

When a man is about to be a father, he brags. It's true. And when that baby is born, it gets worse. When I had my third son, my husband left the hospital to go home and tell our other two sons. He stopped at 7-11 and bought the biggest Snickers bars he could find. He burst in the door, waving the Snickers bars and said, "IT'S A BOY!!!" And a shout went up – YEA!! That's the greatest! A BOY! He will play sports, and wrestle with us, and jump on the trampoline. We'll go camping and fishing and hiking. And my husband let them jump on the couch to celebrate with great joy this baby boy's birth.

I've been thinking this week how God celebrated the birth of His Son – how God jumped with joy in God's own way. He put a magnificent star in the sky; God had a sky-choir singing the Hallelujah Chorus. And God selected certain people to go and welcome the baby to earth – poor shepherds and foreign dignitaries.

And, God bragged, just like any proud father. We have a record of some of the things God said:

- *My Son will be great!*
- *My Son will bring down the powerful*
- *He'll sit on a throne*
- *He will rule with justice, setting things right on earth*
- *My Son will rule forever*
- *He will rescue my children from their enemies*
- *He will open the eyes of the blind*
- *He'll bring out prisoners from dungeons and darkness*

If I shared all God said about Him, we'd be here all night!

God sums it up with these words – *"I couldn't be more pleased with Him; I'm backing him to the hilt; I've bathed Him with my Spirit and my life"* (Is 42:1-9).

God is really proud of Jesus.

It's understandable. God's plan was carefully laid out through years and years; proclaimed and anticipated by many prophets.

What was that plan? Why do we need a plan? Why would God send a Son?

Some people think religion is all about rules – what you should and should not do.

But if you wanted people to simply behave a certain way, wouldn't you just settle for the Ten Commandments? Or some other list of rules? The Bible could have stopped then, in Exodus, with the Ten Commandments, saving us a lot of reading.

Certainly the Bible contains some rules. But, the story in the Bible is not so much about how we should act. When we look at religion as rules, no wonder people say, "any religion will do." But, that's not the main point here. The Christian faith is different.

And, it seems kind of odd really. God says “My Savior will be great and sit on a throne.” Yet He was born in a stall. God says, “My Messiah will rule with justice,” yet His death was unjust. Isn’t that a strange way to save the world? God sending His Christ as a lowly man? And then allowing Jesus to experience all our pain?

But that’s God’s story; that’s God’s plan as he prepared and made His Messiah strong and informed. Isaiah says our Savior is tested – a strong and precious foundation stone; leading with courage and justice; love and forgiveness (28:16).

So the Bible tells us God’s story. It tells us God’s plan to save us, and God’s love for Jesus. The Bible is one big story about people of all kinds seeking and being sought by God - some are poor, some are rich, some are foreigners, some are professionals, some work in fields. All those people are embraced.

Some people seek this baby at all costs; but others are not seeking God’s Son at all, but see Him as a threat and desire to destroy Him.

That’s the world God sent Jesus into. That world is described right here in this book. Jesus entered a world of brokenness, sorrow, and violence; where some loved Him and some despised Him. And through it He was tested and grew strong.

Tough life. Yet God brags. Because God is at work in His most miraculous accomplishment – God is using this baby to rescue all His children which God made.

You and me. God’s precious ones who need rescuing and who need love.

So everything depends on this child and our response to Him. He is God’s gift; a King, but not yet in a palace; a Ruler, ruling not with an iron fist but with servant love; a priest who forgives and reconciles us to God. Emmanuel, God who comes to live with us. Will you receive Him?

Behold, I bring you good news of great joy. Our Savior has been born - as a tiny baby this night. And He will reign forever. Let us draw close to Him now and be rescued.

AMEN