

Christmas, A Line In Time Defining Life  
Luke 1:26-38, Luke 2:1-4

**Slide 1**

Luke 2:1-4, *“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.”*

When God interrupted the life of a young lady named Mary, all she could think about was how different her life had become.

As they made their way along the road, Mary probably wondered about the sense of it all. Although she had agreed, she still couldn't understand why.

She lived in a poor country occupied by a foreign army; violence was never far away. During the night she probably heard soldiers entering the home of her neighbors looking for the patriots they called terrorists.

Imagine, as she made the trip with her husband, how shocked she may have been at the conditions that lay outside the small village they called home.

The poverty she saw on her travels would've been an eye opener for a young woman who had never wanted for food.

Her family was not wealthy by any stretch of the imagination, but her father had always provided food and shelter.

She might have seen lepers in the distance, scorned by society, and pushed far away from those they loved.

Then there would've been beggars who lined the busier sections of road, men and women who couldn't see or walk, dependent on the kindness or pity of strangers to survive.

Since Rome believed in crucifixion, more than likely she had heard about the horrors of those executions. She might have even passed one, if so, to see those victims left hanging on the primitive crosses was horrible.

So much despair and sadness, could anything ever change her world. She probably wished there was something she could do to make a difference.

It wasn't that many months ago that her life had been simple, engaged to be married. She had dreamt of the life that lay ahead of her, but this wasn't it.

An angel had appeared to her one night with a story that she couldn't believe. She was told that she would have a child, a son.

She knew that wasn't to be, after all she had never been with a man, and now she was told that she would be a mother.

The messenger explained that it would be a miracle, that the Father of her child would be God Himself, and the child would be the Son of God.

What could she do? She knew that she was a virgin and if she became pregnant then what the angel said must be true, she believed him, but would anyone believe her?

How could she explain this to her parents, her friends? What would she say to the man to whom she was engaged? Joseph might just be a carpenter, but he wasn't a stupid carpenter.

Why did God choose her? As a matter of fact, why would God want to come as a child into this cruel and hostile world.

I'm sure that question would surface time and time again as she raised this child, the child she would call Jesus.

The question is still valid today, 2000 years later. People still ask: Why did He come? Why bother drawing a line in time? What difference did it make?

We know that the line that was drawn redefined Mary and Joseph's lives, but how did that same line, that was drawn two thousand years ago, define our lives today?

## **Slide 2**

Well, there are those who'd tell you that that line defined an eternal life for some people.

The burning question for them is the same as it was for the man who came to Jesus in Luke 18.

Luke 18:18, *"A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

The answer to that is given by Jesus Himself in John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

Throughout history humans have sought to reconcile themselves with God and they haven't been able to do it. I don't have to go through the plan of salvation, you already know it.

You understand that we really don't deserve to go to heaven and, that in our own power and through our own efforts, there isn't anything we can do that will make us worthy of eternal life.

So, into the picture steps Jesus Christ, God Himself, and He offered Himself as a sacrifice, to pay a debt that He didn't owe because we owed a debt we couldn't pay.

Jesus came to do what we couldn't do, and that was to obtain for us eternal life.

You must understand at this point in history, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, everything that must be done for you to go to heaven has already been done.

All that's missing is your acceptance of that fact. Your salvation depends wholly on you because God has already done His part; all He's asking at this point is for you to respond.

Most of us, and I pray that all of us have accepted that gift, the gift of eternal life. But it's not the only reason He came. As important as eternal life is that's not all the line of Christmas defines.

### **Slide 3**

The line defines an abundant life. Jesus didn't just come so we could have eternal life. If the only reason we get saved is to gain eternity, then the day that we embraced that salvation we'd go to heaven.

Think how much easier that would be, saved would mean safe. Once we accepted Christ as our Savior all our troubles would be over.

One minute we'd be on earth with all its problems and all its pain, and the next minute we'd be in heaven with no pain, no sorrow, and no loss, but that wasn't the plan.

Jesus didn't come, live, and die just so we could live in heaven. He came so we could live on earth. This was part of the promise revealed in John 10.

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.”*

Maybe you know it better from the King James Version where it says, *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”*

That promise is as real today as it was when Jesus made it 2000 years ago. It wasn't just a promise for those listening to His words that day; it was a promise for every person who has ever called upon His name.

The word “abundantly,” that's used in the King James Version, literally means *“full to the point of overflowing.”* That's the life that Jesus wants us to have, a life full of living.

Life is meant to be lived to the full, to be enjoyed, and to make an impact. Helen Keller said, *“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all.”*

The life that Jesus offers will make a difference, not only to us, but to those around us.

When Jesus was searching for similes to describe what our lives were to be like, He said that we were to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Both are elements that change their environment. Once you've added salt to something you know there's salt in it. If you've ever been on a sodium reduced diet you know how bland food can be without salt.

Jesus left us here to flavor the world to make a difference with our lives. Throughout history Christians have done exactly that.

I'm not saying that all the positive contributions made to society in the past 2000 years have been made by Christians, but a good majority of them have.

People talk about the crusades and other abuses that have happened in the name of Christ, but seldom do we hear society, as a whole, acknowledge the positive contributions that the church has made.

It was the church who established hospitals, and orphanages. It was the church that reached out to the outcasts of society with shelters for lepers and the poor. It was the church that started schools and universities.

Sometimes at Christmas a parent might complain about how their children were asked to take part in a program sponsored by a Christian organization to help the needy.

Of course, a Christian organization was sponsoring it, nobody else does that type of thing. When was the last time you saw a Muslim or Buddhist organization raising funds to help children around the world?

Where would the hungry of the world be without groups like World Vision, World Hope, Compassion International, and Samaritan's Purse? Dead! Because, for all the criticism of the church, we're making a difference, or we should be.

The second thing that Christ told believers that they ought to be is light. Light is provided for two reasons: illumination and direction.

The life we're living is supposed to illuminate this world and point people to Jesus. If we're being light, then we'll annoy some people because the dark doesn't look too bad until a little light disturbs it.

Have you noticed just how little light it takes to chase away the darkness? A single candle can destroy the darkness in the darkest room. Christ came that we could live a life that makes a difference.

#### **Slide 4**

But there's another thing that's defined by the line of Christmas. Some people have experienced the eternal and abundant life and they're content. They aren't interested in going any further.

I believe that's because they know what's down that road, and they'd just as soon not go there since this line defines a holy life.

Everyone wants to have eternal life and most of us like the concept of making a difference in the world around us, but how many of us want to live a Holy Life?

As a matter of fact, what images come to mind when I use the word holy? Do you think of Mother Theresa, John Wesley, or one of the writers of the Gospels?

When I say holy, do "you" come to mind? You should because we're all called to live a holy life.

*2 Timothy 1:9, "He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time."*

*Colossians 3:12, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."*

So, what does it mean to be holy? When I tell you that you're supposed to be "holy people" do you cringe or bristle? Do you wonder how you can live an abundant life and at the same time live a holy life?

Does your definition of holiness automatically eliminate any enjoyment you might get out of life? Does it mean you can't have any fun?

Some people think you can tell who's holy by the dour look on their face. To them holiness means that you look like you've been sucking lemons.

Is that what leading a holy life is about? Does it mean that we dress in dark clothes, and never smile?

One day, as Jesus was teaching, a religious leader came to him and asked what the greatest commandment in Jesus' opinion.

Jesus' reply is given in Mark 12:30, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."*

You see holiness isn't about rules, it's about relationship, our relationship with God. Are there things in your life that stand in the way of your relationship with God?

Chuck Colson in his book, *Loving God*, makes this statement: *"Holiness is the everyday business of every Christian. It evidences itself in the decisions we make and the things we do, hour by hour, day by day."*

Or simply put, holiness is wholeness. The whole of Christ in the whole of our life. So, how do we know what decisions to make, what things to do? Well, we have the Bible. The short answer is to just ask ourselves: *"Would what I'm doing honor God?"*

An individual once said, *"All kinds of people will have all kinds of suggestions for what you can do and can't do as a Christian. Here's a simple guideline, ask yourself: Would I do this with Jesus?"*

Have you ever watched a television program or movie when one of your kids walked in and you felt a little ashamed or embarrassed by what you were watching?

Would you mind if I happened by and joined you watching whatever it is you're watching on TV?

What if Jesus called and said He was coming to your house for a couple of days? Would you have to scurry about checking to see what magazines were on the coffee table, what movies were in your Favorites List?

If He asked to use your computer to go online and check His email, would you worry that He'd look in your History Folder? Would He appreciate the joke that you told the other day?

## **Slide 5**

### Conclusion

There was a time, not that long ago, that the church frowned on people going to movies. Then we kind of relented because, after all, what was wrong with being able to go to a G rated movie. Probably nothing, but that isn't what we limit ourselves to is it?

I'm not positive but I think it was Billy Graham who said, *"I watch programs on television now that I wouldn't have dreamed of watching 20 years ago."* I suspect he's not alone.

Here's a helpful hint, if you're wondering whether or not a movie or a video is fit to watch go online. *Focus on the Family* has a website, [pluggedin.com](http://pluggedin.com), that tells you about the content of movies, music, and videos.

Before you catch that movie everyone is talking about, go to [pluggedin.com](http://pluggedin.com) and check out their movie reviews.

You won't always agree with them, but at least when you go see the movie, you'll know what you are going to see.

If you still want to go see a movie filled with vulgarities and debauchery, well that's your choice.

Some people say, "*If I'm going to relate to the unchurched, I have to know what they're watching.*" Stop it. There is a term for this in computer usage: Garbage in, Garbage out.

I'm not just preaching to you, but to myself right now because all too often I find myself justifying what I'm watching on television or a movie I want to see.

I know that deep down in my heart that I wouldn't watch it with Jesus, and I know it's wrong.

I read once that the last part of your body that got saved was your right foot, which of course was in reference to our driving habits.

I believe the last thing that gets saved in our homes is the remote control. When something comes on that you ought not be watching, change the channel, or if it's on a disc hit the button that says stop, then eject it.

You might be saying, "*Holiness is not externals, let's not become legalists.*" I'm not talking about become legalists I'm talking about pleasing God.

We never want to lose sight of Hebrews 12:14, "*Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*"

Socrates wasn't a preacher, but he hit the nail on the head when he said, "*It's not living that is important, but living rightly,*"

No, it's not easy to lead a holy life. If it were, everybody would be doing it. But it's what God's looking for His children to do. A holy lifestyle isn't cultivated by what you don't do, it's cultivated by what you do.

As you spend more time with God in prayer and reading His word, you'll learn what pleases Him and what doesn't. As you become more like Christ you won't have to ask yourself "*What would Jesus do?*," because you'll know.

So where are you? I hope everyone here has stepped over the line that defines their eternal life.

But that isn't enough when Jesus is offering you an abundant life and a chance to make a difference in the world around you. So, embrace a holy life a life that glorifies and brings pleasure to God.