

THE CHRIST-MORE STORY (LUKE 1:28-79)

I'm calling this message, the Christ-More Story. Since "mas" means more in Spanish, instead of Christmas, indulge me if you will, to call it Christ-More. What can be missed in the beautiful Christmas play at one's local church is that, after the shepherds have gone back to their sheep, the 3 wise men or kings, head back east to where they came from, one's heart may have cooled from the warming and touching story of baby Jesus who was wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Even Joseph and Mary and baby Jesus didn't stay in that quaint little town of Bethlehem for long. They headed to Egypt and eventually settled in Nazareth. While we do celebrate the birth of Jesus every year on December 25, and it is important for us to understand how God went about in sending His only begotten Son to this earth to be the Savior to all mankind, there is much more to the story of Christ Jesus though that can keep us inspired, empowered, and our hearts filled with the passion of Christ continually, from now through eternity. This is the Christ-More Story!

With every good story there is at the beginning, a setting of the scene, a giving of the backdrop to the story. The Christmas Story, as it is commonly referred to, is the story of the birth of Jesus to the virgin girl named Mary, through the Holy Spirit of God. Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, who then became a custodial parent, in that Jesus was reared by him and Mary, although Joseph took no part in His being born. I say Joseph was just a custodial parent, yet how important and blessed were Joseph and Mary in being able to take care of and look after the baby Jesus, and then all the way up to His adulthood. That made them blessed though, not divine, meaning they were not and are not of the Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are reminded of that in the account of a woman shouting to Jesus, "'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!" But He said, "**More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!**" (Luke 11:27-28) Yes, Mary was blessed and so was Joseph, and with a bit of similarity, we too as children of God, are blessed, as we are entrusted with Christ Jesus in sharing and showing the love and the gospel of Christ Jesus. We are sharing Christ with others, and then others are sharing Christ with us! It was in Christ Jesus alone, being the Son of God, who was sent by God to be the Savior of the world, to all who would believe on Him. Jesus was to be and is now revealed to us, as the Messiah (Moshiach), or in Greek, the Christ, which means the Anointed One (of God, to be THE Savior to the world). He would, after 3-3-1/2 year ministry, die on a cross for our sins, as He took our sins (against God) upon Himself to justify us before God so that we could be forgiven of our sins, and then have fellowship with God, and with Christ Jesus, and with one another in Christ. We are then also entrusted with His truth, as He dwells in each of us who have believed on Him and received Him, and we then are assured that we will have eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Savior and Lord. That is the foundation of the Christ-More Story.

Jesus summed up God's purpose for Him coming to this earth in **John 3:16-17**, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him **should not perish** but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him **might be saved**." When Jesus was questioned as to why He was hanging out with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus stated, "**I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance**." (**Luke 5:32**)

The backdrop of the story though, according to the gospel of Luke, starts with the telling of how Gabriel, an angel from God, came to Zacharias the priest and told him that his barren wife would bear a child and that his name would be called John. He would, in the words of the angel Gabriel, "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children," and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, **to make ready a people prepared for the Lord**." (**Luke 1:17**) That speaks to the kingdom of God, the family of God, to the calling we have now for us to be one in Christ, having a unity together in our faith in Christ Jesus. That was and is a symbolic representation then of how, after the birth, ministry, and death on a cross of Jesus, for our sins, the Holy Spirit was then promised by Christ Jesus as He said, "**If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—**" (**John 14:15-16**) Similarly, the Apostle Peter, in speaking to the High Priest and the Chief Priests, who had told Peter and the other apostles to stop preaching Christ Jesus, he said, "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be **Prince and Savior**, to give repentance to Israel [and then all nations according to the Great Commission] and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit **whom God has given to those who obey Him**." (**Acts 5:29-32**) Right after Jesus had promised the Holy Spirit to those who obey God, He said this, "**If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him**." (**John 14:23**) That is one of many assurances in the Word of God that He is Immanuel, God with us! "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and **they shall call His name Immanuel**," which is translated, "God with us." (**Matthew 1:23**) Yes, He is so much more for us, as He is not a passive agent that just watches over us, or just walks alongside of us so that we have someone to listen to us about our problems. "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting **Father, Prince of Peace**." (**Isaiah 9:6**) Prince of Shalom. Shalom, being that multifaceted Hebrew word that encompasses a range of meanings related to **peace and completeness, for ourselves, with other people and with God**. The Greek word that means pretty much the same thing is eirene,

"wholeness, completeness", in Christ Jesus, for ourselves, with others, and with God!

It is God, through His Holy Spirit, who is calling us to repentance, (metanoeo), recognizing a need for change and heeding to that need, turning to God for forgiveness of our sins, and to receive Him and His Righteousness, to receive the Holy Spirit, so as to be, born-again, as we are turning away from continuing to sin against God and turning to Him for His Righteousness. Once we have believed on Christ, are led to repentance, and have received Him, we then live the remainder of our lives in our faith in Christ, living in and according to His righteousness. As Jesus said in **John 14:6**, "**I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**" The prophet, John the Baptist would be then, as it was written by Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: **"Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God."** (**Isaiah 40:3**) John the Baptist was preparing the way for the Lord, preparing God's people for the Coming One, and then the finality of his work was when he baptized Jesus, and then also proclaimed, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (**John 1:29**) The angel Gabriel said to Zacharias the priest, John the Baptist's father, "he will turn many of the children of Israel **to the Lord their God.**" (**Luke 1:16**) That is what is referred to as repentance. Later in the story the message that John the Baptist preached was, "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (**Matthew 3:2**) In the telling of the story in Luke he was "preaching a baptism of **repentance, for the remission of sins.**" (**Luke 3:3**) He was preparing the way calling for the people to repent (to have a change of mind, to turn to God and away from their sin) and that Jesus would save them of their sins against God, for He is the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One, the Savior of the world, to all who will believe on Him. To all who will cry out, "save me Lord Jesus!" "For whoever calls on the name of the Lord, shall be saved." (**Romans 10:13**) "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death." (**2 Corinthians 7:10**) Godly sorrow! If the Holy Spirit is leading you to repent, it is not to just bring about sorrow, but to lead you to Christ Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

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LUKE 1:28-38 [Later, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to the virgin Mary, who was betrothed to Joseph. The angel said to her,] "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the **Son of the Highest**; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and

of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the **Son of God**. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. **For with God nothing will be impossible.**" Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her."

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LUKE 1:46-55

[After that, then Mary went to visit the house of Zacharias and Elizabeth, the soon to be parents of John the Baptist. When Mary spoke a greeting to Elizabeth the babe leaped in her womb. It is in the dialogue of Mary and Elizabeth that we have what is called "Mary's Magnificat." She says,] "My soul magnifies **the Lord**, and my spirit has rejoiced in **God my Savior**. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever."

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Mary's "Magnificat", in Mary's magnifying the Lord, it leads us to ask ourselves a couple of questions. She rejoiced in "God my Savior." I believe in her saying that, yes, she did know that she was to give birth to her Lord and Savior. The first question then is for us. Do we know that Jesus is our Savior? Mary also says that God's "mercy is on those who fear Him." Mary was acknowledging, as the Scripture tells us, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." (**James 4:10**) When Mary said "my soul magnifies the Lord", she could have said, "my soul magnifies MY Lord." She was giving reverence and honor to Whom it is due: God Almighty, Creator of all things, the King of kings and Lord of lords, and the Savior of the world, to all who will believe. Do WE then not only recognize Jesus as our Savior but also live according to Christ Jesus as our Lord? After all, if He is our Creator and He is also our Savior, should He not also be our Lord? "He has filled the hungry with good things." As the gospel or good news of Christ Jesus is more than just a heart warming story of the humble beginning of Baby Jesus, are we then not only just recognizing Him as being God Almighty, and our Savior, but that we want more of Him. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." (**Matthew 5:6**) The righteousness of God has been revealed to us in Christ Jesus

our Lord and Savior! Do you or will you say, I want more of you Jesus?! "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" (**Psalm 34:8**) If we are loving God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind we will have the same mindset of King David who said to God, "When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, Lord, I will seek." " (**Psalm 27:8**) Though we may have an active relationship with God, in prayer, in fellowship with Him, and Christ Jesus, and His people, will we say as Moses did to God, "show me Your glory". (**Exodus 33:18**) For anyone who says that isn't intended for you, may we be reminded to where we are going as children of God. "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." That is the Christ-More Story that hopefully we all pursue!

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LUKE 1:67-79 [The next part of the backdrop to the story of the birth of Jesus is going back to the priest Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. He had not been able to talk after the visit from the angel Gabriel in telling him that his wife, Elizabeth would have a child. After the birth of John, Zacharias was] "filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham: to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might **serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.**" And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

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That is called Zacharias' Benedictus. That we "might serve Him **without fear, in holiness and righteousness** before Him all the days of our life." "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." (**1 John 4:18**) Next in the story is Joseph and Mary going to Bethlehem for the census to where there was no room for them in the inn. At that time Mary gave birth and wrapped Him (Jesus) in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger. (**Luke 2:7**) then elsewhere, some shepherds were out watching their flock by night and "...an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of

great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:9-14)

There is more that can be read in this Christmas Story in the gospels according to Matthew and Luke. This story is a message of the hope that we have in Christ Jesus our Lord and the blessings we have in Christ. The Apostle John summed up the story of John the Baptist and Jesus saying, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:6-14)

Just as we read of the Christmas Story in Jesus the Christ being magnified by God as the blessing to all of mankind we can praise God and rejoice in **knowing Jesus**, who came to this earth as a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger Who became for us, our Savior, dying on a cross for our sins and raising from the dead on the third day, conquering death, and sin, and evil and giving eternal life to all who put their trust in Him and that He is "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" and "Immanuel", God is with us!!!

From Mary's Magnificat we are reminded to magnify the Lord & rejoice in God our Savior, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice!" (**Philippians 4:4**), and through Jesus, our Savior and Lord, God is willing and ready to fill all of those who hunger and thirst for His righteousness. Thank You Jesus! Then with Zacharias' Benedictus, we can then "serve [God] without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life."

Therefore, the Christ-More story is, we keep "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (**Hebrews 12:2**) We can rejoice and praise God as He is Immanuel, God is with us!