

Introduction

We hear a lot of talk this time of year about "the reason for the season." The text Dennis read earlier, Matthew 1:18-25, reveals what that reason is. It reveals why Jesus came and I'd like to talk about that.

Jesus Came to Save Us

Look at the word "**name**" in verses 21, 23, and 25. That's always a concern with children isn't it, giving them a good name. And parents today have developed a variety of methodologies for doing so. One of those is called the *Funny the First Time* methodology. Parents pick a name (usually a pun) that makes people laugh. Thus, the Pipe's named their son Dwayne – Dwayne Pipe. Or the Candy's named their daughter Penny – Penny Candy. Another is the *Named Him After My Favorite* methodology. I have a 50 year-old nephew, for instance, Mickey, named after my brother's favorite baseball player, Mickey Mantle.

But giving their son a good name wasn't a concern Mary and Joseph had. That's because they didn't name Him. According to verse 21, Father God did. He named Him Jesus.

Notice something in the second half of the verse though. Father God used a methodology just as all parents do. It's what I would call the *What He Will Do* methodology. The Greek word translated "Jesus" means "**The Salvation of the Lord.**" That as a name fit precisely with what He came to do and would do. As the second half of verse 21 says it, "**He will save His people from their sins.**"

You now know the reason for the season - why Jesus came. It was to save us. Every other reason for the season is secondary to that.

How He Saved Us

That's what Jesus came to do and the Bible makes clear how He did it. It's through what is called His "finished" and "continuing" work.

His finished work has four parts.

The first part is what we're celebrating tonight – His birth. As Hebrews 2:17 says it, He was made like us in all things.

The second part is the sinless and perfect life He lived on earth for 33 years. Had He sinned in word, thought, or deed even once during that life He lived, He could not have saved us.

The third part is His substitutionary death. He took all our sins into Himself on the cross and paid the penalty for them that we should have paid so that we wouldn't have to.

And finally, the fourth part of His finished work is His resurrection. In the power of the Holy Spirit, He rose from the dead.

But it isn't just through His finished work that Jesus saves us. It's through His continuing work as well. 40 days after His resurrection, He ascended into heaven. He now, in conjunction with the Father and Holy Spirit, works supernaturally in, through, and for us.

That then is how Jesus saves us. It's through His finished and continuing work.

What It Means to Be Saved

But what does it mean that He saves us? Verse 21 tells us. Look at the phrase "**from their sins.**" That Jesus saves us means that He forgives our sins and gives us eternal life, life after death forever. At that point, death is gain for us and we're ready to die.

I often tell this story about Francis of Assisi. He was tending a row of vegetables in a garden one day when a man approached and asked him a penetrating question, "**What would you do if you knew you were going to die in ten minutes?**" Francis looked up, paused, and quietly replied, "**Try to finish this row.**"

To be saved means to be ready to die – to have the same peace in the face of death that Francis had.

But that isn't all it means. The New Testament teaches that it means more than being ready to die. It also means being ready to live.

Jesus not only gives us eternal life after we die. He gives us an eternal kind of life before we die as well.

A few weeks ago, a man from our church was slowly pushing his shopping cart at Wal-Mart when an impatient man behind him sarcastically said, **“You’re moving so slow, I hope you get to where you want to go.”** Some years ago, the man’s comment would have disturbed him, he admits, and he would have replied just as sarcastically – and maybe even argued with him. But at this point in his life, it didn’t disturb him at all. He was at perfect peace, free of all inner and outer striving, and kindly replied, **“Thank you for your concern.”**

Let me ask you. Which condition of life is better? Is it to be disturbed and reply sarcastically? Or is it to be at perfect peace and reply kindly? It is, beyond any doubt, the second.

That illustrates the eternal kind of life that Jesus increasingly gives those whom He saves. It’s one of pervasive and habitual love, peace, and joy. Approximately 80 billion people have lived in human history. Each and every one of those (whether the medieval peasant or world class athlete) has sought the same condition of life, one of pervasive and habitual love, peace, and joy. It’s what we call “the good life” and is exactly what Jesus gives those whom He saves.

So that’s what it means that Jesus saves us. He forgives our sins and gives us eternal life after we die. He also transforms what we are and gives us an eternal kind of life before we die.

How to Be Saved

All of us want that I’m sure and the good news is we can have it. Jesus wasn’t just born, Luke 2:7. He also ascended, Ephesians 1:20. As a result of that, Ephesians 1:21, He is **“far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.”** Jesus is no longer a baby in a manger. He is instead the absolute Lord and Master of the universe.

Which clearly implies what we must do to be saved. We must respond rightly to the Lordship of Jesus. We respond rightly by apprenticing ourselves to Him. We make and carry out the decision to be with Him in order to learn and do all that He says.

If you could ask the man at Wal-mart to explain the transformation in his life, I know what he'd say, "**I apprenticed myself to Jesus.**"

Do you want the good life? Apprentice yourself to Jesus. Make and carry out the decision to be with Him in order to learn and do all that He says. You'll get it if you do.

Conclusion

Rich Miller sums it up well and I close with his words: "**When Christ entered our world, He didn't come to brighten our Decembers, but to transform our lives.**" Now and forever!