

The Redemptive Word

Matthew 1:21-25

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Bethel Church has celebrated Christmas this December with a teaching series on the 4 Four Words of Christmas:

The Prophetic Word looked at several prophecies made about Jesus hundreds of years, some a thousand years or more before Jesus was born. They described the circumstances of His coming – born of a virgin in Bethlehem, born in the city of David – He fulfilled them all.

The Shocking Word is what the angel Gabriel told a teenage girl named Mary in Nazareth. You are going to give birth to the Messiah, the Son of God. Mary asks the most obvious question ever asked, “How can this be since I am a virgin?”

“God will do this,” the angel said. And God did, forever showing that salvation doesn’t come from man but from God.

The Angelic Word was nine months later when Jesus was born. The angels of heaven were thrilled to share the news with a group of shepherds. The shepherds went and checked it out and found Jesus in the manger just as the angels had said.

Tonight the final word, **The Redemptive Word**. This is the most important word and one that I hope we will all give our attention to because not only is our world in need of redemption, each of us is personally. As G.K. Chesterton said in answer to the question, “What is the problem with the world?”

“The problem with the world is me.”

Joseph was betrothed to Mary. Mary is pregnant and has told him that she is still a virgin, but that God made her pregnant. Joseph was unconvinced and we can hardly blame him. How many men would be like, “Okay, sure”? He was about to end his relationship with Mary but an angel appeared to him and reassured him that Mary was telling the truth and that he should marry her. The angel went on to give this redemptive word, *She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.* (Matthew 1:21)

He is a Savior

Naming a child is big deal. Most parents take it seriously. When they think about a name, they think about how it sounds with the last name, have they liked people who had that name, or does it rhyme with something nasty that kids will use to torment him? When it came to the name, Mary and Joseph were not given that opportunity with this child. God gave Him His name and the reason God chose it had nothing to do with who else had it or if it could be abused. Most parents give a child a name for the child’s sake. God gave this child His name for our sake. What His name means is what God wants us to understand about this baby. His name says who He is and why He came.

Jesus is Greek and the English form of an Old Testament name, which in Hebrew is “Joshua” or “Yeshua.” Jehovah saves. Or very simply, Savior. Say that with me, Savior. That just sounds good, doesn’t it? I met a little girl last week named Serenity. That sounds good too. Savior. I like that. Who’s not happy to meet a Savior?

The baby was a Savior. God wanted us to know who He was. It also says why He came. Jesus. Savior. Very good. I have a question. What exactly is He saving us from? To be a savior means that there is someone in need of saving and something that they are being saved from.

Who Saves His People

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people...

Who did He come to save? People. We should be relieved. He could have come to save the whales or save the rainforest or some other thing. Then what would we do? He came to save us. He came to save *you*. I know the question in the room somewhere. I can guarantee someone here is asking the obvious question. I was unaware that I was in need of saving. What is He saving us from?

From Their Sin

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sin.

Sin is a moral and spiritual reality that expresses itself everyday in our attitudes and actions against God, others, and ourselves. If you were unaware that there is a sin problem in the world, read today's paper and look in the mirror. Something is tragically broken here. Something isn't the way it's supposed to be. Christianity agrees. At the core is a broken relationship with our Creator. Our sin has broken it.

The ache and longing of our hearts comes from humanity's distant memory when things were right. God made us morally perfect, but our sin has broken us. And all the king's horses and all the king's men haven't been able to put it back together again. What do we need? We need someone to take away the thing that separated us from God. If anyone could ever do that, would He rightly be named Savior?

Here is how Jesus lives up to His name. This baby became a man and lived a perfectly moral life. If He had sinned, He couldn't save people from their sins as He would be as guilty as the rest of us. But He never sinned. On the contrary, He lived the most amazingly wonderful life ever lived. Fulfilling prophecy, he died on a Roman cross for us as a sacrifice for our sin. He died to pay the penalty our sins deserved. The Savior saved us by choosing not to save Himself. He allowed Himself to be killed for us. And in the miracle we celebrate each Easter, He was resurrected from the dead overcoming our biggest enemy, death. After His resurrection He told His disciples to tell as many people as possible that there is salvation from sin for those who believe in Him. And here we are today doing exactly that.

The Redemptive Word is that salvation from sin's punishment is available to all who will believe in Jesus as their *Yeshua*. As their Savior. Here is the most exciting thing you will ever hear: you can know this salvation tonight, right there in your chair. Is He your Jesus? Is He your *Yeshua*? Your Savior?

It changes your whole perspective on Christmas. Two years ago we took a group from Bethel over to Israel to tour that special place. One of the highlights of a tour there is Bethlehem. It's not what you expect. Over the traditional site of Jesus' birthplace is a massive and ancient church. It's huge.



To see the site of the birth you have to descend a narrow stairway down to a small room. It doesn't matter who you are; to stand there and consider the enormity of what the spot means is sobering. Over this spot is a very large altar. Two years ago when I had gone through and come up the other side, I was waiting for the rest of the group and watched some of the religious caretakers of the ancient church. They were performing some kind of religious ceremony, burning incense, etc. As I watched them, I saw them laughing. And they kept laughing and joking and laughing some more while performing this supposedly reverent ceremony.

I don't know what was so funny, but I remember the irony. Right there in Bethlehem, on the spot where the whole thing began, I saw a picture of humanity's perspective on this child. Down below people were worshipping, crying and praying. Above, people were indifferent, laughing, and clowning around.

Tonight and tomorrow there will be two kinds of people: those that are worshipping and those that are not. What is the difference? Who do you really believe this child was? Is He Jesus or not? Savior or not? And do I personally believe that He came to save me from my sins? Which of these two kinds of people are you? We want this service to help you come to the faith conclusion or the faith reminder that Jesus is the Savior and Christmas is a holy day because of who He was and what He came to do.

You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sin.

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