

Praise the Lord
Isaiah 45:20-25

I hope everyone had a merry Christmas. It is still the season of Christmas at the church. And boy am I happy that we get another Sunday to talk about the birth of Jesus, because it is worth some extra time and celebration. So let's celebrate Jesus. It something is worth doing, it is worth overdoing. This city is about celebrating things in an over the top manner. It is New Years Eve in Las Vegas. There will be hundreds of thousands of people who have traveled from all over the world to stand just a few miles from here celebrating the passage of time from one year to another. Which when you think about it, does not matter at all. You have to remember to put a different date on your checks, but other than that it is just another day and another year. It is going to be just another Monday. But I don't wanna be a wet blanket for this whole day. You do you. You can dance if you want to. You can celebrate whatever you want to. But don't forget to keep celebrating Christmas. Because Christmas is worth celebrating.

Our Savior being born matters. The fact that God became flesh so that he could save you from sin and death matters. That is something worth celebrating. It is not trivial. It wasn't just another day when Jesus was born. God became man. God lived among his people. God lived with us. Every other God out there promises you something in the future. This will happen later if you do this now. Our God did something for us in the span of history, that we can always point to and say our God lives. And people have seen him. Mary and Joseph held their God in their hands. Simeon rejoiced to hold the Savior of the world in his hands. Anna saw and held her savior in her hands. God is real and he was among us.

God wanted Isaiah to tell the people that. They didn't have Christmas. The people of Isaiah's time didn't grow up hearing stories about how God sent his son. They were still looking forward to what God would do. They were still trusting that God would fulfill his promises and save them. That was their faith. Just like you and I have faith that God will take you and I and all believers to heaven. They were trusting that God would send a savior to save them. Before Jesus and after Jesus all believers believe that God is going to save us. He is the one that we trust to fulfill his promises.

But it is easy to veer off the path a bit. In the times of Isaiah, God told Isaiah to tell the people.

Gather together and come, assemble you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save.

The people of Isaiah's time were praying to idols. Statues made out of wood. Which seems ridiculous to us who have a true God in our life. But that is what they did. They were praying carvings hoping that somehow they could help them.

In the US, we don't run across many idol shops. But we aren't that different.

Do you know any crazy sports fans? The ones that are real superstitious. They have to wear their lucky jersey to watch the game. If you were in the other room while their team got a touchdown, you better stay there! Don't jinx this! They are screaming into the TV during the game, but does that matter? Do you actually have any affect on that game because of what you do or say or think far far away from the game. Can an unwashed jersey become an idol?

What about more personal things.

I just wanted to let you know, that my prayers are with you. There are some out there that question what does that mean? Any time a tragedy happens my whole facebook and twitter feed are full of "thoughts and prayers are with the victims of fill in the blank." As 2017 draws to a close maybe you are one of many that is looking to shut the door d on this year, because it was tougher than most, and when times really got tough you had an outpouring of friends or loved ones let you know that their prayers were with you. But that didn't exactly help you the way that you wanted it to.

If my daughter comes to me and says Daddy I need some breakfast, I won't respond to her, My thoughts and prayers are with you. I'll help her out and get her something to eat. If there is something that I can do to help her, well then I am going to help her, but sometimes when people need help that we can't give them. all we can really do is offer them prayers. Well.... what good is that? That depends.

See if we all just pick a god, any god and say, I am going to ask this tree for help, or I am just going to think about you today, What does it matter? The world is full of idols It is full of things that people trust in, rely upon, and ask for help, that are really completely powerless to do anything to actually help you out. Your lucky jersey is going to let you down one day. Wishful thinking is going to let you down one day. Platitudes spoken to people that we love are going to let people down. Your strength, your abilities are going to let you and others down.

But Jesus never will. Your God never will. God says in Isaiah.

There is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior there is none but me.

A prayer to Jesus on a friends behalf really can change their world. Because God is real. And God really cares about us. And God really has the power to help us. And he really did help us in the way that we needed the very most help. He saved us from Sin. He did that through the plan of salvation which was that the son of God would be born to a virgin, live a life in our place, and then sacrifice himself so that you could be saved. And he didn't leave us alone now to suffer. He is still with you. He will not push you beyond what you can bear. He will help you.

That's why we celebrate christmas.. It's not just an obscure holiday that we decided upon, it is about the love of God that comes to all mankind shown to us through the

merits of Jesus Christ. God said he would send a Savior and he did. God keeps all of his promises to you, and he will continue to do so because there is no other GOd, no other savior but him.

Jesus really matters. Christmas really matters. All of it is worth celebrating. So on a day like New Years Eve, in a place called Las Vegas. How do you celebrate this? We celebrate birthdays by blowing out candles on a cake. We celebrate a new year with Fireworks, music, and dancing. How do we celebrate the one true God saving this world from Sin and death.

God says turn to me. And be saved. Be on God's team and enjoy the victory. Have you ever watched a victory parade on TV. It could be when the candidate wins. Or some sports team wins a national championship. There is only one winner in a political contest. There is only one winner in a best of 7 series, and the winner gets to celebrate and play "We are the champions by queen, they have no time for losers because they are the champions of the world.

God is the only God. It isn't even a contest. There are no other God's in this world that challenge God's power and dominance. it is just him. He is in a class of his own. That's why he says he swears by himself. You always swear by something greater than yourself. People swear to God because they want someone greater than them to hold them accountable. Well since there is no one greater than God because he is the greatest, he swears by himself.

He is just so great. We need to celebrate him. Again how do we do that? Singing, we do that with our hymns. Our hymns for today, Hail O source of every bluessing, O Lord our Father thanks and praise. That is a way that we celebrate our God. We do it by our prayers and our proclamtioations. But we are only here in this church 1 out of the 168 hours of the week.

But in colossians, our epistle reading we hear how we can give praise to God more, whatever you do, whether in word or deed do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

When we worship, we do so in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy spirit. It is out of love for them that we do this. What if we mentally did that with many other things in our life. In the name of the Father, the son and the Holy spirit I am going to do the dishes, take out the trash. In the name of the Father the son and the Holy spirit, I am going to put in extra effort in the relationships that are a struggle for me. In the name of the Father and the son and the Holy spirit. I am going to praise my God with all that I do today.

That's praise. That's true celebration. That is worship. When we don't turn it on and off. We we keep in the forefront of our mind the greatness that our God has and then we use our life to serve and worship him. That is how we celebrate.

It isn't with a burst of effort. It isn't with a beautiful firework that is there for a second and then gone forever. The praise of our God endures. It goes on and on and on and on and on. It is every day of our life that we praise him with what we do. Just as our faith endures. Just as the love of God for you endures.

He is the one who gave you faith. He is the one who kept his promises so that our faith would be in something that mattered. He is the one that continues to watch over us and help us. That is why we boast in him. He is what makes our life great. It isn't the passing of time that we celebrate. It is the gift of love that God has given to you that will never end.

His love for you endures year after year. It never fades. It never gets tired. It never wears out. Let's celebrate him this year and every year. To God be the Glory. Amen.