

When we used to go to CLAN Gathering, or another Christian conference, I loved watching the people doing **the signing for the** deaf. I have never really spent time around anyone who could use sign language, and so I was just fascinated with how they used their hands to communicate with one another. They seemed so fluid in their ability to talk and sing with people who were deaf; and the expressions on their faces as they shared was priceless. As I watched, I was particularly moved seeing how praise was expressed.

Our boys were quite young at the time and I can remember thinking as I watched parents talking to their children that, if my children had been born hearing impaired, I would learn sign language because I would want to communicate with them. I would want them to know without a doubt how much I loved them and cared for them, how valuable they were to me, how much they matter to God. Learning sign language wouldn't be a burden but an expression of love.

Seeing sign language helped me to reflect upon the significance of what God has done for us. I see in that experience a living parable. We are here on earth, busy living our lives, pursuing our own agendas, but deaf to God's voice. **Isaiah 6:10** *I've got something to say. Is anybody listening? I've a warning to post. Will anyone notice? It's hopeless! Their ears are stuffed with wax— deaf as a post, blind as a bat. It's hopeless! They've tuned out God.*

**Zechariah 7:11** *“But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and covered their ears. <sup>12</sup> They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the Lord Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the Lord Almighty was very angry.*

**Matthew 13:14-15** *“These people will listen and listen, but never understand. They will look and look, but never see. <sup>15</sup> All of them have stubborn minds! Their ears are stopped up, and their eyes are covered. They cannot see or hear or understand. If they could, they would turn to me, and I would heal them.”*

**God wants us** to turn to him, to listen to him, yet so many people, often including us, simply choose to block him out. We don't hear what God is trying to say to us. God has been trying to communicate His message to humanity, but we aren't getting it. But rather than give up in frustration, God loves us so much that He desperately wants to reveal Himself to us in ways that we can understand. So, He sends His very own Son to communicate His message in a way that we can understand. That is the miracle of Christmas. That is the miracle of the message.

Our Advent sermon series is about the Miracle of Christmas. It is not enough to just know about the miracle of Christmas. We need to experience the **miracle of Christmas** in our own hearts and lives. Last week we thought about the miracle of the moment – Jesus came at just the right time. Today we want to focus on The Miracle of the Message. We are using clips from the movie, Miracle on 34th Street, to help us illustrate and understand the miracle of Christmas.

In today's clip from the movie, we saw how Kris Kringle interacted with a little girl who had come to the department store to see Santa. Part of the plot is that the daughter of Mrs. Walker doesn't believe in Santa and she witnesses Kris communicating with this little girl in a way that the little girl could understand.

Did you see the miracle of the message? Kris Kringle communicated in a way the girl understood. He was able to speak her language. **Hebrews 1:1-2** records this miracle of the message from God: *In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.*

God sent Jesus to communicate His message in a way that we can understand! The miracle of the message is that God speaks to us today so that we can know Him and draw near to Him!

### **I. God speaks through history**

God has been speaking throughout history to reveal Himself to us. He wants us to know Him, to love Him, to worship Him, to serve him and follow him. God reveals Himself through His creation, through the sunrise and sunset, through the sun, moon and stars.

God spoke to Moses in the burning bush, He spoke to the Israelites from the smoke and fire on the mountain,

He spoke to Elijah in a still, small voice, to Isaiah in a vision in the temple.

God spoke to Hosea through his family circumstances and to Amos in a basket of summer fruit. He spoke to Jeremiah through a potter's clay and to Joseph through dreams. God even spoke His message through a donkey!

God has been speaking His message through visions and dreams, through angels, through preachers and prophets, through symbols, natural events, and many other means.

He could reveal Himself in Ur of the Chaldees, in Haran, or Canaan, Egypt, Babylon. There is no lack of variety, because God's revelation is not a monotonous activity that must always occur in the same place or the in the same way. God has been speaking throughout history in a variety of places through a variety of means in order to make Himself and His will known.

Prior to the coming of Christ there had been 400 years of silence. Since the prophet Malachi last uttered his messages from God, there had been no prophets until John the Baptist arrived. God's revelations in the Old Testament were fragmentary, occasional, and progressive, because no single one of them contained the whole truth. They could not adequately capture the full picture of God's nature.

God had been speaking, but people weren't getting the message. They didn't understand God's heart. They didn't understand God's plan. Too many claimed to be speaking for God, but they misrepresented Him to others and those who were speaking for God were ridiculed, or worse.

Confusion, not understanding, resulted.

## **II. God speaks through Jesus**

But now, at last, God sent His Son to bring His message to us! In the Lord Jesus Christ, God revealed Himself directly to us. It is true that God revealed Himself through the words spoken by Jesus, through His message, but He did more than that. Jesus Christ is the living, divine Son of God. He did more than just proclaim God's message - He is God's message.

Jesus came to reveal God, to make Him known to us in ways that we can understand. The writer of Hebrews goes on to say of **Jesus in verse 3**, "*The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of His nature, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*" John's Gospel describes Jesus as the Word becoming flesh and living among us. **John 1:14** *The Word became a human being and lived here with us. We saw his true glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father. From him all the kindness and all the truth of God have come down to us.*

If you want to know what God is like, look to Jesus! When Philip asked Jesus to show them the **Father, Jesus replied**, "*Have I been among you all this time without your knowing Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father*" (John 14:9). Jesus declares in John 10:30 *I and the Father are one.*

In the OT, God reveals himself through different people and circumstances but we see his compassion for the poor, the sick and the foreigner. Debt is abolished in years of Jubilee and there are cities of refuge. The rich are expected to care for the poor and workers are expected to be paid properly for their work. Religious leaders are castigated for their failure to follow God's instructions and allow the people to follow other gods.

What we see is Jesus challenging the religious authorities, turning over the tables of the money lenders in the Temple, spending time with the sick, the poor and the downtrodden. He heals the sick and raises the dead. In short, he sets the example of godly living, so that, in his life we learn how to live.

## **III. God speaks to transform**

The miracle of the message is not just in the fact that God speaks to us today through His Son, but that the message has the power to transform our lives. **John 10:10** *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

**2 Corinthians 5:17** *Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new.*

Christmas is the celebration of the greatest message ever proclaimed. God is with us. God came near so that we could draw near to Him.

**2 Corinthians 5:19-21** *What we mean is that God was in Christ, offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world. And he has given us the work of sharing his message about peace. We were sent to speak for Christ, and God is begging you to listen to our message. We speak for Christ and sincerely ask you to make peace with God. Christ never sinned! But God treated him as a sinner, so that Christ could make us acceptable to God.*

Why would He do that? Because He wanted us to know how very **much He loves us**. He wanted us to know that He created us for a reason - that we might know and love Him. He came to proclaim the message that we have been set free. We don't have to live as prisoners to guilt and regret.

## **Conclusion**

Some of you this past year have received messages that have certainly changed your life. Some of you heard that difficult message from the doctor. You heard the message from your child, "I'm getting divorced." You heard the message from your employer, "You're fired." As a result of the message your life has changed. Perhaps it is more subtle than that. Perhaps the message you hear is, "You're useless." "You're worthless." "You can't."

But in the midst of all, there is another message. "Nothing whatsoever can ever separate you from my love." He speaks, "Trust in Me with all your heart and don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge me, and I will direct your paths." In the midst of life's betrayals and bitter messages He whispers, "Forgive those who mistreat you." In the midst of life's messages of joy and celebration He shouts, "Rejoice, with great joy!" He whispers: "You're so loved and valued." "You're my special child." "You can, if you trust me."

The miracle of Christmas is the miracle of the message - God loves you and me! Are you listening? Believe the message God is speaking to you and your life will never be the same!