

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn Pastor

HOW GOD REVEALED THE MESSAGE OF HIS LOVE

Luke 1, 2; Matthew 2

December 22, 2019

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Here are the four points to my message today:

- God revealed the message of his love through prophets.
- God revealed the message of his love through angels.
- God revealed the message of his love through the Holy Spirit.
- God revealed the message of his love through knowledge.

For every Sunday in December, we've lit an Advent candle. The candles represent hope, peace, joy, and today's candle represents love.

SCRIPTURE: I John 4:16-18

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love.

With today's theme about love, I want to point out the different ways the message of God's love - demonstrated by the coming of Christ - was communicated.

First, GOD REVEALED THE MESSAGE OF HIS LOVE THROUGH THE PROPHETS

EXPLANATION: I'll not spend much time on this point because I've preached on this many times. Without at least some knowledge of the prophets in the Old Testament, we won't fully appreciate the coming of the Messiah. The prophecies created a hope for the future and a sense of anticipation of good things to come. While God's chosen people faced many challenges, and at times they wondered if he had forsaken them altogether, the love that was communicated through the prophets was that God had not forgotten them and that they had a future.

Second, GOD REVEALED THE MESSAGE OF HIS LOVE THROUGH ANGELS

FIRST TO MARY

Luke 1—verse 26 tells us Mary was a virgin and that an angel appeared to her.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 1:28-38

²⁸ The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

³⁴ “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail.”

³⁸ “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

EXPLANATION: Once the angel had told Mary what was going to happen, Mary had no doubts at all. God chose Mary. She was “highly favored,” the angel said. In his **love** for Mary, he did not treat her as some object who was at his disposal. Notice the order of things: the angel told her what was going to happen – that she would become pregnant. She didn’t become pregnant first, then flounder in fear and wonder what was going on. No, God sent an angel to tell her what was about to happen.

NEXT, THE ANGELS APPEARED TO JOSEPH

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 1:20-21

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

I’ve spoken about Joseph already this season. Because God loved Joseph, he sent an angel to tell him not to be afraid and to tell him what to do. What if God didn’t send an angel to Joseph? What if Joseph had to just rely on Mary’s account of everything? Would Joseph have believed her? Really, we don’t know, but it did not happen that way. God wanted Joseph to know firsthand what was going on. The message from the angel to him was consistent with the Angel’s message to Mary. You see, God loved Joseph so he communicated with him clearly.

NEXT THE ANGELS APPEARED TO THE SHEPHERDS

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:8-20

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

So much could be said about this passage of scripture as well! But I want to focus on the message of God's love in verse 11: *Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.*

The Messiah had come, and the first to know, outside of Mary and Joseph, were the commoners, the shepherds! The angels did not appear to the religious elite. God wanted the message of his love to spread quickly so he shared it first with people who would tell the news, not debate it. Verse 17 says they spread the word about what had happened and people were amazed. Had the message gone to the Pharisees, the Sadducees, or the rabbis, they would have immediately started debating and questioning.

Third - GOD REVEALED THE MESSAGE OF HIS LOVE THROUGH HIS SPIRIT

EXPLANATION: FIRST WITH ELIZABETH

Elizabeth was Mary's cousin. After the angel told Mary that he was going to have a baby and that her cousin Elizabeth was six months pregnant, she packed her bags. And it was confirmed, she was indeed pregnant. But she didn't say, "Guess what Mary? I'm pregnant." Listen to how it played out:

SCRIPTURE: Luke 1:39-45

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my

ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”

Mary already knew Elizabeth was going to have a baby. The angel told her. At the sound of Mary’s voice, the baby, who we know to be John the Baptist, jumped inside Elizabeth and immediately Elizabeth prophesied. I challenge you to read this section of scripture about five times and ask the Lord to show you something new each time.

This is a message for another time, but here we have proof that the unborn can hear and respond.

NEXT LET’S SEE HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKED WITH SIMEON

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:25-32

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

I picture Simeon as a man with a huge burden, a serious fellow. He knew how his country had fallen. He knew the prophecies of the coming Messiah and he longed to see him. Overtaken by the spirit of God, he went to the temple at the same time Mary and Joseph were taking Jesus. The connection happened, and Simeon took the Messiah in his arms.

Again, we see the message of God’s love being revealed to a man who was a devout believer but not a member of the religious elite.

Review: God revealed the message of this love through the prophets, the Angels, the Holy Spirit, and...

GOD REVEALED HIS LOVE THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

The Magi, or wise men, are the mystery people of the story. Listen to what the scripture says about them:

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 2:1-11

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

King Herod met with the Magi to inquire what was going on.

⁹*After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.*

¹⁰*When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.* The magi were clearly important as their visit was known by King Herod.

They saw the star, and that’s all we know about how they knew. It is assumed they were brilliant men who may have had a copy of the Old Testament prophecies, but we do not know for sure.

CONCLUSION: The coming of Christ was communicated and confirmed clearly with all the characters in the story. No one was left wondering.

Today, God may reveal the message of his love any way he wants. He may choose to use prophets or angels, although I’ve never met an Old Testament-like prophet, or, to my knowledge, an angel. But I know the work of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures are with us today.

Have you accepted the message of God’s love? Romans 5:8 sums it up: *“In that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* Our Lord left heaven and entered his own creation. God incarnate, Jesus Christ.

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Thanks to Jennifer Anderson for her editing assistance.

Sincerely, Paul Gunn
Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Nashville, Tennessee
USA