

ENCOUNTERING THE CRADLE

1. Welcome
2. Thank leadership
3. Mention briefly Christmas – silly season for many

- But beyond all this hype and running around Christmas day is a day to celebrate when the world encountered the cradle....the birth of a Saviour.
- It was a day when God manifested His presence in the world by giving us the privilege of experiencing the birth of His Son Jesus Christ.

WHAT I WANT TO SPEAK ABOUT

- That is why this morning I want to speak to you about encountering the cradle. Because before you can fully take hold of the cross you need to take hold of the cradle. So this morning my text comes out of...

Isaiah 9:6-10:

⁶ For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor,^[a] Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!

PRAY

- So embark on a journey with me as we take a look at not only the King of the Universe but also the King of the cradle.
- His earthly relationship was one of Him giving of Himself instead of taking
- Coming from a lineage of Royalty He was born into humble beginnings.
- Being in a place of being served into a position of service. From a place of being worshipped to a place where He would be scorned, whipped and beaten.
- Moving out of palatial surroundings into a world of sin.
- Trading His robe for dirty sandals.
- He came on a mission.
- He came with one purpose and one purpose only and that being to reconcile us to the Father.

- He came to graft us into His lineage that we would be co-heirs with Him leaving us an inheritance.
- Moving us from selfish to selflessness.

SO WHAT DOES THE BIRTH THAT IS SHROUDED IN CONTROVERSY MEAN TO YOU 2000yrs LATER?

1. IT INTRODUCES US TO GOD THE MAN.

- Before you understand the cross you need to understand the child that was born in order to hang on that cross.
- You see even the very rumor of His birth brought such an offence that it led to a king plotting to kill Him, but it was not meant to be – No God had another plan – the world needed a saviour and hence a Saviour needed to be born – and that is the core of this festive season.
- For sum of us this has been a very difficult year
 - We have struggled and often it has felt we are swimming against the current but yet we have kept at fighting the good fight.
- And this is why I feel it is so important to speak on this topic of encountering the cradle. Of taking hold of the thought that unto us a child is given, a Saviour is born.
 - ✓ God has come in the form of a man yet not losing His deity.
 - ✓ It reveals His deity wrapped up in earthly form.
 - ✓ No longer is it a column of fire by night or a pillar of smoke by day, or a burning bush – no God seems to have gotten personal by revealing Jesus. The One whom prophets prophesied about centuries before.
 - ✓ Leaving heavens plush settings He was born into humble beginnings – there was no fanfare or celebrations if anything quite the opposite.
 - ✓ He came as a gift when we least deserved it – showing us God’s commitment to His people when we were at our worst.
- To me it speaks about second chances, new beginnings and a different chapter.
- Each one of us need that at some point in time on this journey of life

Isaiah 43 ¹⁶⁻²¹

This is what God says, the God who builds a road right through the ocean, who carves a path through pounding waves, The God who summons horses and chariots and armies— they lie down and then can't get up; they're snuffed out like so many candles: "Forget about what's happened; don't keep going over old history. Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new.

- And then there is was something completely brand new....”a child is born unto us”
- God as if He had gotten to a point of no return and decides to clash with the course of the world and blesses us with the birth of a Son, not just any Son but one who is destined to be Saviour.
- It is as if the entire cosmos came to a complete stand still in expectation of the arrival of the young child.
- And in line with Isaiah 43 – old history is forgotten and a new chapter has just been published.
- The bright star that guided the magi as well as the animals in the stable came to a standstill and waited with baited breathe to hear the first cry of the child who would:
 - Redefine religion
 - Offend those who thought they were so righteous
 - Challenge modern day thinking.
 - Model leadership to the point that He still has a following 2000yrs later

2. IT INTRODUCES US TO HIS MISSION.

- ✓ He came like a man on a mission.
 - ✓ He had a goal, a purpose, a destiny to fulfil.
 - ✓ **Luke 19:10:**
 - ¹⁰ **For the Son of Man^[a] came to seek and save those who are lost.**
 - ✓ **Luke 5:32:**
 - ³² **I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent.”**
 - ✓ There was no second guessing or trying to put together a game plan – no He had the plan from before the beginning of time.
 - ✓ Things were so corrupt and got so out of control that He came set up governance and to rule with fairness, justice and righteousness.
- You need to understand that God’s plan for mankind always included the necessity of a Saviour, a redeemer. He came for one primary purpose and that was to suffer and die on a cross so that we could be reconciled to the Father.
 - † Animal sacrifices were no longer appeasing to God.
 - † The blood of royalty had to be poured out instead.
 - † So for 9 months in a virgin’s womb a Saviour was being carved out into flesh.
 - † Gentle hands and feet were fashioned so that one day nails could be driven through them.
 - † That innocent head with pure eyes were formed so that one day men could drive a crown of thorns into them.
 - † That tender torso was shaped so that one day it could be pierced by a spear.
 - No matter how much you try and play it down or deny it, He was born so that He could be a sacrifice.

- Born to die and then rise again.
- Born to carry the load...the weight of our sin.

3. IT INTRODUCES US TO HIS NATURE.

- ✓ God's undying love for us cannot be better portrayed than by the birth of His Son.
- ✓ **John 3:16 (MSG)**
¹⁶⁻¹⁸ ***This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again.***
- ✓ Here is a Father who all along knew that the very people He created would become so wicked and callous the sacrifice of animals just wouldn't be enough – it got so bad that He would have to send His Son to become a sacrifice.
- ✓ Right through the centuries we have:
 - Failed Him
 - Neglected Him
 - Denied Him
 - Rejected Him
- ✓ Yet besides all of this He still chooses to love us. A love that is not governed by what we do or do not do, but simply a pure love that chooses to love no matter the outcome
- ✓ Within my text Jesus is given 5 names to illustrate the very nature of who he is:
 1. Wonderful
 2. Counsellor
 3. Mighty God
 4. Everlasting Father
 5. Prince of Peace

WONDERFUL

- No matter what the world does to drown out His name, He brings wonder, power and miracles to His people
- He is the One that
 - Parts the oceans
 - Calms raging seas
 - Commands life out of death
 - Brings light to darkened eyes
 And causes crooked limbs to walk straight
- **1 Kings 8:56**
"Blessed be God, who has given peace to his people Israel just as he said he'd do. Not one of all those good and wonderful words that he spoke through Moses has misfired"

COUNSELLOR

- Have you ever being in a situation where the walls are collapsing around you and you don't know which way to go
- **James 1:5-8**
⁵ If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. ⁶ But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone.

MIGHTY GOD

- Points to a God of might, power & authority.
- **Matthew 28:18**
¹⁸ Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.
- **Ephesians 3:20**
Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.
- Is it mercy or grace that you are in need of this morning?
- What is your need?

EVERLASTING FATHER

- Just in that title of Father tells me that we are accepted as we are that like I will do anything to protect my kids so God puts a hedge of protection around you.
- He is not just a God or just a saviour but He has opened the door to the Father and given us access to the throne of Grace.
- You have an inheritance because of Him.
- **Psalm 68:4-6**
*His name is the Lord—
rejoice in his presence! ⁵ Father to the fatherless, defender of widows -
this is God, whose dwelling is holy. ⁶ God places the lonely in families; he sets the prisoners free and gives them joy.*

PRINCE OF PEACE

- Peace is not the absence of obstacles but simply the triumph over opposition.
- It is security in the face of adversity
- The assurance that all will be well
- Remember the story of the lost sheep / coin & son – the price of peace makes sure that whatever is missing in our life can be found again.
- What's missing in your life today?
- Is it peace that you are searching for?
- He is the prince of peace, the prince of all that is lacking in your life.

- He is able to bring wholeness into whatever situation you are facing.
- Even towards the end of His ministry he made us a promise regarding peace
- **John 14:27 (Whole Chapter)**
“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.

- So what part of Jesus do you need today?
- Is it a Father that you are in need of?
- Is it wise counsel that you are seeking?
- Or do you need a ray of peace in the midst of your storm?

As I am coming in to land I want to end with a short story – a true story...

This is part of a true story of a Northwest airlines plane crash some years ago in Detroit, Michigan. There was a little girl that came out of this plane that they found. When they found her, they couldn’t believe that she came off the plane and thought maybe she was driven there with some other relative. Her mother had died in the crash and they didn’t understand how she could have survived and be there standing outside the plane amid all the rescue efforts. Then they discovered that when the plane was going down the mother wrapped herself around the child and covered her completely and when the plane crashed, her body completely absorbed the impact and the child was preserved. Her love protected her child. That is the kind of savior we have and what He has promised to do for His children. As this mothers love preserved and protected her child, so God’s love is for us to preserve and protect us from harm and that which would destroy us. His love is greater than even a mother’s love.

Isaiah 49:15-16

¹⁵Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet I will not forget you. ¹⁶Behold, I have indelibly imprinted (tattooed a picture of) you on the palm of each of My hands; [O Zion] your walls are continually before Me.

C LOSING

- Earlier on I described Christmas as I experienced it but I am keenly aware and sensitive to the fact that this was not the case for many people. For many this time of the year is a very traumatic and lonely time to the point that all they want is a bit of normality in their lives over this time of the year. For some of us this has been a hard year and all we can think about is surviving let alone celebrating.
- I want to encourage you this morning “For unto us a child is born” – He came for you and for me not just the select few.
- You will find all that you need wrapped up in him – He is the
 - ❖ beginning and the end
 - ❖ Alpha and Omega

- ❖ Wonderful counsellor
- ❖ Mighty God
- ❖ Everlasting Father
- ❖ Prince of Peace

- Earlier I asked the question what does the birth of Christ mean to you?
- Now I ask the question what are you going to make the birth of Christ mean to you?
- One question speaks of your past attitude, the other of your future attitude.

ONE FINAL THOUGHT BEFORE WE CLOSE IN PRAYER

- There is another name given to Him.....Immanuel.....God is with us.
- No matter how defeated you feel, no matter how many times you have failed there is the promise that God is with you.
- You are not alone and you haven't been forgotten – He loves you and assures you that He is closer than you think.
- THE GOD THAT IS GOING TO BE WITH YOU IN 2011 IS THE SAME GOD THAT WALKED WITH YOU IN 2010. HE IS A FAITHFUL FATHER AND IS KEENLY INTERESTED IN YOU.

PRAYER