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Sermon Notes

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Supernatural, Yet Natural

Luke 2:1-20

I. The Exaltation of Everyday Life

A. Daily “Humdrum”...

- Does daily life have any significance at all?
- Does God care about my everyday struggles?

B. Christ our Example

Other than the phrase "Christ, Our Redeemer", no phrase stirs the heart of a Christian more than "Christ, Our Example". The fact that Christ led a natural, human life provides us with a path to follow in our own daily struggles. His example brings us hope.

1. Christ claimed to be our example

John 13:15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

2. The apostles declared that Christ is our example

1 Peter 2:21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

1 Corinthians 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Philippians 2:5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus

3. The Apostle John made imitation of Christ in this world REQUIRED to know we are saved

1 John 2:5-6 This is how we know we are in him: ‘Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

4. His life as example began in Bethlehem
 - a. He could have come as a grown man
 - b. but he came as a baby, to live a life common to us

Luke 2 gives us the picture of the beginning of Christ's life.

5. Example continued from Bethlehem to Golgotha

C. Supernatural, Yet Natural

Yet it is not the commonplace example of Christ which is the most powerful message of Christmas... but rather the blending of the supernatural with the natural

1. Weaving together of commonplace/miraculous
2. This weaving is for our benefit:
 - a. that we might marvel at the power of God
 - b. that we might never again scorn the daily duties of our lives, but might walk as He walked in them
 - c. That we might understand "EMMANUEL", the supernatural word that sums up my sermon

D. My goals today

1. Highlight the narrative to bring out contrast: supernatural yet natural
2. Exhort you in three ways:
 - a. to MARVEL at EMMANUEL
 - b. to MEDITATE on EMMANUEL
 - c. to MAKE the EMMANUEL principle & person central

II. The Narrative

Breaks into four sections:

- The Decree vs. 1-3
- The Birth vs. 4-7
- The Shepherds, the Angels, & the Christ vs.8-16
- The Reactions vs. 17-20

A. The Decree

1. Caesar Augustus... census for raising taxes & identifying troops allocations

a. date of Christ's birth

- i) born during reign of King Herod the Great (Matthew 2)
- ii) Herod died in April of 4 B.C.
- iii) Luke tells us that Jesus was born during a census

Controversy over Quirinius:

- Critics say census under Quirinius took place in 6/7 A.D. (long after Herod the Great died)
- Accuse Luke of making a mistake
- Two answers: 1) Archaeology has shown Quirinius may have been governor twice, the first time beginning in the year 10 B.C.; 2) the translation of Luke 2:2 may read differently

Luke 2:2 "This census was before the one taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria."

Either way, we can be certain that Luke made no mistakes... he was a very careful historian

Conclusion: Jesus was probably born in 5 or 4 B.C. right before King Herod's death

b. historical circumstances of Christ's birth

i) Caesar Augustus

- Gaius Octavius: 30 B.C. put an end to the bloody civil wars that had ravaged Rome the previous century
- Soon took the name "Caesar Augustus"... a divine title
- Centralized power in such a wise way that the Roman Senate was still involved
- Prosperity soared; the borders were made secure; Rome was at the highest level she'd ever experienced

The desire for a ruler who would reshape the political and social chaos of the commonwealth and lead it to new stability and power was a widespread sentiment in the empire. That was the Roman dream, all too soon shattered by the encroaching tyranny of the Caesars, the fickleness of the masses, and the later invasions of the barbarians. Within this empire emerged another historical force—the kingdom of God. (Bibliotheca Sacra, vol. 135, #538, April 78, p. 134)

ii) the "Pax Romana" : advantages and limitations

- Absence of strife allowed for peace and prosperity for Romans
- Roads built from tax money unified the world and would later allow for the rapid spread of Christianity
- Peaceful conditions were a "safe cradle" for the years of Christ's youth

BUT:

Epictetus: "While the emperor may give peace from war on land and sea, he is unable to give peace from passion, grief and envy. He cannot give peace of heart, for which man yearns more than even for outward peace."

2. Joseph & Mary

a. Travelled the 75 miles from Naz. to Beth.

b. "Because she was pregnant..."

i) Odd:

Men knew little about childbirth Local women, not hospitals Arduous, two week journey

ii) Reason: GOSSIP & SLANDER (Matthew 1, Joseph was very concerned)

3. Contrast:

a. Natural-

- that a government leader should raise taxes!!!
- that neighbors should gossip re. that which appears scandalous
- that Joseph should join thousands of his countrymen in travelling to his native city (vs.3)

b. Supernatural-

- that God should sovereignly ordain that Augustus' decree, the neighbor's gossip, and Joseph's obedience to fulfill a prophesy given over 700 years before by Micah:

Micah 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel"

B. The Birth (A Crowded Inn and a Lonely Mother)

1. The Crowded Inn

- a. all those descended from David descended upon Bethlehem to register
- b. the innkeeper was preoccupied with his customers, failed to be compassionate, and missed the time of Christ!

2. A Lonely Mother

- a. "she gave birth to her firstborn"

- no nurses, no doctors, no midwives
 - Joseph isn't even mentioned
- b. "**she** wrapped him in cloths, **she** him in a manger"
- long strips of cloth to keep the baby snug and warm
 - usually done by someone else, while the mother recuperates

SUCH INCREDIBLE LONELINESS, YET DIGNITY!!!

3. Contrast:

a. Natural:

Galatians 4:4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law

- that Jesus was born of a woman in the ordinary way (Gal.4:4) with pain, blood, and struggle...needing to be scrubbed off, and comforted from the ordeal
- that he was so helpless... note the passives (**was** born, **was** wrapped, **was** laid)
- that he was so poor (WORLDWIDE!)

The overwhelming majority of babies born in the world are born into poverty!!

b. Supernatural:

- that Mary was pregnant at all!
- that the helpless baby, unable even to cover himself with a blanket, was at the same time

THE OMNIPOTENT CREATOR OF THE MANGER HE LAID IN, HIS MOTHER WHO BORE HIM, THE INNKEEPER WHO TURNED HIM OUT, AND OF INDEED, THE UNIVERSE!!

C. The Shepherds, the Angels, and the Baby

1. The Shepherds

- a. raising flocks for temple sacrifices
- b. guarding them from intruders!

HOW IRONIC, in view of the heavenly intruder!

2. The Angelic Messenger

- a. sudden appearance, been there all along
- b. GLORIOUS LIGHT, incredible terror!
- c. typical angelic greeting... FEAR NOT!!

Illus. Angel School!!!

3. The Angelic Message: 2 amazing aspects (vs.11)

- a. "TO YOU is born a Savior"
- b. "Christ the Lord" (not "the Lord's Christ" as in 2:26)

"This will be a sign..." NEEDED!!!

4. The Angelic Host

- a. "Host" = "Army", God's warriors!
- b. where's the battle? REVELATION 12

Revelation 12:1-7 The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. ⁵ She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.... ⁷ And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.

- i) Constant warfare in heavenlies
- ii) Herod's wrath in Matthew 2
- iii) Jesus' circumcision 2:21ff
- iv) PROTECTION NEEDED!!!

5. The Angelic Praise

- a. an army that praises! What confidence!
- b. God's absolute power, amazing ways
- c. PEACE: Humanity's greatest need-

Two forms of peace that people lack:

- 1) PEACE IN LIFE
- 2) PEACE IN DEATH...

Isaiah 57:21 "There is no peace says my God for the wicked."

BOTH STEM FROM BEING AT WAR WITH GOD!! Peace offered is PEACE WITH GOD!!

d. to whom is it offered? To the elect!!

NOT: PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TO MEN...

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men who are the objects of God's good pleasure."

6. The Angelic Exit... gradual and spectacular; they observed the angels "as they were returning to heaven"

7. The Shepherd's Response: **LET'S GO AND SEE!!!**

8. Contrast:

a. Natural: that shepherds were out there

- just doing their jobs
- response TERROR/JOYFUL CURIOSITY

b. Supernatural:

- angelic visitation

INBREAKING!!!! -ANGELIC VISITATION (have you had one lately??)

- angelic message

This was a clear prophecy of the Christ... a sign given that could be known no other way; the information came to the shepherds supernaturally

So also information about the deity of Christ:

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

D. The Reactions (vs. 17-20)

1. Shepherds: SPREAD THE WORD!!

FOCUS "What child is this?"

2. The audience: **AMAZEMENT**

3. Mary: **QUIET MEDITATION**

Exhortation: In this busy season, be like Mary... take a few moments for quiet reflection,

MEDITATE ON THE MEANING OF GOD WITH US

4. Shepherds: **RETURN PRAISING**

VERY HARD TO DO...BACK TO DAILY LIFE

Imagine after all they'd seen how hard it must have been to go back to their jobs! But here the EMMANUEL principle finds its most practical application

III. EMMANUEL: A final exhortation

A. Emmanuel means "God with us"

1. "On our side"... Romans 8:31

i.e. "Are you with us or against us?" friend or foe? God is friend:

IF GOD IS FOR US (on our side) WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?"

working for us, pulling for us, on our team, etc.

Greatest proof: His death on the cross for us!!

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

2. "Side by side" or going through it with us

Christ experienced life as we did...yet with supernatural power:

- He obeyed his parents, yet he was conscious of his divine status as the Son of God
- He knows hard manual labor in a carpentry shop, yet he healed with just a word

- He knows hunger, yet he fed the 5000
- He walked on water across the lake, then got in the boat like a normal man and rode across with the disciples.
- He knows bone-weariness, as he slept in a storm-tossed boat, yet he awoke and stilled the storm with the words "Peace, be still!!!"
- He knows poverty, yet he took a gold-coin from a fishes mouth to pay his taxes!

HE KNOWS BECAUSE HE BECAME A NATURAL MAN, YET HE TRIUMPHED BY SUPERNATURAL POWER

HE KNOWS BECAUSE OF BETHLEHEM...BECAUSE OF HIS INCARNATION

SO... when you are going through your daily life remember that EMMANUEL means Christ knows what it's like, and include Him in your commonplace activities.

The incarnation **PROVES** that God cares a lot about the way natural things are done. Yes, the incarnation is supernatural, but it's supernatural breaking into the natural! **NOTHING IS TOO SMALL TO MATTER!!!!**

B. Emmanuel means "God **IN** us"

1. Not just example
2. Not just "I know what it's like"
3. Not just "I'm side by side with you"
4. I AM **IN** YOU!!!

Christ lives within every Christian... Every Christian is an Incarnation!

5. Emmanuel gives you the power to follow the way

Supernatural power to live a natural life

C. Four Final Exhortations

1. View common life as significant
2. Realize Christ experienced it all
3. Realize Christ is in you if you are a believer

4. Turn constantly to His supernatural power in your natural circumstances.

Exaltation of the Natural

Also

Limitation of the Natural:

Isaiah 59:15-16 The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice. ¹⁶ He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him.