

Broad Series: Grounded (The life of Jesus in four parts, Exploring Jesus as the incarnation of God in the created world, and how that gives salvation an earth grounding.)

Series Part 1: Dirty Hands

Sermon #3: “He Has Come”

Scripture: Luke 1:67-79

Text: Isaiah 41:10 “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Sermon Blurb: Do you have that inner sense that you were made for something more? It’s as if you are part of a bigger story, a larger purpose. Well, you’re right! Your story started long ago. It is mysteriously linked with the baby that was born that first Christmas. Something happened then that touches you now. Celebrating Christmas is not just a holiday, it’s you embracing your destiny. Don’t miss this Sunday when we peer back into Christmas and see God who has come, for you!

Gathering Song: *Christmas Is Coming* - Choir

Welcome: Pastor David

Greeting Time: *Share your favorite Christmas food.*

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Baptism of Mason Lindholm -Pastor David

Prayers -Pastor David

Faith Sharing: Mary Halverson

Christmas Giving Tree

Offering

Message: “He Has Come” -Pastor David

PP#1: Grounded: Dirty Hands

He Has Come

Isaiah 41:10 “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Grounded: God’s Dirty Hands. “He Has Come.” Isaiah 41:10 “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Let me tell you a Christmas story. It’s from the Bible. I’m sure many of you have heard it over and over again...but maybe just not at Christmas!

It’s a story about God’s people, who were stuck. They were caught in a system where they had no way out. Their lives were trapped, and they didn’t feel alive. They had no hope.

The shepherds were out on the hills nearby, keeping watch over their flocks. Suddenly, a light appeared, a burning light...and a voice spoke...the voice of God! It said, "Take off your shoes!"

PP#2: *God appearing to Moses in the burning bush*

The shepherd was Moses, and the flaming light was a burning bush, deep in the Sinai desert.

This is 1500 years before Jesus' birth. This Christmas story from the Bible comes from Exodus, nearly at the beginning of the Bible. But it is still a Christmas story.

God's people, the Hebrew people, were slaves in Egypt. They were powerless and trapped, and the deep look in their eyes was vague and lifeless. There was nothing they could do. They were just going through the motions, trying to get by.

Moses had escaped into the desert 40 years before. He was almost totally forgotten. Until a bush burned with flames, and continued to burn...and burn...and burn...but didn't burn up.

Moses can't help it. He has to go and take a closer look. As he leans in, he is startled by a deep voice. It calls him by name and then tells him to take off his sandals, for he is standing on holy ground. Moses obeys. And as his feet are directly on the dirt, God's voice explains.

PP#3: Exodus 3 (CEB)

7 Then the Lord said, "I've clearly seen my people oppressed in Egypt. I've heard their cry of injustice because of their slave masters. I know about their pain. 8 I've come down to rescue them from the Egyptians in order to take them out of that land and bring them to a good and broad land, a land that's full of milk and honey 9 Now the Israelites' cries of injustice have reached me. I've seen just how much the Egyptians have oppressed them. 10 So get going. I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

Exodus 3, picking it up in verse 7. "Then the Lord said, 'I've clearly seen my people oppressed in Egypt. I've heard their cry of injustice because of their slave masters. I know about their pain. I've come down to rescue them from the Egyptians in order to take them out of that land and bring them to a good and broad land, a land that's full of milk and honey Now the Israelites' cries of injustice have reached me. I've seen just how much the Egyptians have oppressed them. So get going. I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.'"

See? It's a Christmas story! This is the message of Christmas: God says, "I have seen my people. I have heard their cry. I know their pain. And I've come down to rescue them." Merry Christmas!

Whenever you hear this story again, from now on, when you are reading the story of Moses and the burning bush, no matter what time of year, or where you are at, or who is around. I want you to say, "Merry Christmas!" Will you try to remember? This is the Christmas message!

Moses is standing there, with his feet in the dirt, and God says, "I'm sending you to go bring my people out." Moses sputters and stammers..."I can't!" But God says, "I am going with you. My power will be with you. It will be OK. Now, you, with the dirty feet, get going!"

PP#4: Isaiah 41:10 "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Over and over again, throughout history, and throughout the Scriptures, God promises: "I am with you. I will help you." We see Christmas over and over again! It's there, in Isaiah 40:10. I'm going to read it again, and I want you to respond with, "Merry Christmas." OK?

God's words: "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

[Merry Christmas!]

You see, God doesn't stay far off. He comes close. He hears. He sees. He understands. And He comes and He helps. He gets involved. He gets in there, rolls up His sleeves, and gets his hands dirty. And things change. God's people walk out of Egypt. God's people return from Babylon. The good news we proclaim about God can be summed up in three words...it's the three words of Christmas: "He has come!" That needs the response! ["Merry Christmas!"]

He has come! [Merry Christmas!]

PP#5: *Image of Zechariah prophesying while holding baby John the Baptist.*

While Mary was pregnant with a miracle baby, and probably not long after she heard about an unavoidable and very inconvenient journey to Bethlehem, an old priest named Zechariah holds his newborn son, John, born to his wife, who happens to be cousin to the pregnant Mary. And for the first time in nine months, Zechariah is able to speak. He looks at his son, knowing that his birth marks the beginning of the coming of the Messiah, and the first thing he says, is the Christmas message. He speaks about the Messiah who is on His way!

PP#6: Luke 1 (CEB)

67 John's father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied,
 68 "Bless the Lord God of Israel because He has come to help and has delivered His people.
 69 He has raised up a mighty savior for us in His servant David's house,
 70 just as He said through the mouths of His holy prophets long ago.
 71 He has brought salvation from our enemies and from the power of all those who hate us.

Luke 1, starting with verse 67: "John's father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, 'Bless the Lord God of Israel because *He has come* to help and has *delivered His people*. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in His servant David's house, just as He said through the mouths of His holy prophets long ago. He has brought salvation from our enemies and from the power of all those who hate us."

Did you hear it? "He has come [Merry Christmas!] and has delivered His people." His words recall Moses leading the people out of Egypt. "He has raised up a mighty savior...He has brought salvation." Here is Christmas!

PP#7: Luke 1 (CEB)

72 He has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and remembered His holy covenant,
 73 the solemn pledge He made to our ancestor Abraham.
 He has granted 74 that we would be rescued from the power of our enemies
 so that we could serve Him without fear,
 75 in holiness and righteousness in God's eyes, for as long as we live.

Verse 72, "He has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and remembered His holy covenant, the solemn pledge He made to our ancestor Abraham. He has granted that we would be rescued from the power of our enemies so that we could serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness in God's eyes, for as long as we live."

God had promised to Abraham to send through him a descendant who would be a light to the whole world. Zechariah proclaims, “He has granted that we would be rescued from the power of our enemies so that we could serve God.” Again, this was God in Egypt, and this was God in Babylon. And Zechariah says that God was doing it again, at Christmas.

PP#8: Luke 1 (CEB)

- 76 You, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare His way.
77 You will tell His people how to be saved through the forgiveness of their sins.
78 Because of our God’s deep compassion, the dawn from heaven will break upon us,
79 to give light to those who are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide us on the path of peace.”

Then, Zechariah switches from talking about the Messiah who was going to be born to Mary, and talks about his own son, John. Verse 76, “You, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare His way. You will tell His people how to be saved through the forgiveness of their sins. Because of our God’s deep compassion, the dawn from heaven will break upon us, to give light to those who are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide us on the path of peace.”

John is born before Jesus, because John prepares the way for the coming of Jesus. He will speak of forgiveness and of God’s deep compassion, God’s light breaking upon those in darkness and death, guiding into peace.

PP#9: *Image for a person seeming blue on Christmas.*

Do you need Christmas this year? Do you need to hear those three amazing words?

Perhaps you’ve heard a lot of other hard words, harsh words, like “it’s cancer,” or “your position has been eliminated.” Or perhaps you’ve heard, “something’s wrong with the car,” or “she’s not doing very well” or “I need the money right now.” “I don’t love you any more.” “Get out of my life.” “I’m so disappointed in you.” Or perhaps you hear your own thoughts, “I’m such a failure.” “No matter what I try, I just can’t seem to stop.” “I’m no good to anyone.” Or “I’m just so sorry.”

Are you starting to get the vague, distant look in your eye? Do you feel trapped, stuck, hopeless? Tired? Does the mountain seem to loom so high in front of you? Are you ready to give up?

You need Christmas. You need to hear the good news. God does not stay distant, or leave you alone. Our God is a God of dirty hands. He comes near. He rolls up His sleeves, and gets His hands dirty...in our lives, in our world.

God hears. God sees. God knows. And God comes. This is Christmas! Before, God sent Moses. Before, God sent the prophets. Each time He was with them, and miracles happened. But this time, this time, God doesn’t send anyone. This time, it’s time to deal with that ugliness on the inside of God’s people, the slavery that holds from within. It’s time for forgiveness. It’s time to reestablish that broken relationship. It’s time to restore that image that God created in each one of us.

PP#10: *Image of a Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem, full of wonder and holiness.*

And so, this time, God doesn’t send anyone. This time, God comes *Himself*. He takes on the body of a person, is born like everyone else, His hands become hands made of dirt.

God does not leave us stuck, trapped, despairing. The Word who created all things, comes to create in us a new beginning. The light dawns in the darkness. The baby cries in the manger.

Fear not! He has come! [Merry Christmas!]

Amen.

Closing Song

Benediction: Pastor David