

BaptistWay Bible Series for December 5: God living among us

November 22, 2010

As we enter the Christmas season, most of us are making lists and checking them twice. We have gifts to buy, parties to plan and decorating to do. But amid all these preparations, are we taking time to prepare our hearts?

On December 25, we'll celebrate the birth of Jesus. Today, before we get into the mad rush of the holidays, let's pause for a moment to think about who it is we're celebrating.

Jesus is powerful

John takes us back to the beginning of time when he introduces Jesus. In Genesis, all of creation was made with nothing more than God's spoken word. In John 1:1, John says Jesus is the Word that God spoke. Then in verse 10, he reinforces this idea, saying "all the world was made through him."

Listen to how the Apostle Paul says it in Colossians 1:15-17. "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

Each Christmas, we celebrate a tiny baby who was born in Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. It's easy to forget that this babe was the Son of God who helped create the universe and now

holds it all together.

Jesus is life

When the Word was spoken by God, all creation came to life. Jesus' gift during creation was physical life, but when he was born as a human, he brought spiritual life to anyone who would believe. "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12-13).

These are the basics of our faith, and we talk about them so often, it's easy to stop listening. We need to be careful not to become immune to the full meaning of this gift of life. You see, God created mankind because he wanted to spend time with us, talking with us and enjoying our presence. We lost the right to walk side-by-side with God when sin entered the picture. But God loves us so much, he hates being separated from us.

Jesus was born so he could live a life without sin. That gave him the right to take responsibility for the sins of all mankind. When he died on the cross, He took on himself the punishment for our sins. It's a trade that benefits us far more than him.

When the Bible says we must "believe in his name," it means we must understand the fullness of who he is and the magnitude of his gift. This Jesus is part of the Holy Trinity, yet chose to give up his seat in heaven to make sure you and I would have the chance to walk in fellowship with God the Father, as we were designed to do.

That's the life we celebrate. It's the birth of a baby in a manger. And it's the new life that awakens in us through faith in Jesus when we accept his gift.

Jesus is Savior

Jesus restores us to relationship with God, not so we can serve him, but so we can be everything he made us to be. Sin put our spirits to death. Jesus restores us to life.

Here's how Paul says it: "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation" (Colossians 1:21-22). Jesus was born so he could trade places with us. He took our sin and gave us his holiness. That means we can talk to God and know he hears us. We can enter his throne room and worship him in spirit and truth.

Jesus is the giver of grace and truth

Salvation is wonderful, but it isn't intended to be the gift. Salvation is merely the wrapping that surrounds the gift, and we can't even see the gift until we go through salvation.

What's the real gift? The presence of God.

Food for thought

John says, "From the fullness of his grace, we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:16-17).

The psalmist says "you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" (Psalm 16:11).

Through Jesus, we are restored to relationship with our loving Father and can know the truth about God's love for us. These are the blessings available to all Christians. What personal blessings have you received from God? Remember to thank God this holiday for these extra blessings you've

received since the first gift of salvation.