

The Christmas Touch pt 3

Christmas Is a Time to Touch Heaven

Luke 1:26-56

Good New, Bad News

A man went to see his doctor in an acute state of anxiety. "Doctor," he said, "you have to help me. I'm dying. Everywhere I touch it hurts. I touch my head and it hurts. I touch my leg and it hurts. I touch my stomach and it hurts. I touch my chest and it hurts. You have to help me, Doc, everything hurts."

The doctor gave him a complete examination. "Mr. Smith," he said, "I have good news and bad news for you. The good news is you are not dying. The bad news is you have a broken finger."

It is interesting how the same event can have both good and bad news to it.

We are reminded of that with... The beginning of Charles Dickens' classic, *A Tale of Two Cities*. It starts like this: "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times."

This easily could have been said of the times when Jesus was born. Judea was a vassal state of Rome. Augustus Caesar was emperor and gave watch over Herod who acted as king. During this time, people scrambled to make a living. Poverty and sickness was all about. It was the worst of times.

To make it worse, the prophets were silent. For 400 years, the question had been, "Where is the Messiah?" For many, it was the worst of times.

But for some stargazers in Persia saw it differently. They had observed an unusual planetary alignment making the brightest star they had ever seen. For them it was a good omen, the birth of a new King. It was the best of times.

I think Mary would agree with that. That first Christmas day was the best of times. For... After Mary went through the events of those days, she was filled with wonder.

The text in Luke says...

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. It had been an unbelievable nine months.

She had a lot to think about. A lot had happened. Perhaps she even reflected to the beginning of the story nine months earlier.

We will find in our study of Mary that there are two times we can respond to God's work in our lives (Luke 1:26-56).

I. The first time we should touch God with praise is the GOOD TIMES.

- A. When the news came to Mary about being chosen, she was amazed at the wonder of it all.
 - 1. The angels said that she was “highly favored.”
 - 2. I think she immediately saw the privilege of being selected to carry the Messiah.
 - 3. But, she does not congratulate herself.
She doesn’t come across as if she earned it.
 - 4. Instead, she celebrates God.
- B. SHE TOUCHES GOD WITH PRAISE.
 - 1. She sees clearly a most remarkable thing about God.
 - 2. He is about to change the course of human history...the most important three decades in all time are about to begin.
 - 3. And where is God?
 - 4. He is occupying Himself with two obscure, humble women—one old and barren—the other young and virginal.
 - 5. And Mary’s response is powerful. She excitedly sings a psalm of her own making.
- C. It is a song of worship.
 - 1. When she says, “My soul glorifies the Lord,” the word glorifies is a powerful word, it denotes a mammoth expression of exaltation of who God is. It is mega-exaltation.
 - 2. And then, when she says, “My spirit rejoices in God my Savior” she uses a word that means “overjoyed.”
 - 3. There is an unspeakable joy that is too difficult to express.
 - 4. And while she communicates many things about God’s character, I want to notice one particular one, that is, God is a personal God.
 - 5. He is a personal God by nature who reaches out to His people.

II. The second time we should touch God with praise is the BAD TIMES.

- A. When the news came to Mary about being chosen, she had to wonder

how this would affect her.

1. It was “good times” to be selected by the Lord.
2. But the cost made it the worst of times.
3. Here she was, sexually innocent, about to have a child.
4. She has to tell Joseph an unbelievable story.
She is pregnant by God.
5. Would you have believed it? Probably not.
6. So here we have a disappointed and confused fiancé.
7. Eventually, Joseph does get it right and takes Mary as his wife.

B. But now, to make a difficult pregnancy worse,

1. It’s time for Joseph to go to Bethlehem.
2. When they finally make it, there is no room for them in the inn.
3. And if that wasn’t bad enough, contractions had begun. The baby was on the way.
4. So, the best that they can do is a stable, which certainly was not the most desirable.
5. But, at least they had privacy, until the shepherds showed up.
6. The important aspect I want to note here is the attitude of Mary.

C. SHE TOUCHES GOD WITH PRAISE.

1. She is a true worshiper of God.
2. You can tell a true worshiper because they go through the circumstances of life with a contentment and joy.
3. Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.
4. There was plenty to ponder and be content about.
5. She had the satisfaction that her willingness to be available, usable and obedient was worthwhile, even through all this hardship.

III. There is one way to respond to the times, whether good times or in bad times.

They were a young couple, in the prime of life, they had just had their second child a little girl, she was to compliment her 3 year older sister, Layne. Kieth was a deputy sheriff, wanting to follow in the footsteps of his father and become a game warden, Dianne was a dispatcher, and now the mother of two beautiful girls. Their life was good, as a matter of fact for that next year **it was the best of times.**

Then late one night, Dianne would awaken to a strange sound coming from the babies room, she got up to find out if her baby was ok, but she wasn't she was having a seizure, it would be classified as a grand mall seizure. They would rush her to the little hospital nearby, but none of the Dr's. there had an explanation, in desperation she was rushed off to Minneapolis to the University Hospital and all of the specialist. They too were baffled, finally they tried inducing the child into a coma to try and stop the constant seizures. Noone knows for sure, was it a dirty needle, the seizures etc. that brought the extremely high fever, but the results would soon be known by all. It had done it's damage, effectively frying her little brain. She would never again be the same. **It was the worst of times.**

Soon they and there little girl returned home, all had changed. The one they brought back with them was not the same. She stared off as in a complete daze. No longer the chuckle and smiles that they have become used to. Not the baby sister Layne had imagined growing up with, not the little grandchild the grandparents had adored so dearly. She was almost a vegetable. She could no longer eat by herself, she had to be fed through a feeding tube. Her seizures would come and go some more severe lasting up to 10 minutes or more, others less noticeable, but still bad enough. She begin to cry almost 20 out of 24 hours. The medical bills piled up, both parents were almost at the end of the line. They desperately needed help so they contacted an organization in the twin cities who specialized placing children in special foster homes. It would take 6 mts before their prayers were answered and the right home was found.

Still it was not easy, they weren't abandoning their child, they were just seeking help. But would people understand, would Layne understand, would they be able to overcome the guilt. Getting the help they needed was good, leaving their precious Joslyn with a strange family 200 miles away was hard. **At that point, it was the best of times and the worst of times.** At least the family shared their faith and that was good. Now being seen by experts, a new diet was set, solving the constipation problems and the crying. They came and were welcome to come

whenever they could, and were even able to take her home a few days at a time. Layne was almost jealous because her baby sister had a home in the country and in the city. It was evident to all that this special girl needed two families to take care of her and a special bond developed between all involved. This arrangement was to last for more than 6 years with many challenges, some moves, court battles, and victories. The obstacles were met face on by a strong bond between both families and a strong faith in God. It was not easy, **but considering everything, it was the best of times, at least relatively speaking.**

Then one fall day, six years later something changed, status seizures set in, the worse they had seen since the horrible day over 6 years ago. She was taken from ND to the twin cities by air ambulance and placed in the Children's hospital. It was soon evident that her time was drawing close. The seizures were almost constant, never ending only getting harder and harder. Her body was shutting down, it was only a matter of time, it was the worst of times. Yet faith was still able to praise God, believing that soon she would be healed not in this world, but in the next. No more seizures, no more feeding tubes, no more shots, she had earned the nickname pooky because they would have to poke her so often and her little mouth showed the pain, but the silence demonstrated the trek that had been placed in years before. Then on a faithful night six weeks later in the arms of her foster dad, the angels came for her and ushered her into the presence of a loving father, well done my child, come and claim your reward. As hard as it was for all of those left behind, **it was once again the best of times**, and God was to be praised and was by all who knew the story best. By Keith and Diane, by Helen and Marv and even by Layne and Eric and Trent. Now Joselyn had a mansion in heaven, now Joslyn could run and talk, no more pain, no more seizures, no more Dr's, only peace, and the touch of a loving heavenly father.

So you see, as children of God even in times like this we can and must

A. TOUCH GOD WITH OUR PRAISE.

1. Today, more than ever, is a time for worship, for the spirit of Christmas is worship.
2. Gordon Dahl says, "In our culture we tend to worship our work, work at our play, and play at our worship."
3. How true these words seem to be, especially during this time of the year.
4. This is not a time for play, but a time for worship, for there is good news all about.
5. The distance between man and God is not something of God's

creation, but of man's.

6. Man has created the distance. But...God has bridged the gap.
7. For unto you is born in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

B. This is worth our worship.

1. We have opportunity to celebrate His promise-keeping character.
2. For some, life is pretty sweet right now.
 - a. You have family all about.
It is a time of happiness.
3. For others, life is more bittersweet and difficult, or just plain sour.

C. The angel Gabriel, gives us a reason.

1. "For nothing is impossible with God."
2. Whatever you face today, it is not impossible for God.
3. Understand that Mary, both through the good times and the bad times praised God.
4. For with fingers of faith, she reached out and touched the face of God (as she held Him in her lap and peered into His face.)
5. So as we sing this hymn think about the great things the Lord has done for you.
Let your praise be rooted in this reality...that God is no longer far off, but always on site.
6. There is the worst of times, but there will also be the best of times and it will last for eternity. Let us praise as we pray.