

Readings: Matthew 1, Luke 2:1-20

Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham, was born in the city of David, the king's city, on a particular date in time. It's recorded here, and confirmed in other historical records. Did you take note of some of the names as you listened to the record?

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – you know them. They were the first generations to follow God. Those were the three to whom God made the first promise. *I'm going to bless you – I'm building a kingdom.* This kingdom would bless other nations. Did you recognize Rahab and Ruth? Both from other nations, as each acted in faith, both experienced blessing. What about Hezekiah, the king who prayed when he was in trouble, whom God helped? (2 Kgs 19:15ff) Then there's King David, whose city is Bethlehem, who received the promise that his throne would be established forever. (2 Sam 7:1-17)

These people lived by faith. Some experienced hard tragedies but God helped them overcome. Some of these people failed God – but God helped them get back on their feet. God continued to be at work, and continues to work in us, even when times are hard and when we fail.

Others experienced great victories, like Josiah, who found the Bible which had been hidden in the temple walls. When he read it, he was so taken with its message that he read it to all the people of Israel, and turned the whole nation back to God. (2 Kgs 22:8ff)

Others in the genealogy had hardly any faith at all. Yet God still worked.

The lives of these people fill the Bible from Genesis to the New Testament – to this very night; to the birth of Jesus Christ.

Jesus came from this line of people. God planned His Messiah from the very beginning, even though no one really realized what was going on. None of us actually sees the big picture of God – except in those every-once-in-a-while experiences. We are busy living, right? But even though we are not constantly aware of God, that does not mean God is not at work.

God works continually. God is vitally interested in the world, and in you, no matter how insignificant you may feel. To God everyone is important and each is on a path. The question is, where does your path lead? Are you on a path of faith?

A friend of mine worked as an administrative assistant for Land of Lakes Corporation here in Dallas. During a downturn, her position was cut deeply. She saw no future there, but had few options. Later, through some miraculous circumstances, she enrolled in seminary. Graduating last summer, she just got her first call as a PC(USA) pastor. It's at a church in Minnesota – the "land of lakes." That is a fantastic sign. She would have never seen the big picture that God had in mind for her when there seemed to be no future.

God is like that. When His children give themselves to Him and follow His lead, God loves blessing them in surprising ways. God is at work accomplishing His plan.

It was the same for the people in this genealogy who trusted God, as it was for my friend.

Knowing that helps us understand that the birth of this baby was not ordinary. It was orchestrated by God. The gospel writers say, “The birth of Jesus took place in this way.” And then we see this list of people. We see hints and connections, “city of David,” “Son of David,” and we can see that God has been at work all along.

Jesus’ birth was long planned, covenanted by God, for the purpose of miraculously saving us, even though the event looked rather ordinary.

God calls ordinary people – a shepherd boy to be king, an old man, like Abraham, a young virgin from a poor family, a young man to care for her and His Son. God always calls ordinary people like you to do extraordinary things.

But there is a catch. You may have noticed it.

Whether it was an angel who spoke, or a prophet, or something they thought they heard in prayer, action was required of them. All had to respond.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – grandfather, father, and son, each had to relate to God. They couldn’t depend on the fact that their parents went to church or had faith. They were each their own man before God. Each was required to take the path.

Joseph and Mary each received a visit from the angel Gabriel. Each one on their own had to decide for himself and herself to follow God.

David had to actually walk out of the shepherd’s field and follow the prophet Samuel to be anointed king. Then, he had to persevere for fifteen years before he assumed the reign of king. In the meantime, he grew in wisdom and learned to walk with God.

Well, if it requires effort, why follow God? I think the choir said it best.

In the first light of a new day, No one knew He had arrived
Things continued as they had been, While a newborn softly cried.

But the heavens wrapped in wonder, Knew the meaning of His birth
In the weakness of a baby, They knew God had come to earth.

As His mother held him closely, It was hard to understand
That her baby not yet speaking, Was the Word of God to man.

Has that Word spoken to you tonight? It might look very ordinary. You might not see the big picture. But when God is involved in your life, nothing is more fulfilling – no possession, no loved one, no ambition is greater than being an intimate part of God’s plan; being part of the big picture of God’s work.

Jesus left heaven to redeem us, But before His life began
He knew He'd come back
Not as a baby but as The Lord of every man

While there's often hardship and ordinariness in life, when you respond to God, God lavishes you with his presence, help, and blessing. That was the experience of this long line of God's people.

God extends to you an invitation tonight to believe. Join this pedigree of real people who experienced the miracle of God coming to be with us, the ones He made, whom He loves, to whom He sent our Savior, Jesus Christ.

AMEN