A Birth, a Death, and a Purpose

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 December 2024

Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang. Thank you for joining us.!

We'll look up in chapter 16, verse 1, which is the resurrection, the greatest news of all. Where we left off last Sunday morning was Jesus has been arrested, He's been tried, He's been sentenced to death, He's been crucified on the cross, and as we covered last Sunday, buried in the tomb.
And it was truly the darkest of nights for those who believed in the Lord. And yet, as we talked about last Sunday, in our calendar, we are in a very different place.
It's the Christmas season, the most wonderful time of the year. And in one aspect, these two things seem very opposite.
You've got the joy of Christmas juxtaposed with the darkness of the death of Jesus. But as we think about the gospel and comprehend the fullness of the gospel, the truth is that these two things fit perfectly together.
[1:37] Easter and Christmas. Crucifixion and birth. Because to rightly understand either demands that you truly comprehend the other.

To celebrate the birth of Jesus without understanding why He came, and without understanding the mission He had, is to miss the meaning of Christmas altogether.
At the same time, to grieve the death of Jesus without understanding this was the very reason why He was born in the first place, is to forget the promises of God that were fulfilled in the birth of Christ.
So what I want us to do this morning as a church is to just push pause for a moment at the end of chapter 15, and let's let our minds remember what we left off with last Sunday.
At the end of chapter 15, verse 47, says, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where He was laid. He's been put in the tomb.
[2:54] He's died. But we must remember not just that He died, but why He died.

And we must remember it's not just simply that a man died, it's that the God-man died.
Remember, as we've talked about at great length, that when Christ was crucified, there were others who were crucified at the very time. Crucifixion was not a rare thing, and yet it's only the crucifixion of one that brings us salvation.
And the reason why the death of Jesus uniquely saves is because of who Jesus uniquely is.
And so what I want us to do today is, it'll be a sort of review of the Gospel of Mark, chapters 1 to 15, setting us up for next Sunday to consider the greatest news of all, the empty tomb, but to remind ourselves why Jesus died, why Jesus was born, and how all of it works together to give us the hope of the Gospel.
[4:13] Because to understand what this is all about is to understand a birth, a death, and a purpose.

Christ must take on flesh. He must be born. But it's not enough for Him just to be born. He must die in our place.
But His death is not something that happened circumstantially. It was purpose. A birth, a death, and a purpose.
So let's just retrace the journey through the life and the death of Jesus. We're going to start in Matthew.
You can just stay in Mark, though, because most of our time, we're going to be doing a brief review of everything we've covered the last two and a half years in Mark 1 through 15.
[5:07] But I want to take you through eight steps of this journey to understand the birth, the death, and the purpose of the life of Jesus. Step one is that Jesus will be born to save His people from

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

their sins.

Jesus will be born to save His people from their sins. That comes from Matthew 1. Let me just read to you Matthew 1, 18 to 21. Now, the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way, that when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.
And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife.
For that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.
Christmas is not just a celebration of a birth. It's the recognition of a purpose, the purpose to redeem sinners.
[6:41] And for people to celebrate the Christmas season, apart from the recognition of our sin, and apart from the understanding of our need for a Savior, is to get lost in nostalgia and tradition, and to neglect the very purpose of Christmas.

Jesus was born, but He was born to save His people from their sins. If you're here this morning and you're one who enjoys the celebration of Christmas because you love the music and the lights and the gifts and the gatherings, I'm right there with you.
I love all those things immensely. But do not get lost in the traditions and nostalgia of a season and miss the very purpose for which it all points.
Jesus was born, but He was born to save people from their sins. So the first thing we see is that Jesus will be born.
The second step of the journey is that we see that Jesus was born just as had been promised. We see that in Luke chapter 2.
[8:10] Luke 2 verses 1 to 7 describes what takes place when Christ was born. Verse 4 of Luke 2 says, Jesus also went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea to the city of David which is called Bethlehem because He was of the house and lineage of David to be registered with Mary His betrothed who was with child.

And while they were there the time came for her to give birth and she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.
So the first step of the journey is the prophecy, the promise that Christ will be born and He will save people from their sin. The second step of the journey is that promise was kept.
The promise was made and the promise was kept. A Savior will come, Matthew 1, Luke 2, the Savior has come. The Redeemer has come and in Him you will find salvation.
That leads us to a third step as you just consider the life of Christ and that third step is that in Jesus you will find the dividing line of all humanity.
[9:32] You will either be for Him or against Him. You will either be one of His covered by His grace or you will be someone who has rejected the gospel.

The pain of the life and the ministry and the mission of Christ will be piercing to the soul of His mother Mary.
We read about this also in Luke 2 verse 34, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is opposed and a sword will pierce through your own soul also.
The first step of the journey is the promise that Christ will come. The second step is that Christ did come and the third step of understanding His life and His death and His mission and His purpose is that in His life Christ will be the dividing point.
That was true 2,000 years ago. That is true today. As much of a joy as the Christmas season is, it would be incomplete to celebrate Christmas without grieving over the reason why we have Christmas in the first place.
[11:00] The reason we have the birth of Christ is because we are sinners in need of a Savior. And for some they don't want to consider that part of it because they just want Christmas to just be nothing but fun and nothing but light and nothing but just comfort and it's uncomfortable to think about our sin and our punishment but here's the reality of it.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

If you don't understand why Christ came you cannot understand Christmas. Jesus came because we are sinners in need of a Savior and in Christ coming all of humanity finds the dividing line. Simeon holds the young baby Jesus in his arms. He's been praying to meet the Messiah and yet he rightly declares that the life and the mission of Jesus is one that will pierce the soul of his mother because the joy of giving birth to a baby as glorious as that was that baby had a purpose and the purpose was for Christ to grow to live and to die.
And in our culture if you want to talk about Christmas for the most part for the most part people are fine celebrating Christmas.
even the world is pretty well okay talking about or singing about the birth of a baby. Even those who are unbelievers are happy to do so.
[12:50] Now generally speaking they're happy to do so because there's big money in singing Christmas and recording Christmas songs and putting out Christmas albums and a lot of people are happy to make money however they can.

But even if you want to talk about Christmas being the birth of baby Jesus even the world for the most part is okay with that. But when you get specific about why Christ was born and what his life will accomplish and when you explain that the baby was born because we are sinners in need of a Savior and that salvation will be found only through Jesus.
Now the people divide. Celebrating a birth is fine. Saying that in him alone salvation is found divides.
But to sing the songs of his birth and not recognize our need for a Savior because of our sin is to miss the message entirely.
There will be joy but not without sorrow. The birth of Christmas must be viewed in light of the cross. There will be victory but it won't be without pain.
[14:25] And there is a crown but not without a cross. And the reality is this baby who was born to bring salvation was indeed hated by many and rejected by most and the reason for that 2,000 years ago is because he told the truth and not what the crowds wanted to hear.

And nothing has changed. The world today still rejects the message of Jesus when it's not what they want to hear.
So in thinking of the life and the mission of Jesus first it's prophesied that he will come. Second it's told that he did come.
Third in his life he is the dividing line of all humanity. with that let's turn our attention back to the gospel of Mark and step four in the life and mission of Jesus as it's found in the gospel of Mark is that he begins his public ministry and we see this in Mark chapter 1 verses 1 to 11 we're just going to do a kind of a quick skim and walk through these 15 chapters so you can turn to Mark 1 we'll just kind of move forward through this as a review of where we've been I think it was April 2022 when we were in this text of Mark 1 and Jesus begins his public ministry he is baptized and a man named John the Baptist is preparing the way for 30 years after Jesus is born he's going to live life as we live he'll learn through education as a man he'll get a job he will have responsibilities he will have friends he will be tempted as you and
I only without sin and then he will begin his public ministry Mark does not start where Matthew and Luke start John's gospel starts from eternity past Mark starts picks it up right here at the events of his baptism and he begins his public ministry ministry 30 years of training 30 years of preparation for three and a half years of his public ministry the fifth step along the journey is as Mark records it for us his ministry in Galilee this takes us from the middle part of chapter 1 all the way through chapter 9 it's in this section where we read about Jesus being tempted in the wilderness he calls his disciples interestingly enough
[17:48] Jesus does not call the best and the brightest he doesn't call the most wealthy and influential he calls common men but calls them to come live an uncommon life of devotion and that really is what the gospel is all about Jesus didn't come to seek and save simply the wealthy he didn't come to seek and save the highly educated he didn't come to seek and save those who are powerful the Bible tells he came to seek and save the lost the lost are those who are sinners and that's all of us regardless of background regardless of nationality regardless of education regardless of all things we all are spiritually lost in need of salvation and Christ came to seek and save the lost and he will call these flawed men to leave everything and to follow him and eventually these men will turn the world upside down in chapters 1 through 9 Jesus ministers in

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Galilee and he teaches in parables Mark tells us about his authority over demons and disease and sickness and death he will be rejected by many he will rebuke the leaders of his day in chapter 8 he will be declared to be the Messiah the son of the living God and in chapter 9 we see the transfiguration which was a preview of the coming kingdom step 6 was his journey to Jerusalem after covering for 8 and half chapters his ministry in Galilee Mark will then spend chapter 10 on the journey to Jerusalem and on that journey Jesus will teach about marriage he will teach about children he will speak of his coming death he will heal those who are blind and if you would open with me again to chapter 10 this theme verse for the entire gospel can be found in
Mark 10 verse 45 Mark 10 45 for even the son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many to understand Christmas you need to understand that Christ paid our ransom to understand that you must understand why a ransom was needed and to understand that we must speak of sin you cannot understand Christmas without understanding sin Christmas is the birth of Christ who was born to be a ransom for many and we need a ransom because we were sinners bound for judgment and needed to be set free by one who could perfectly pay for our sin and that's the very reason and purpose for the life of
Jesus Christ so you can't understand Christmas without understanding the cross you can't understand this season without understanding the suffering of Jesus you can't understand the light if you don't understand the loss and you really can't sing of and speak of the hope of Christmas if you don't understand the horror of our sinful condition to celebrate Christmas is to ponder the reason why he was born in the first place and the reason for his birth is that he would live a perfect life die for us for the glory of the father and the good of all who believe the seventh part of the journey is his ministry in
Jerusalem the way the gospel of Mark unfolds we get his ministry in Galilee we get his walk toward Jerusalem and then in chapters 11 12 and 13 we get his ministry in Jerusalem this includes what we call the triumphal entry when Jesus rides into Jerusalem you'll recall that Jesus rides in Jerusalem and he goes to the temple the place that was called his father's house and observes all that's taking place the sinfulness the worldliness the lying and scheming and cheating leaders who are supposed to be serving the people instead making much of their own wealth at the expense of the ones they're supposed to serve and so Jesus will go back and he will cleanse the temple he will put the entire thing to a stop this baby that we sing about and celebrate at
[23:49] Christmas time is the same one who 33 years later will go into the temple with as many as 250 thousand people there and with the authority and the command of his word will bring all of it to a halt we rightly sing about sweet little Jesus boy born in a manger but that baby who was born was the redeemer who had a zeal for his father's house and would look at those who are supposed to protect the people but instead were devouring the people and he will say to them you have made my father's house a den of thieves people do quite fine with a baby in a manger but the world divides when you explain that the baby in a manger came to save sinners from their sin and that without believing in him judgment will fall upon you he will have his authority questioned which is quite ironic because even those who would question his authority and say who gave you the right to do this are the very ones who witnessed first hand the authority

Christ had to command all things unlike anything they've ever seen and then Jesus will teach about the last days at the end of his earthly life before the crucifixion he will give insight into what will happen at the end of all things and you have to stop and wonder how can he do that how can he know how can he speak with such clarity and authority about that which is yet to be and the answer is because the one who was born in Bethlehem is the one that through him all things exist and all things hold together we sing not of a mere baby when we think of
Jesus and sing of his birth we are singing and worshiping the one who made all things and then the final step the eighth step in the journey was in chapters 14 and 15 this is where we see what we call the passion week of Christ the arrest the trials the suffering the crucifixion Jesus will spend the night before his crucifixion in the upper room with his apostles Judas will leave and betray him Jesus will go to Gethsemane with his fellow disciples the eleven he'll be arrested he'll go through six trials and though all along the way
Pilate will say multiple times I find no fault in him when faced with the choice with Pilate between doing what is right or saving his own career he will choose himself and do exactly what Jesus has warned about and that is those who would gain the world yet forfeit their own soul and then Jesus will be crucified he will die and as we looked at last week chapter 15 the very end of the text says in

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

verse 46 Joseph bought a linen shroud and taking him down wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb and Mary
Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid Jesus has been crucified and buried and it seems so final so dark so disappointing for those who believed in him even though he had said that's what would happen in their mind to watch this one they had believed in be crucified and suffer the way he did and laid into a tomb felt so final because there had been this prophecy that Jesus would save his people from their sin and then Christ was born to save his people from their sin he has said he must pay his life as a ransom for our sin and yet in their mind what good is a dead redeemer what hope is there in a savior who has been laid in a tomb when he doesn't get any more final than watching the body of a loved one lowered into the grave and when you come to the end of chapter 15 everything about it for the people felt dark it felt heavy and even for many who had followed him it felt hopeless hopeless but we go back this morning to where we started [30:20] Matthew 1 she will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus and he will save his people from their sins in the death and burial of Jesus it is the perfect outworking of exactly what had been promised now it may be true that decorations and lights and family gatherings and the exchanging of gifts and the singing of familiar hymns may be something nearly all people enjoy doing but all of those things are without any meaning if you don't recognize that this one you celebrate came to die Christmas is the recognition of a birth a death and a purpose he was giving his life as a ransom for us so as you celebrate this Christmas season do so in remembrance of the reason why he was born not just that

Christ was born but why he was born with the understanding that as we've spent the last two and a half years as a congregation looking at every single word in Mark 1 through 15 all of it is because Christ came to give his life as a ransom this isn't a biography for us to just have details and information this is a message that we would have salvation in Christ and the truest way to celebrate Christmas is the celebration of a promise and the tomb that is empty is the recognition of the accomplishment of that very promise so there's a familiar Christmas song sung this time of year every year that says come now long expected
Jesus the last verse says born thy people to deliver born a child and yet a king born to reign in us forever now thy gracious kingdom bring by thine own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts alone by thine own sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne the life of Jesus is about a mission and the mission was to save sinners and the greatest way to celebrate Christmas is to remember the purpose for which you came and this morning if you know Christ as savior let your
Christmas season be celebrated in the fullness of who he is why he came and what he accomplished and if you don't know Christ as your savior do not confuse the joy of tradition with repentance it is possible to love Christmas as our culture understands it and miss the entire meaning behind it but to do so is to misunderstand the whole thing Christ was born and we rightly celebrate that but he was born to save and he had to save because we were sinners and sin demands judgment and the wages of sin is death and so it is the birth the life the death and the resurrection of Jesus
Christ that gives us eternal salvation call unto him confess your sin believe in him and even this day find salvation salvation in the one who came to give it Lord we thank you today for your word and pray that it would take root in our lives and encourage us and call us to a place of belief in Christ's name amen we love you church family thank you for being here tonight christmas on the tree 530 outside south entrance be here and join us we will see you then god bless!
[36:46] you

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host