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"Focus on Christmas"

For the next four weeks, we will again look at lessons written during the warmer days of 2013. These lessons are connected by a common word. We will study about the birth of our Savior from an "ultimate" perspective.



The Ultimate Mission Trip

Scripture: John 19:30, Philippians 2:6-9, John 1:14, Luke 19:10, Luke 4: 17-21

Lesson Goal: To better understand Jesus' mission trip.

I wish that every member of Mars Hill Baptist Church could experience the blessing of going on a mission trip at least once. I understand there are health issues and various other legitimate reasons that do not allow many the blessing of an international or cross-country mission trip. Although some are unable to go, many have joined the mission cause as great prayer warriors and generous financial supporters. For a mission trip to be truly successful and God-honoring, each of us must do our part. Your part may be making cloth dolls to give to the children, driving the team to and from the airport, daily filling the prayer bowl with prayer, or perhaps quietly and unnoticeably placing an offering of love into someone's hand.

Missions for Mars Hill Baptist is not an option; it is a calling. And missions is not so much about what we do as about who we are. Whether it's working a booth at the Harvest Festival, filling a shoe box, or buying a backpack for an unknown child, "mission" defines who we are—Mars Hill Baptist Church. Missions should be a passion for all of us. There should be a burning desire in all our hearts to see the lost come to salvation in Jesus Christ. This burning desire is what gets wells dug, concrete floors poured, bags of food distributed, and the name of Jesus proclaimed. This burning desire takes us to places like Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, but it also takes us to the elementary schools, to the gyms, and the ball fields of our own communities. The same passion that carries us across the world carries us across the street. Our mission, be it far or near, is to tell others that Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

Today we will learn about "The Ultimate Mission Trip." Had it not been for the ultimate mission trip, we would all still be lost in our sins. Before we look into today's Scripture passages, it's important for us to understand the meaning of the word "ultimate." This word can be used both as a noun and as an adjective. As a noun, it means "the best achievable or imaginable of its kind." Today, we will focus on the adjective definition: "being the best or most extreme example of its kind."

John 19:30

As we read this Scripture, we quickly notice this is not the Christmas scene, but the scene of Christ's crucifixion. From the cross, Jesus spoke the words translated as "It is finished." In the original language, this phrase has multiple meanings. One of which translates into English as "mission accomplished."

* What was the mission accomplished in John 19:30?

As we study about this John 19:30 mission accomplishment, it will help to read Philippians 2:6-9, giving careful attention to verses 7 and 8.

* How did the cross fit into the ultimate mission trip? *Please give prayerful thought to your answer.*

John 1:14

* What does it mean that the Word became flesh? Where and how did this occur? To help with these answers, please read Luke 1:26-38 and Luke 2:1-7.

To further understand the ultimate mission trip, read Luke 19:10.

* Explain what it means that Jesus "has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

* Referring back to Luke 19:10, explain the following statement: "Jesus' mission was the ultimate rescue mission."

Jesus' mission helps us to understand His ministry. In fact, His ministry is an extension of His mission. Please read Luke 4:17-21.

* Describe how Jesus' mission was truly a rescue mission.

The Ultimate Question—Have you been rescued by Jesus?

Go Tell It On The Mountain

Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere;
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born.

While shepherds kept their watching
Over silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens,
There shone a holy light:

Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere;
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born.

Down in a lowly manger
Our humble Christ was born
And God send us salvation,
That blessed Christmas morn:

Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere;
Go, tell it on the mountain
That Jesus Christ is born (Work, II.).

The Ultimate Christmas Gift

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9:15

Lesson Goal: To better understand the ultimate Christmas gift.

Introduction: In last week's lesson "The Ultimate Mission Trip," we learned of Jesus' ultimate mission "to seek and to save the lost." Today, we turn our attention to "The Ultimate Christmas Gift."

Have you ever received a gift that was so wonderful it was literally indescribable? As you tried to express your excitement, appreciation and gratitude you said something like: "I just don't have the words to adequately describe how I feel." If that has ever happened to you, you know a little of how the Apostle Paul felt when he wrote 2 Corinthians 9:15. Please read this verse again.

(V15a) Verse 15 begins with something very much like a shout of "hallelujah praise." Paul's exclamation: "Thanks be to God!" is not casual or lighthearted. These words are a declaration of praise and thanksgiving, expressing the most sincere pronouncement possible—Thanks be to God!

In the seemingly simple words, "Thanks be to God," we see the fountain flowing with words of doxology (meaning "praise to God"):

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below,
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

- * **In the last few weeks, what has God taught you concerning praise and thanksgiving?**
- * **How do you express your praise to God?**
- * **How does our personal, private praise affect our public collective praise?**
- * **Please finish the following statement.**
Praise is the result of...

(V15b) In the second portion of verse 15, we find the reason for the Apostle Paul's great testimony of thanksgiving and praise: "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift." We should read this verse in connection with 2 Corinthians 8:9. Please read.

The indescribable gift of which Paul writes is the gift of God's own Son. Please read John 3:16. Now carefully, slowly, and prayerfully read it again listening, hearing, and receiving each word. Worship Him as you read these wonderful words of life.

We cannot fully comprehend or appreciate the blessed fact that **God gave**. Think on the truth that **God gave**. Pray on and over the truth that **God gave**. Literally speak aloud the word of truth **God gave**. Meditate on the truth that **God gave**. With the help of the Spirit, say the words—**God gave**.

Prayerfully contemplate these questions.

1. Why would God give?
2. Why would God, the Creator of the universe, give to *us*?

Please read 1 John 5:11, Galatians 1:3-5 and 2:20, and Titus 2:11-14.

- * **Read John 1:12 and prayerfully testify by writing what it means to you personally that *God gave*.**

(V15b) “His indescribable gift”

Indescribable means “not able to describe, not able to fully explain, without words of description, beyond explanation.” The *ultimate* Christmas gift is the one the Apostle Paul describes as “indescribable.” This ultimate Christmas gift is the gift of God’s Son to the world by which God made a way of salvation for all of us (whosoever).

I ask each of you to do something very special during this Christmas season? Would you take just a few minutes, before you start enjoying the blessing of opening gifts, and read Luke 2:1-20? Then pause and thank God for “The Ultimate Christmas Gift.”

As your class comes to a close today, please lift your voices in praise. “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”

O Come, All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold Him,
Born the King of Angels!
O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning,
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing!
O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord!
(Wade)

The Ultimate Good News

Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

Lesson Goal: To learn that the “Ultimate Good News” is good news for all people, even the good ole boys.

We begin with Luke 1:11-14. In these verses, we see an angel of the Lord appearing to a man named Zacharias, whom we would describe as a senior adult. Zacharias and his senior adult wife, Elizabeth, had not been able to have children. But on this day, as described in verse 13, the angel tells Zacharias that his prayers have been heard and that Elizabeth would have a baby boy whose name was to be John.

According to verse 12, when Zacharias saw the angel he was shocked and afraid, but the angel spoke words of comfort and power: “Do not be afraid.” The angel also told him that the birth of his son, John, would be a time of gladness and joy. The Scriptures declare that John would be a mighty man of God. Read Luke 2:14-17.

Found throughout the Christmas story are the words “fear not” and “do not be afraid.” These words were spoken not only to Zacharias but also to a virgin named Mary, a man named Joseph, and to a band of “good ole boy” shepherds.

Fear is something we all encounter at some time. We usually try to hide our fear; in fact, often we try to master fear by masking it or cope with it through over-aggression. Bullying would be an example of this coping method.

* **What are some things that cause you to fear today?**

Answering this question may be difficult, because to answer, requires an admission of fear. Do your fears relate to growing older, to the economy, fixed incomes, college expenses, mortgage payments, health issues, healthcare, issues of children and grandchildren?

* In the heart of the Christmas story, we find the words “Fear not.” Please read 2 Timothy 1:7. What does this verse say about fear in the life of the true believer?

We move from Zacharias to the story of the angel’s visit with Mary. Please read Luke 1:26-30. Did you again read the words: “Do not be afraid”? What do you believe were some of the things that may have gone through young Mary’s mind when she received this news?

* **What may have been some of Mary’s fears?**

* **The angel said to Mary: “Do not be _____.”**

Please read Matthew 1:18-25. Again we read the words in verse 20: “Do not be afraid.” This time the words are spoken to Mary’s fiancé, Joseph.

* **What were some of Joseph’s fears?**

Now we turn our attention to the shepherds—the good ole boys. The term “good ole boys” is used with respect and appreciation. Please read Luke 2:8-20, giving special attention to verse 10.

Here we again find the words: “Do not be afraid.” This time the angel speaks the words to the good ole boys—the callused-hands guys. Those guys that smell like sweat, sheep and dirt. In a special way, these guys represent the plain old ordinary folks of the world. This would be the class to which I belong. These guys were accustomed to tents, not palaces. They cooked over an open fire, not in a rotisserie oven. They dreamed under the stars, not of becoming stars. On this night, the greatest announcement in the history of the world is given to these lowly good ole boy shepherds. The announcement begins with: “Do not be afraid.” What started out like a thousand nights before, just another night in the lives of these shepherds, was interrupted by a heavenly visit to announce “The Ultimate Good News.”

Read verses 10 and 11.

“For there is born to you”

This Savior is the Savior of all people of all lands, even the good old boys of the world. This Savior is not just for the elite, but for *all* people. He is the Savior that the Old Testament prophesied. He is the Savior Scripture has declared, and now on this night, He has been born in Bethlehem. The joy of this good news is that it is “The Ultimate Good News” which “will be to all people.”

Quickly, the shepherds made their way to Bethlehem to see this which was spoken of by the angels (please read verses 15-20), and there they found everything just as the angel had told them. Imagine what it must have been like for these shepherds. In just a couple of hours they have gone from pulling night watch to stepping into the very presence of the “Newborn King.”

- * **How do you think the shepherds felt?**
- * **What must their emotions have been like on this night? Remember it started with fear, but where are their emotions now? Read verse 20.**
- * **What brought about this change? Was it “The Ultimate Good News”?**

Remembering that Christmas is only five days away, please join with the good ole boy shepherds to glorify and praise God for “The Ultimate Good News.” As a class, lift your voices together.

Joy to the World

Joy to the World, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the World, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love
(Watts).

...especially to all the good ole boys.—Your pastor and friend, Bro. Mick

The Ultimate New Beginning

Lesson Goal: To better understand the new beginning offered by Jesus Christ.

If you haven't, you will soon. If you have already, you probably will again. If you haven't, you don't have to, but you probably will. Oh, that special time when we take the Christmas decorations down. The Christmas tree is put in its box and sent to that accumulation sight where all good Christmas trees end up. Have you ever noticed, it's not nearly as much fun to put away all the Christmas stuff as it was to put it out before Christmas?

A Word of Personal Testimony

It's a fact that I personally try to avoid the "put the stuff away" time. I have told Cindy that putting the stuff away causes me to be depressed. She usually responds that I need to face my fears. My after-Christmas job is to take the boxes and boxes and boxes back down to the basement where they will be safely stored until next Christmas. It's just really hard for me to get pumped about putting the Christmas stuff away for another year. I guess I still have a lot of little boy in me, even at my age.

In a matter of a few days, the clock will strike midnight, the ball will drop in Time Square, thousands will sing *Auld Lang Syne*, and 2015 will be history. The new year will bring new beginnings, new resolutions, new dreams to be dreamed.

Please read 2 Corinthians 5:17.

This "Ultimate New Beginning" has nothing to do with a new year or New Year's resolutions. In fact, many of my well intended New Year's resolutions don't even make it into February. The *new beginning* of this lesson is found in the fact of our position in Jesus Christ when we accept Him as our Savior and Lord.

- * **What does it mean to accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?**
- * **If Jesus is truly your Savior, do you have a passion and desire to make Him your Lord?**
- * **In verse 17, we find the words: "if anyone is in Christ." Notice the word "anyone." How are the words "whosoever" and "anyone" related? See John 3:16 and 2 Corinthians 5:17.**

The "old creation" is our life outside of Jesus Christ before we accept Him as our personal Savior. The "new creation" is our life *in* Christ. When we become followers of Jesus Christ, through faith in Him as our Savior and Lord, what are some things that become new in our lives? Allow me to get you started with your answer.

Some things that become new in our lives when we become followers of Jesus include:

- 1) New eternal destination
- 2) New friend who will never leave or forsake me
- 3) New power to live life
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)

- * **What does it mean to you personally that in Jesus you are a new creation?**

If you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you can accept Him today and become a new creation experiencing "The Ultimate New Beginning." Your teacher will be glad to talk with you and help you make the greatest decision of your life. In fact, you can do it right now. Whether you are a teenager, a senior adult or any age in between, simply surrender your life to Christ. You may ask how to do that. It begins with honesty. Just be honest with yourself and with God; admit you are a sinner. You may even want to pray this simple prayer.

Dear God, I know I am a sinner, and because of my sin I am deserving of hell. But God, You made a

way that my sins could be forgiven. So through Your Son, Jesus Christ, I ask You to forgive me of all my sins. I believe with all my heart that Jesus Christ died for me, that He was buried, and on the third day He was raised from the dead to live forevermore. Today in faith, I trust Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord, and I begin my new journey of life with Him. Today, and for the rest of my life, let me live for You, Jesus. Thank You for saving me. Amen.

If you have prayed this prayer today, please tell your teacher, one of our staff members, or come tell me. We want to rejoice with you.

Happy New Beginning!
Bro. Mick

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