

# BRIDGING THE GAP

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## From the Pastor's Desk

### "The Announcement"

"He will be great and will be called the Son of  
the most High"

Luke 1:32

Mary was young and poor. She had all the characteristic that the people of her day would make her seem unstable for any major task. But God chose Mary for one of the most important acts of obedience He had ever demanded of anyone. You may feel that your situation in life makes you an unlikely candidate for God's service, but He can use you if you trust Him. God's blessing does not automatically bring instant success, fame, or favor. His blessing on Mary to be the mother of Jesus would lead to much pain. Praised by countless generations as blessed among

women, her submission led to our salvation. Jesus is a Greek form of the Hebrew word *Joshua* which was a common name meaning savior. Just as Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land so Jesus would lead His people into eternal life. In Jesus' name people were healed and demons were banished and sins were forgiven. The birth of Jesus to a Virgin is a miracle that many people find hard to believe. Jesus was born without the sin that entered the world through Adam. He was born holy just as Adam was created sinless. Mary said despite the possible costs, "I am willing." She didn't know about the tremendous blessing she would receive. She only knew God was asking her to serve Him and she obeyed. **DON'T WAIT TO SEE THE BOTTOM LINE BEFORE OFFERING YOUR LIFE TO GOD.** The announcement of a child's birth was met with various responses throughout Scripture. Sarah, Abraham's wife laughed, Zacharias doubted, but Mary submitted. She believed the angel's words and agreed to bear the child, even under humanly impossible circumstances. Motherhood is a painful privilege and Mary had the unique privilege of being the mother to the very Son of God. A big part of her painful privilege of motherhood would be to see her son rejected and crucified by the people he came to save. There are many lessons we can learn from her life. God's best servants are often plain people available to Him. His plans often involve extraordinary events in ordinary people. A person's character is revealed by His or Her response to the unexpected.

Luke 1:38 "I am the Lord's servant and I am willing to do whatever He wants, may everything you said come true."

We as Christians should be willing to accept God's will for us, no matter how costly it is. Our responsibility is to obey God, regardless of the personal consequences. It is the work of the Kingdom that counts and we should be willing to make any sacrifice required to carry it on.

IF YOU WERE TOLD THAT YOU OR YOUR PARENTS WERE TO HAVE A CHILD THIS YEAR HOW WOULD YOU REACT? For some of us that would be a miracle. So in what area of your life do you need to believe that nothing is impossible with God? God had predicted this even over and over. Now the time had come. The announcement was informal and simple, but it was to be the greatest announcement ever made. Is God asking you to step out in faith, and trust him to do the impossible in your life? Maybe God is saying to our church, "Trust me, step out, dream big, think in impossible terms.

Will you be the one? Can you say "I am willing to do whatever God wants?" Mary did. Wow, think about the victory we have in Jesus Christ our Savior and celebrate Christmas, not the gifts but the GIFT!

Enjoy the Journey,  
Pastor Clayton

## **Sermon Topics and Service Outlines December 2006**

**December 3 Second Sunday of Advent:**  
**Theme: "Keeping Watch"**  
AM SERVICE "Unified Because of Christ"  
Luke 2:15-16  
Pastor Clayton

**PM SERVICE: "Fresh Service"**  
**Pastor Brian**

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**December 10 Third Sunday of Advent:**  
**Theme: "Keeping Watch"**  
AM SERVICE: "The Message of Truth"  
Luke 2:17-18  
Pastor Clayton

**PM SERVICE: CHRISTMAS DINNER  
STARTING AT 5:00 PM!**

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**December 17 Fourth Sunday of Advent:**  
**Theme : "Keeping Watch"**  
**Christ's Birthday Offering**  
AM SERVICE: Faithful to The End"  
Luke 2:20  
Pastor Clayton

**PM SERVICE: CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS  
PROGRAM!**

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**December 24 CHRISTMAS EVE**  
AM SERVICE: "Christmas is Coming"  
Pastor Clayton

**PM SERVICE: FAMILY COMMUNION  
4 TO 6 PM**

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**December 31 NEW YEAR'S EVE**  
AM SERVICE: "Time Is On My Side"  
Pastor Clayton

**PM SERVICE: NEW YEAR'S EVE  
SERVICE 8 TO MIDNIGHT**

## Stewardship Month

**In January we will begin a series about Stewardship from the Book of Genesis. This will be a four week preaching series:**

- Week 1** Isn't it all Mine?
- Week 2** the Blessings we Don't Deserve
- Week 3** How Am I Doing?
- Week 4** Lasting Returns

Most Christians would readily say that God is the Lord of their lives. But too many of us live our lives like toddlers, clinging tightly to things we don't even own. God has provided everything for us, our lives, our possessions, our abilities to earn a living and yet too often we don't acknowledge that He alone is the Source. As our grips tighten, we find ourselves struggling with every concept of Lordship. In January we will talk about the concept of Lordship Living and what it means to allow God to be our Provider. We will be exploring four main areas of Lordship Living: Ownership, Relationship, Trust and Faithfulness. I pray that our hearts will be filled with a desire to become better stewards of all God provides as we focus on how much God loves you and me and how much He wants to be Lord of every part of life.

Pastor Clayton

## Sunday School Spotlight

Thank you for helping up fill the Rainbow! Because of your presence, bringing your Bibles, and inviting friends to Sunday School, we were able to complete the Rainbow in seven weeks. We hope you enjoyed your special surprise "at the end of the Rainbow."

In some of your classes, the lessons have been centered around God's faithfulness to the Covenants He makes. Noah, Elijah, David and King Solomon were just a few examples of people who experience God's faithfulness.

If you are not currently attending a Sunday School class, we have classes for all ages. We would love for you to try one. Hiding God's Word

in your heart is one of the greatest Blessings you will receive!

"I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth." Genesis 9:13

Jayn Willeford  
Sunday School Superintendent

## A Different Christmas Poem

The embers glowed softly, and in their dim light,  
I gazed round the room and I cherished the sight,  
My wife was asleep, her head on my chest,  
My daughter beside me, angelic in rest.  
Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white,  
Transforming the yard to a winter delight.  
The sparkling lights in the tree I believe,  
Completed the magic that was Christmas Eve.  
My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep,  
Secure and surrounded by love I would sleep,  
In perfect contentment, or so it would seem,  
So I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.

The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near,  
But I opened my eyes when it tickled my ear.

Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know,  
Then the  
Sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.  
My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear,  
And I crept to the door just to see who was near.  
Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night,  
A lone figure stood his face weary and tight.

A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old,  
Perhaps a Marine, huddled here in the cold.  
Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled,  
Standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.

What are you doing?" I asked without fear,  
"Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!  
Put down your pack; brush the snow from your sleeve,  
You should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"

For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift,  
Away from the cold and the snow blown in drifts...  
To the window that danced with a warm fire's light  
Then he sighed and he said "It's really all right,  
I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night."  
It's my duty to stand at the front of the line,  
That separates you from the darkest of times.  
No one had to ask or beg or implore me,  
I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before me.  
My Gramps died at Pearl on a day in December,"  
Then he sighed, "That's a Christmas 'Gram always remembers."  
My dad stood his watch in the jungles of 'Nam'  
And now it is my turn and so, here I am.  
I've not seen my own son in more than a while,  
But my wife sends me pictures; he's sure got her smile.

Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag,  
The red, white, and blue... an American flag.  
I can live through the cold and the being alone,  
Away from my family, my house and my home.  
I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet,

I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat.  
I can carry the weight of killing another,  
Or lay down my life with my sister and brother...  
Who stand at the front against any and all,  
To ensure for all time that this flag will not fall."

"So go back inside," he said, "harbor no fright,  
Your family is waiting and I'll be all right."  
"But isn't there something I can do, at the least,  
"Give you money," I asked, "or prepare you a feast?  
It seems all too little for all that you've done,  
For being away from your wife and your son."  
Then his eye welled a tear that held no regret,  
"Just tell us you love us, and never forget.  
To fight for our rights back at home while we're gone,  
To stand your own watch, no matter how long.  
For when we come home, either standing or dead,  
To know you remember we fought and we bled.  
Is payment enough, and with that we will trust,  
That we mattered to you as you mattered to us."

PLEASE, would you do me the kind favor of sending this to as many people as you can? Christmas will be coming soon and some credit is due to our U.S. service men and women for our being able to celebrate these festivities. Let's try in this small way to pay a tiny bit, of what we owe. Make people stop and think of our heroes, living and dead, who sacrificed themselves for us

LCDR Jeff Giles, SC, USN 30th Naval Construction Regiment OIC, Logistics Cell One Al Taqqadum, Iraq