

The Birth of a Miracle

Sunday's Christmas program invited us to engage the Biblical Christmas story through drama, song, and dance. Let's dig deeper into that experience.

1. Warm-up Question: What was your favorite moment in Sunday's Christmas program?
2. Scene 1 introduced us to two contemporary characters facing stress and worry in the Christmas season. One was dealing with their father's failing health; the other was worried about whether they would be approved to adopt a child. Being joyful in the Christmas season can be challenging when life doesn't cooperate.
 - a. One of the characters said, "Sometimes life seems to gobble up all the positive energy a person can muster." In this Christmas season, what circumstance could gobble up your Christmas joy if you let it?
 - b. During that first Christmas, Mary herself faced a huge amount of stress and worry. Her experience is captured in the words of a powerful Christmas song that Jessica sang and Aly danced to – "Breath of Heaven (Mary's Song)."

I am waiting, in a silent prayer.
I am frightened, by the load I bear.
In a world as cold as stone,
Must I walk this path alone?
Be with me now, be with me now.

Breath of heaven, hold me together.
Be forever near me, Breath of heaven.
Breath of Heaven, lighten my darkness.
Pour over me your Holiness, for You are holy,
Breath of Heaven.

Can you imagine Mary experiencing these feelings? What do you suppose held her together despite all she went through? And what can we learn from that?

- c. Sometimes it feels like God – or life – is "doing stuff" to us – stuff that's hard, stuff that doesn't feel good. Scenes 2 and 3 in Sunday's program offered a glimpse into how discombobulating God's gift of Jesus must have been to Mary and Joseph when they first received the news. Matthew 1:19 tells us that Joseph's first impulse was to break off his engagement to Mary. Imagine what he was feeling inside. Imagine what Mary was feeling inside. Yet out of this pain and chaos, a miracle was born. When in your life have you experienced God working this way – birthing a miracle out of chaos in your life?
3. Our guest vocalist, Michael Thomas, sang "O Holy Night" as we watched video of Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem for Jesus' birth. The lyrics go like this:

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,
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.

A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices.
For yonder breaks a new glorious morn.
Fall on your knees.
O hear the angels' voices.
O night divine.
O night when Christ was born.

- a. “Long lay the world in sin and error pining, till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.” Can you relate to those words? What do they mean to you?
 - b. “The thrill of hope; the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.” What changed for the world when Jesus was born?
 - c. “Fall on your knees. O hear the angels’ voices. O night divine.” If you could have been there as one of the shepherds, what do you think you would have felt and thought?
4. Read Luke 2:8-20. We tend to think of shepherding as an honorable occupation. Not so in the first century. Shepherding was roughly equivalent to being a garbage collector. Shepherds were regarded as smelly, poor, and untrustworthy. So why do you think God decided to share the joy of Jesus’ birth with shepherds? What’s the significance of that part of the Christmas story?
5. Scene 7 depicted the wise men traveling from afar just to catch a glimpse of the child whose birth was heralded by a star. Matthew 2:10, “When they saw the star stop, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage.” They sensed there was something cosmically important about this child. The song “Mary Did You Know” provides a great description of that cosmic significance. The lyrics are printed on the next page. Five different lines in the song have been highlighted. For each of those highlighted lines discuss:

What does this line tell us about the story of Jesus – who he was and what he did?
And what does this mean for me?

Mary Did You Know

Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?
Mary did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?
This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you.

Mary did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?
Mary did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with his hand?
Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?
When you kiss your little baby, you kiss the face of God.

The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again.
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak, the praises of the lamb.
Mary did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?
Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect lamb?
That sleeping child you're holding is the great I am.
Oh, Mary did you know?

For each highlighted line, discuss:

What does that line tell us about the story of Jesus – who he was and what he did?
And what does that mean for me?

Reminder:

We have only two Sunday's left in 2018 to meet the attendance goal the bank has given us for our capital improvements loan. We need everyone who is not away on travel to please be at church this coming Sunday! See ya there!