

To Kindness & Love, the Thing we Need Most - Luke 1:26-35
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

Every Who Down in Whoville Liked Christmas a lot...

But the Grinch, who lived just north of Whoville, Did NOT!

The Grinch is definitely one of the most beloved of holiday characters. Invented by Theodore Geisel (AKA Dr. Seuss) on December 26, 1956 after a difficult Christmas, the Grinch gives us a living picture of how Christmas can truly be redemptive. While the children's book admits not knowing the reason the Grinch is, well, so grinchy, both full length movies give pictures of the characters back story that do give an explanation. In both movies the Grinch is an orphan who is rejected and lives as an outsider. The most recent animated movie shows him as a child looking at the joy people experience at Christmas from a distance, as he, as an orphan is left alone. The Jim Carrey version shows his rejection by peers on the playground and at school, as well as what he perceived as rejection by his love interest at a class Christmas party, which sends him into a rage against Christmas. Either way, the movies tap into a longing of every human heart, the desire to be loved and belong. And of course, these movies do show that in some magical way the deeper meaning of Christmas can cause our hearts to grow two sizes larger. Yet, we also know that this and other longings are actually met as we peer into the manger and see the baby Jesus, the Son of God.

It had to be incredibly shocking for Mary to have Gabriel show up to announce God's plan to her. We think of angels as sweet cuddly beings, yet the most common words from their mouths are, "Do not be afraid." So the appearance had to be intimidating enough, but Gabriel's pronouncement would alter the course of the life of this virgin, unmarried yet engaged Galilean peasant girl. Even though she was a virgin, she was about to be pregnant and have a miracle baby who would be the King God had promised through His prophets for generations. He would, "Reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there will be no end." Of course, Mary was perplexed, how can a virgin get pregnant and have a baby? The angel answers her with the declaration that the Holy Spirit will come upon her, and the power of God Most High will overshadow her leading to the conception of Jesus. She would give birth to a child who would be called the Son of the Most High (v. 31). Most High is a title referring to the place of the throne of God Himself, which is echoed again in verse 35 as Jesus is declared to be the holy Son of God. In this declaration and name God has met us with a glorious truth that invites all of us to a family and a table.

Speaking of Jesus as the Son of God actually brings us back to our previous series on the Nicene Creed. The core truth of our theology is that we worship One True and Living God who eternally exists as three distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus did not become the Son of God at His birth, He is eternally the Son who existed as God for eternity and in relationship with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Yet, this Son of God entered history through the womb of Mary and took on humanity. So the Son of God is revealed as the Son of the Most High to us in His birth in Bethlehem. He is the unique, holy Son of God.

But, and this is a significant but, the title Son of God is not one he kept for Himself. By coming into the world Jesus attacked our core problem of a broken relationship with God which led to a complete fragmentation of our relationships with others and ourselves. He was despised and rejected by men (Isaiah 53:3). No other human in history deserved to live a life of acceptance, popularity, and fanfare. Instead Jesus was rejected by the establishment, abandoned by his friends, sold out by one of his closest buddies, and died alone on a cross. This was the way, though, for reconciliation between man and God, as

Jesus the King died in our place for our sins, and brought us reconciliation with God. And the reconciliation given by the Son of God is so amazing, so cosmic. 1 John 3:1 states it plainly. *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children (sons) of God; and so we are.* Notice what this and multiple other texts is telling us. We were enemies with God, and because of Mary's Son those of us who see our Lord and Savior in the manger are adopted into the family and declared to sons and daughters of the Most High. And He places us in a family that should be the most accepting, loving, grace filled group of people on earth. When the local church fails to be this loving and gracious community is it a sign that the people are not truly looking to Jesus and drinking deeply from the well of mercy. But it should be. The church should be a community of former rebels who are now sons and daughters who love like Jesus. And it is here that rejected Grinches should discover a place to belong and be loved.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Joshua 13	Joshua 14	Joshua 15	Joshua 16	Joshua 17	Joshua 18	Joshua 19

Reading from this past week's sermon: Luke 1:26-35

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: John 6:35

Family Worship

Song - *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*

<https://youtu.be/2RP0S4FMK3c?si=8YyQHCdYd07DjEN2>

Gospel Project

Unit: Hope for the Captives

Story: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Big Picture Question: How can we glorify God?

Answer: We can glorify God by loving Him and obeying Him.

Scripture: Daniel 3

New City Catechism

Question 49: What does Christ's resurrection mean for us?

Answer: Christ triumphed over sin and death so that all who trust in him are raised to new life in this world and to everlasting life in the world to come.

Verse: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

Luke 1:26-35

- Have you ever felt rejected and unloved? How can you identify with the Grinch at Christmas and during the year?
- As you read the Christmas story in Luke 1, how does the moment between Gabriel and Mary strike you?
- What does it mean that Jesus is the Son of the Most High, or the holy Son of God?
- How did the life and death of the only begotten Son of God open the way for followers of Jesus to become sons and daughters of God?
- What can we do to make sure our church is a welcoming and grace-filled space for those who feel rejected?

Prayer

*Pray that Jesus would fulfill our longing to belong, especially through His people the church.

*Pray for the Gift of Love Christmas Store this Saturday.