. He humbly opens His servant’s heart to everyone - including the poor, the needy and the downcast.

His heart was to serve all creation. From the least to the greatest, Jesus did not discriminate. Think about the disciples and the people Jesus associated with.

Most were fisherman but, among them was Matthew a tax collector, Simon a zealot - this implies someone involved in trying to overthrow the Roman government. Then there’s Judas who was a thief. Paul was a Pharisee who murdered Christians. And the list goes on!

Jesus came into the world in a lowly and humble way. And because of this God connects with us in a very meaningful way. By being born the way He was and where He was, Jesus immediately identifies with the lowly of the world. And we are reminded that God’s love is not only for the elite, but is for all people.

Jesus loved all mankind. And He served them because of His love. Acts 10:38 says:

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.

Think of the ways that Jesus served.

He taught the gospel. He fed crowds of hungry people.

He healed the blind, the lame, the sick and even raised the dead.

He set people free, and ultimately He gave His life to serve all mankind.

One of the greatest acts of loving servanthood is found in John 13:1-17. It was right before Jesus was about to be crucified. Verse 1 says:

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for Him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

Then Jesus washed the disciples’ feet. This is one of the greatest examples of loving servanthood ever. Washing feet was usually the job of the lowest servant in the house. But because Jesus loved the disciples... He served them. Notice the connection between love and serving. Then, listen to what Jesus says in verses 14-17:

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash

one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Because of love Jesus served and it is unmistakable that we should do the same. Mark 10:43-45 says:

...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

Next, let us look at:

3. The Way Jesus Died.

Have you ever thought about the connections between Jesus' birth and the way that He died - or the beginning of His life and the end? The beginning of His story is just as important as the end, and the end just as important as the in-between. Listen to the ways the birth and death of Jesus intersect.

- At his birth He was rejected of men. (Luke 2:7, Mark 15:15)
- At the cross, He was rejected and hung between 2 criminals.
- Myrrh was present at both (Matthew 2:11; John 19:39).
- At both, there was darkness (Matthew 2:10,14; Matthew 27:45).
- At both, His body was wrapped in clothing (Luke 2:7,12; Mark 15:46).
- At both, a Herod was involved (Matthew 2:7; Luke 23:7).
- At both, there was worship-though the first was genuine and the second was mocking (Matthew 2:11 and Luke 2:13-14; Mark 15:19).
- At both, wise men recognized His deity (Matthew 2:1; Mark 15:39 and Luke 23:41).
- At both, Jews and Gentiles were there.
- At both, He was hailed as King-though one was in earnest and the other in jest (Matthew 2:2; Mark 15:26,32).
- At both, an "honorable" man named Joseph was present (Matthew 1:19; Luke 2:16; Mark 15:43).
- At both we find the chief priests and scribes involved (Matthew 2:4-6; Matthew 27:1).

The parallels between Jesus' birth and death are amazing. **Both the birth and death of Jesus were marked by humility and vulnerability.** His birth in a manger and His crucifixion on a cross were profound demonstrations of God's intentional choice to connect with humanity in our most vulnerable way.

His birth was surrounded by animals in a lowly barn and by shepherds. At His death, we witness Jesus hanging on a cross, crucified and punished alongside

common criminals. Neither one of these experiences is “mighty” or “grand.”

All of this teaches us that Jesus' mission was not one of earthly glory and power, but of sacrificial love and redemption. His birth and His death were both acts of loving servanthood.

We can look at the manger in Bethlehem and see that it was the ultimate foreshadowing of Jesus' death. His birth was the very start of His journey toward sacrifice for humanity's sake. **He was born to die. He came to earth to give Himself as the perfect Lamb of God who died for the sins of all.**

On the cross, Jesus fulfilled this purpose. He endured excruciating physical and spiritual pain, willingly surrendering His life to cover our sins.

Jesus the King of Kings was a loving servant and He chose to come to earth, to lovingly serve, to be crucified and to rise again, so that we, His people, could be close to the Father. Without His death and resurrection, we would still be dead in our sin and have no hope of an eternity with God.

His birth in a lowly stable was a deliberate act of humility. He humbled Himself so that identified with the lowly and the ordinary, His love and salvation are for all people, regardless of our status in life.

From His birth in a stable to His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus' was a loving servant. He willingly set aside His divine glory to take on the form of a servant, who experienced our joys and sorrows firsthand.

And because He experienced our brokenness, we can be confident as we approach Him, knowing that He not only hears our prayers, but empathizes with our weaknesses. Hebrews 4:15 says:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet He did not sin.

In our moments of doubt, pain, or despair, we can turn to Him, knowing that He not only hears our prayers but understands the depths of our hearts.

The connection between the manger and the cross also compels us to embrace the sacrificial love of our Savior.

One of my spiritual gifts is preaching. It is what I love to do. However, in the early years after starting Grace we needed an administrator, and we didn't have the money to hire one. Soooooo, guess who had to do it? Me. Since administration isn't my gift, I struggled. But for about 5 years I did it anyway. For me that was one of the greatest acts of loving servanthood I could ever do. I died to myself and served for the greater good of the Kingdom.

The servant love of Jesus calls us all to a life of servant love. We are now His hands and feet. That means we do the things He did. Actually, listen to what Jesus said in John 14:12-14

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in Me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask Me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

We can do greater works than even Jesus did.
But remember, **the key to greatness in the kingdom of God is serving!**
If you want to be great in God's kingdom – then be the servant of all.
If you want to grow in loving others – then start serving them.

How do you know if you are truly a humble servant?

By how you respond when you are treated like one!

If you get upset when people treat you like a servant – it shows an area in your life where you need to die to yourself!

When you die to yourself it is life-giving to others!
When you humble yourself – God gives you even more grace to love and serve.

If you find yourself in humble conditions – remember the conditions Jesus was born in.

Remember the love and humility He lived out in His life.

And remember that your destiny is to be conformed to His image.

You do that by loving and serving others!

So, today let's commit ourselves to being loving servants.
Let's pray.

Lord, thank you for coming to earth and dying for my sins.
Thank you for being a loving servant.
Forgive me for the times I've not loved and not served.
Make me a servant like you. In Jesus name. Amen