

Maple Springs Baptist Church

Series: Re-Discovering Christmas

Week 1: Finding Courage in My Chaos

The story of Christmas doesn't begin with couple who's trying to figure out how in the world they got pregnant. The Christmas story actually begins with a couple that are worried that they'll never get pregnant. The back story of Christmas is what makes this Christmas story so incredibly remarkable. Doesn't begin with angels announcing it. It actually begins with God making **an unbelievable, incomprehensible, impossible promise** In fact, this promise is really what makes the Christmas story so believable.

Here's how it began: GENESIS 12:1. Abram, leave everything you know, which was very, very dangerous because security & safety in ancient times had everything to do with your family, your relatives.

And then the promises began. GENESIS 12:2a. Abram is 75—no children

Promises continue: GENESIS 12:2b. Abram, I'm going to make you famous.

Promise continues: GENESIS 12:2c. This was time of extraordinary violence. GENESIS 12:3a. Abraham, I'm going to be a part of your story; a part of this story until this story is completed and nothing is going to stop it.

And then God gets to the completely unbelievable, incomprehensible, absolutely impossible part of the promise. GENESIS 12:3b. In other words, every single person on the Earth will ultimately and eventually be impacted by your life, Abram.

But ... Blessed? Nations Conquered, Enslaved, and Plundered each other. Yet Genesis says Abraham believed the unbelievable.

Eventually Abraham & Sarah have a son—Isaac, and Isaac had 2 sons Esau & Jacob. Jacob has 12 sons—10 didn't like their bro Joseph. Do we kill him or sell him? They sold Joseph. He ends up in Egypt, where they do in fact become as God promised a NATION—a nation of slaves—not feeling very blessed and certainly not in a position to bless anybody else.

God sent a deliverer Moses, & by the time Moses got finished with Pharaoh, and Egypt, nobody in Egypt was feeling very blessed by the descendants of Abraham. They crossed the Red Sea—invaded Promised Land, the land of Canaan. Canaanites weren't feeling very blessed by the presence of Abraham's descendants either.

About 1000 years after God made the promise to Abraham, the nation became the Kingdom of Israel. Under King David there was peace. Suddenly for the 1st time the nation of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, are in a position to do something significant in the world.

Under Solomon, it looked like Israel may be in a position to be a blessing to the rest of the world. They were wealthy. And they were influential. But Solomon chose to marry the daughters of foreign kings. And Solomon chose to worship their gods as well.

So, as a response, God actually kept a promise, but not his promise to Abraham. His promise to Solomon.

And the Kingdom of Israel was divided. Opportunity lost. In fact, they would never have an opportunity like that again to be a blessing to the surrounding nations. For the next 200 or 300 years there was chaos in both kingdoms. And then northern Kingdom was invaded by Assyria.

Israel can't even bless herself, much less than anyone else and in the midst of all of this chaos. Judah has no position of strength, no position of authority in the world. Right in the midst of that, God sends a prophet Isaiah. ISAIAH 49:6.

Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar come to Jerusalem and destroy the city. The best & brightest are carted off into captivity.

In this chaos God sends another prophet, Malachi. And his words are just impossible. There was no reason to believe any of this. MALACHI 1:11a No, there is no way in the world that your name is going to be great among the nations. MALACHI 1:11b. In other words, God's name will be known throughout the world. MALACHI 1:11c. Anywhere people worship there would be a group that recognizes the Lord Almighty.

In 63 BC Rome sent Pompeii to Judah & Galilee. He would conquer the Jerusalem & annex that whole area into the Republic of Rome. And so began the occupation, the Roman occupation of the Holy Land.

Descendants of Abraham would become a nation, but this unbelievable, incomprehensible and impossible promise would end there. Because all the nations of the world would not be blessed through Abraham.

What makes the story of Christmas so remarkable is when things were as hopeless as they could possibly be, when God's promise to Abraham was as out of reach as it could possibly be. Galatians 4:4a.

When things were just the way God wanted them, when everyone had lost hope and no one was even beginning to dream that God would fulfill his unbelievable, incomprehensible, impossible promise to Abraham. When nobody was expecting it LUKE 1:26-33.

In the end, God did exactly what he promised Abraham, that through Abraham every single nation on the in the world would be blessed. Israel would in fact be a light to the Gentiles.

The history of the Jewish people was the cocoon that birthed the hope of the world, the light of the world, the Savior of the world whose Kingdom would endure forever. And the thing that makes the Christmas story so believable is the fact that the entire story is so remarkable. The Christmas Story really did begin 2000 years before the first Christmas, and the Christmas Story continues to unfold 2000 years after that first Christmas morning.

God decided that through Jesus, salvation would in fact come to every nation, every tribe, every people. Through Christmas, we are reminded in the most remarkable way imaginable that God is active, even when it seems like He's not that God. Even when God is silent, God is not still. And through this remarkable story, we are reminded on a personal level that God is interested in the affairs of men. God can be trusted. He is listening. We are reminded that our Heavenly Father keeps His promises.

3 Principles of Finding Courage in the Chaos

Principle #1: Courage is Formed in the Foundation of Your Faith in the Savior. Hebrews 11:1

Principle #2: Courage Compels You to Draw Near to God and Trust Him as Your Redeemer.
Hebrews 11:2,6

Principle #3: Courage Brings Purpose, Peace, & Hope as You Trust in the Living Word.
Hebrews 11:3