



“....And the Soul Felt Its Worth”

John 1: 1-5, 14

December 1, 2019

Sermon Series: “O Holy Night – A Sacred Song for a Godly Life”

Rev. Dr. Henry Hansen

THE BIG IDEA

As we begin Advent, this message focused on the Christmas Story and the important implications of the Incarnation – that God became flesh. We looked at the carol O Holy Night and focused specifically on the verse “Long lay the world in sin and error pining. Til he appears and the soul felt its worth.” We considered the history of Israel going back to the promise(s) given to Abraham in Genesis 12 and that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the promise. When he came into the world at Christmas, it was a cosmic affirmation of our lives because it meant the Creator came. The Creator became us. This gives us worth. Our soul feels its worth by faith.

GETTING STARTED

1. Share a memorable experience of Christmas or an important aspect of it you enjoy of its celebration (putting up lights, caroling, sweets, and traditions with family and so on).
2. Explain what was covered in the message about the following verse – “Long lay the world in sin and error pining. Til he appears and the soul felt its worth.”

LEARNING & LIVING OUT SCRIPTURE

Together, read John 1: 1-5, 14

3. What’s the general idea these verses from John is communicating? And what is its implication?
4. The Greek word for “Word” is “Logos.” It describes the principle that organizes and holds together the world. What’s John saying about the Logos? How might this have been heard and received during that time?
5. Consider what it means that the Word became flesh and was full of grace and truth. Talk about both and why they’re important?
6. Read Genesis 12: 1-3. The last verse highlights that Israel (the nation Abraham founded) would bless other nations. Simply consider the “pining” of Israel and the long awaited need for a Savior to redeem

them from their being conquered through various Empires of late including the Babylonians, Assyrians, Greeks and Romans. They were plundered (if not deported) by all of them. While this was over hundreds of years, they and the world awaited a Savior for long before. Simply discuss that framing of the bible and what Christmas signifies. Remember also verses mentioned in the message including:

“She (Mary) will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1: 21

“It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.” Isaiah 49:6

Why is the fulfillment of God’s promises important for us to see in the bible?

7. The orthodox (correct) view of Jesus is that he’s fully human and divine. The rest of the Christian story hinges around that identity. Sometimes we experience this as heart knowledge before we do head knowledge, or maybe the other way around. Henry shared openly his struggle in affirming the complete divinity through his adolescence in terms his intellectual ascent toward the faith.

As you consider the grand scheme of history, rulers and kingdoms have risen and fallen. Legends have come and gone. The world has rapidly changed. As you place Jesus in the first century coming out of a humble background – such as from insignificant Bethlehem and then Nazareth – how well do you do in affirming the unique way God revealed himself and not until this point in history.

LIVING OUT “REAL LIFE”

8. The central message of Sunday’s message is that the Creator came. And he became us. God’s love shown means you are known. That’s the primary place from where your value flows. How integrated is this truth in your life compared to other places where we find value – achievement, material possessions, and other people’s opinions (current or deep in our past). Consider the application of this vital truth of God’s affirmation of you.

Apply the program insert in your bulletin to your life that has the song verses, Scriptures and questions. Use it as a daily devotion.

Listen to as many versions of this song as you can find. Share with others your favorites.

THE “EXTRA-MILE”

9. Invite a friend to church who doesn’t normally come.

SHARING & PRAYER REQUESTS

Pray for people grieving this time of year.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

“The first picture you have of God in the Bible is God with his hands in the mud, creating the world. God is not afraid to get his hands dirty. He’s involved with matter and unlike thinkers before him like Plato who believed matter wasn’t real - only ideas. Jesus showed that matter is real. The last picture you have of God in the Bible is God cleaning up the natural universe of the toxic waste of evil and sin and rehabbing a beautiful new urban home for himself. In the very center of the Bible you have a God who cares about the physical and the spiritual. And at Christmas, God became human and he took on the physical. He redeems body and soul,” - Tim Keller

“Led By the Light of Faith”

December 08, 2019

Sermon Series: “Series: O Holy Night – A Sacred Song for a Godly Life”

Pastor Ray Medina

THE BIG IDEA

Reflect on verse 2. When was a time in your life where you were led by the light of faith?

O HOLY NIGHT BY ADOLPHE ADAM, 1847

VERSE 1 - O Holy night! The stars are brightly shining It is the night of our dear Savior’s birth Long lay the world in sin and error pining ‘Til He appears and the Soul felt its worth A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn

CHORUS - Fall on your knees; O hear the angel voices! O night divine, O night when Christ was born O night, O Holy night, O night divine!

VERSE 2- Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming Here come the Wise Men from Orient land The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger In all our trials born to be our friend

CHORUS - He knows our need, to our weakness is no stranger Behold your King; before Him lowly bend Behold your King; before Him lowly bend

VERSE 3- Truly He taught us to love one another; His law is love and His gospel is peace Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother And in His name all oppression shall cease Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we Let all within us praise His holy name

CHORUS- Christ is the Lord; O praise His name forever! His power and glory evermore proclaim (2X)

LEARNING & LIVING OUT SCRIPTURE

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS - Matthew 1: 18-24 and Matthew 2, Luke 1: 26-80 and Luke 2: 1-40

THE INCARNATION: John 1: 1-18, Colossians 1: 15-22, Philippians 2: 5-11, 1 John 1

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY: Isaiah 7:14, 9:6 and passages known as Servant

SONGS OR POEMS: 42:1-4; Isaiah 49:1-6; Isaiah 50:4-7; and Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

1. What does this famous carol (this week’s verse) tell me about the first Christmas?
2. What does this carol teach me about the manner of Christ and my need of him?
3. What aspect of the first Christmas and of Christ will I uphold in my worship of him this week?
4. How will I behold God and his presence in my life as life’s greatest gift? Examples – silence, solitude, further reflection of Scripture, service, care of others, love for neighbor, praise or intercession.

“Love, the Liberator”

Luke 1:46-56 and Galatians 5:13-14

December 15, 2019

Sermon Series: “Series: O Holy Night – A Sacred Song for a Godly Life”

Rev. Shannon Coon

THE BIG IDEA

The third verse of O Holy Night says:

*Truly He taught us to love one another,
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains he shall break, for the slave is our brother.
And in his name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we
With all our hearts we praise His holy name.*

It is hard to believe that these lyrics started out as a poem written by an atheist poet when he was asked by a clergyman to write for a Christmas mass. Adolphe Adam, the poet, read the birth stories of Jesus in Luke and envisioned himself in the stories, watching them unfold. From this experience with Luke’s gospel, he understood that the birth of Jesus would shake up the social order of the world into which he appeared.

Mary’s song, the “Magnificat” is a particular text in which Mary is not only the recipient of the blessing of God, but she also envisions that blessing being extended to the whole world. The third verse of O Holy Night reminds us that in a world where “all oppression shall cease,” it begins with loving one another.

GETTING STARTED

1. Can you think of a person of fame who came from a humble background? Why do you suppose we like stories of people who “rose to fame from nothing?”

Do you know of someone who is hard to give a gift to because they “have everything already?” Are you good recipient of gifts or do you find it hard to be on the receiving end?

2. Mary can’t help but wonder why she was chosen. A peasant girl, poor, young, vulnerable, weak. If God was choosing someone to give birth to God’s own son, you would think he might have chosen a mature, strong woman in the royal palace. But it precisely because of Mary’s humble stature in life that she was chosen. How can someone who has everything be in a position to receive? Mary invites us to admit that we too are in need. Do you know your own poverty? Do you know your need for a Savior?

Because Mary was the recipient of God’s loving benevolence that she was able to envision that same social reversal happening in the whole world. Mary invites us to help enact that vision in the world. As O Holy Night suggests, it begins with “loving one another.” This may sound more complicated than it is. It involves simply honoring the image of God in each person we encounter. Are we preparing for the Prince of Peace by acknowledging that we are ALL image bearers?

LEARNING & LIVING OUT SCRIPTURE

Together, read **Luke 1:46-56**

3. In verses 46-48, what do you notice about Mary? What does she reveal about herself, about God, and about her relationship with God?
4. In verses 50-51, what are two qualities of people on whom God’s favor is bestowed?

5. In verses 51-55, Mary sings as if the actions of God have already happened, because they are in the past tense. But have they actually happened?

The original Greek of this text uses a verb tense that is not completely translatable into English. It is not a simple past tense, but rather it is an ongoing tense – these things have started to happen, are happening now, and will continue to happen in the future. What this implies to us as readers is that we are participants in the actions Mary is envisioning.

6. There are two important components to this text. First, is the person of Mary. She knew her poverty and was therefore in a position to receive the gift of bearing God's son. And so we ask ourselves: Do I know my own poverty?

The second component in this text is the vision of Mary. Because of what has been done for her, she is able to see a world where power and force and oppression no longer exists. For us, it means we resist the temptation to judge others according to worldly standards. It means that we live in a certain disposition – that of loving one another. And while that feels like a “tall order,” it is as simple as honoring God's image in each person we encounter. So we ask ourselves: Am I acknowledging each person as an image bearer?

LIVING OUT “REAL LIFE”

7. Over the next week, can you make eye contact with people and tell yourself, “This is an image bearer?” Perhaps even say little prayer throughout the day for various clerks, postal workers, and fellow shoppers as you go through your week.

SHARING & PRAYER REQUESTS

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (optional)

Great book: *The Dangerous Act of Loving Your Neighbor*, by Mark Labberton, IVP, 2010.

“The Stargazer’s Guide to Christmas”

Matthew 2:1- 6, 9- 11

December 22, 2019

Sermon Series: “O Holy Night – A Sacred Song for a Godly Life”

Rev. Dr. Henry Hansen

THE BIG IDEA

This message concluded the series of messages on the carol O Holy Night. It ended by looking at the choruses “Fall on your Knees. Hear the angel voices. O night divine, o night when Christ was born;” “Behold your king, before him lowly bend.” “Christ is the Lord, O praise his Name Forever. His power and glory evermore proclaim.” It lands on a note of worship. Not just proclaiming the historical fact of Jesus’ birth and the message of his teachings and ministry, but a proclamation to worship and adore Christ. The magi – also known as Persian priests of the religion of Zoroastrianism that was a mix of astronomers and astrologers or “seekers” of the constellations – worshiped Christ. Here was shown how wonder is meant to lead us to worship. Christmas is more than awe of the starry host and dazzling lights, carols, decorations and gifts, but a focus on worshipping the Christ-child. It can all be summed up in one word – wow! Look at what God has done. Divinity has become humanity at Christmas. Wow. Imagine the implications for our lives.

GETTING STARTED

1. Share a memorable nativity you’ve seen or Christmas pageant.
2. What’s behind the sermon title? What are stargazers intended to ultimately do?

LEARNING & LIVING OUT SCRIPTURE

Together, read Matthew 2:1- 6, 9- 11

3. See the note above about who these wise men were. What’s significant that Persians acknowledged the meaning and significance of the birth of the messiah and king of the Jews?
4. If you look at other details in this story about Herod (see also verses 7-8), what does this tell you about the world Jesus was born into? How does it parallel –in some ways – ours?
5. Read the following

“One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek:

that I may dwell in the house of the LORD, all the days of my life,

to gaze on the beauty of the LORD, and to seek him in his temple.

For in the day of trouble, he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.” Psalm 27: 4-5

What does it mean to gaze upon the beauty of Christ? What outcome does this have in our lives?

6. Will wonder lead you to worship? What do you seek at Christmas? What competes for your affections?

LIVING OUT “REAL LIFE”

7. Consider how much you gaze upon the beauty of God and allow your affections to be captured by his character. Think about the practice of meditation on his goodness, love and faithfulness to your life. What will gazing look like for you this Christmas? How will you live in a perpetual state of “wow” look at what God has done?

THE “EXTRA-MILE”

8. Invite a friend to Bidwell to see the good happening on Christmas Eve and into the New Year.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

“When I *think upon my God*, my heart is full of joy that the notes dance and *leap* from my *pen*.” Joseph Haydn.