

The Hinge of Christmas

I. The Season & The Stories

This season we know as Christmas is a time when most people remember the stories of Jesus' birth. We are reminded by movies, articles and advertisements, which may remind us of those stories. Santa Claus, Elves, Rudolf, "It's a Wonderful Life," or the "Miracle on 34th Street," family dynamics, gift giving.

There are good stories — Joseph & Mary, Bethlehem, "no room at the inn," the manger, the shepherds, Herod the Great, the wise men, and the celebration by angels. They are stories we need to tell our children and on which we can reflect.

The REAL STORY is that the birth of Jesus is the appearance of God himself in the flesh.

He became one of us to be **present within his creation** as a creature and unite himself to his creation.

He became one of us in order to reveal God to us. In Jesus we see who God is, how he behaves, and how he relates to people. We see God when we see Jesus.

He became one of us in order to experience and sympathize with our suffering.

He became one of us in order **to redeem us** through the sacrifice of his own life.

He ***became one of us*** so that we might become one with God.

Athanasius -

You know what happens when a portrait that has been painted on a panel becomes obliterated through external stains. The artist does not throw away the panel, but the subject of the portrait has to come

and sit for it again, and then the likeness is re-drawn on the same material. - *Athanasius of Alexandria* (4th century)

Heb 1:1 NIV In the past God spoke to our forefathers.. **2** but in these last days he has **spoken to us by his Son**,... **3** The Son is the radiance of God's glory and **the exact representation of his being**¹.

II. Opening the Door of Salvation – in need a hinge or two

A. The Squeaky Hinge *GABRIEL'S 1ST MISSION:*

Luke 1:5 NIV In the time of **Herod** king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. ... **7** But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

9 [Zechariah] was chosen by lot, ..., to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, ... **12** When Zechariah saw him, he was **startled** and was **gripped with fear**. **13** But the angel said to him: "**Do not be afraid**, Zechariah; your **prayer has been heard**. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a **son**, and you are to give him the **name John**. **14** He will be a **joy and delight to you**, and **many will rejoice** because of his birth, **15** for he will be **great in the sight of the Lord**. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. **16** **Many** of the people of Israel will he **bring back to the Lord** their

¹ NKJ the express image of His person ESV exact imprint of his nature

God. **17** And he will **go on before the Lord**, in the **spirit and power of Elijah**, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

18 Zechariah asked the angel, “**How can I be sure of this?** I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”

19 The angel answered, “**I am Gabriel**. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been **sent** to speak to you and to tell you this good news. **20** And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time.”

Disappointment had closed his heart

B. The Hinge of Promise *GABRIEL'S 2ND MISSION:*

In the world of Caesar's Imperial Power, no one was less threatening than a teenage girl in a backwater village.

Luke 1:26 NIV In the sixth month, God **sent** the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, **27** to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

Might Gabriel have gasped in wonder at the task entrusted him: To be herald of God's generosity and deed that would clothe all majesty in humility! Did he hesitate at the sight of the fragile virgin before him, fearing whether this frail womb could bear God's weight and contain infinity within its walls?

28 The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

30 But the angel said to her, “**Do not be afraid**, Mary, you have found favor with God. 31 You will **be with child** and **give birth to a son**, and you are to give him the name **Jesus**. 32 He will be great and will be called the **Son of the Most High**. The Lord God will give him the **throne** of his father David, 33 and he will **reign** over the house of Jacob **forever**; his **kingdom** will **never end**.”

Did Gabriel tremble while waiting this child's answer, anxious that she not refuse?

34 “**How will this be**,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

35 The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will **overshadow*** you. So the **holy one** to be born will be called the **Son of God**. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month.

37 For **nothing is impossible with God**.”

38 “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “**May it be to me as you have said**.” Then the angel left her.

Unhinged: Portable Encounter Zone:

Luke 1:39 NIV At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she **entered** Zechariah’s home and **greeted** Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth **heard** Mary’s greeting, **the baby leaped in her womb**, and Elizabeth was **filled** with the **Holy Spirit**. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: “**Blessed** are you among women, and **blessed** is the [fruit of your womb]! 43 But why am I so favored, that the **mother of my Lord** should come to me? 44 As soon as the **sound** of your greeting reached my ears, the **baby in my womb**

leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!”

46 And Mary said: “My **soul [magnifies]** the Lord 47 and my **spirit rejoices** in God my Savior, 48 for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me **[happy] blessed,** 49 for the Mighty One has done **great things for me** — holy is his name. 50 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. 51 He **has performed** mighty deeds with his arm; he **has scattered** those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. 52 He has **brought down** rulers from their thrones but has **lifted up the humble.** 53 He has **filled the hungry** with good things but has sent the rich away empty. 54 He **has helped** his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful 55 to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers.”

C. Disaster on the Hinge of a Dreamer

Matt 1:18 NIV This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was **found to be with child** through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was a **righteous man** and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to **divorce** her quietly. (Deut. 24:1)

20 But after he had **considered** this, an angel of the Lord **appeared to him in a dream** and said, “Joseph son of David, **do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife,** because what is **conceived** in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and **you are to give him the name Jesus,** because he will save his people from their sins.”

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 “The virgin will be with child and will give

birth to a son, and they will call him **Immanuel** — which means, “God with us.”

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Ministry: Opening the Dream Doors

Disappointed by long delay
Forgotten the Dreams of youth

Open to the most impossible possibilities

Encountering the Promises

Giving Life to the Dream