

Christmas 2024 | David Baumgartner

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[0 : 00] Well, Merry Christmas everybody from my family to yours. What a special time of the year. I tell you everything is so good. Really good to be here. I think the goal this evening is for us to enjoy some food, to enjoy fellowship and have some fun.

And I think the plan is for all of us to get home before midnight, before the government shutdown. I don't know what that looks like. That sounds bad, doesn't it? A government shutdown?

All right. Good. That's good. As most of you know, we've been in a verse by verse study of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Gospel of Matthew.

Right now, we're about two-thirds of the way through. In the past, of course, we've looked at the other Gospel accounts. We looked at the Gospel according to Luke back in 2003 to 2005. Mark from 2010 to 11 and then John from 2015 to 17.

But I think the main point... Kurt, I'm going to turn this thing off. I think the main thing is that when we study the life of Jesus like this, there's many aspects that emerge.

[1 : 24] For example, one could focus on his teachings. Jesus, we're told, taught with authority. Or a person could focus on the miracles of Jesus. He did many miracles. Even his critics credit him for doing miracles.

Or we could focus on the prophecies concerning Jesus. But I think that there's one theme that I believe particularly stands out at Christmas time.

And that's the humility of Jesus. His humility. Now, if anyone had a good reason to not be humble, I would say it's Jesus. Would you agree with that?

He was and is superior to us in every way. He has no faults, no weaknesses for which he should be ashamed. And yet, the Scripture describes him as the greatest example of humility.

So tonight, I wanted to ask if we could consider three aspects of Jesus' humility. First, I'd like to look at some examples of what we see in Scripture, beginning with his birth.

[2 : 35] And then secondly, I'd like to look at why did Jesus come in such humility? And then third, what does that mean for all of us? So first, let's go ahead and bring our thoughts to the Lord in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we are so grateful that we can come here and be reminded once again of just the wonder that God, the second person of the Godhead, entered humanity.

And we are so grateful, Lord, that we can come here tonight and celebrate that. We thank you for each person here. We thank you for just how you are so faithful to us.

And we pray, Father, that as we consider just the Scripture, what it says, and also just through Jesus' example, that we would become more and more like him.

Thank you so much, Lord, for tonight. Thank you for the children. Thank you for all that you've done for us. In Jesus' name I pray. And God's people said, Amen.

[3 : 40] Amen. So first, I'd like to offer six things about Jesus' humility. If you have your Bibles, I'd welcome you to turn to chapter 1 of Luke. The first thing I'd like to consider is for us to consider his parents.

What was his mother's name? Mary. Mary. Mary was a young girl, possibly about 15 years of age. When she was with her cousin Elizabeth, she spoke about her low estate.

She said in verse 48 of chapter 1, For he, that is the Lord, has had regard for the humble state of his bonds laid. For behold, from this time on, all generations will count me blessed.

Well, friends, I would say Mary was blessed. But I'd also say that Mary was also a sinner who needed a savior. In Luke chapter 1, verse 14, it's recorded that she told Elizabeth, My spirit rejoices in God who?

My savior. How about Joseph? We actually know very little about him. We know he's Jesus' stepfather. But besides being a carpenter, there's really not much said.

[5 : 00] It's speculated that Joseph died at an early age, possibly during Jesus' teenage years. But the main point here is regarding his parents.

There's really no advantage here. They were good people. I'm sure they were good neighbors. But I'd say that they were pretty ordinary. Let's consider the timing of Jesus' birth.

In Paul's letter to the church in Galatia, Paul said, When the fullness of time came, God sent forth his son.

What did Paul mean by that? Well, looking back, we can say that this was the first time in the Mediterranean world that the Mediterranean world was unified under one rule.

Of course, I'm talking about the Romans. Now, it could be said, that's a good thing, right? I mean, consider Roman roads. The Romans were very good at building great roads.

[6 : 04] Did you know that they constructed over 400 major roads, covering a quarter of a million miles throughout the empire?

And it was, of course, that was to connect Rome, the capital, to important cities and locations throughout the empire. How about a third one?

Roman peace. Many of you have heard of Pax Romana. The Romans were fairly permissive about various religions, as long as there wasn't any trouble.

And, of course, if people paid their taxes. Jews were allowed to preserve their own customs. Third, how about this? There was one dominant language in the whole empire.

What was that? That was the Greek language. All of this made it possible for people like the Apostle Paul to travel to many countries to spread the good news of the gospel.

[7 : 02] But we also know that Jesus came during a time in history when his people were severely oppressed. This was behind the decree that was ordered.

In Luke 2, verse 1, it reads, In those days, Caesar Augustus issued a decree, a census to be taken of the entire Roman world.

Some translations give a reason why. And that reason was to be taxed. Of course, this forced Jesus' parents to travel to Bethlehem because Bethlehem was Joseph's city of heritage.

Did you know that's an 85-mile journey? Not by a greyhound bus, but actually on the back of an animal. Probably a donkey. And, of course, being very, very full-term in her pregnancy, I'm sure Mary felt every jolt.

So, regarding his parents, we see his parents and also the timing of his birth. How about third? The humble setting of Jesus' birth.

[8 : 12] We saw a lot of children here tonight. I'm sure you'll agree with me that the birth of a child usually takes place with great excitement and preparation.

Would you agree with that? Yeah. I was present at both of my children's delivery. They're in a fully equipped hospital. Plenty of doctors.

Plenty of nurses around. And then, of course, there's all the preparation at home. A room, diapers, toys, a crib, stuffed animals.

You know what I'm talking about. But what do we see in Scripture about Jesus' birth? Well, actually, there's very little information.

We're not told the time of the year. We're not told the time of the day. But what we do see is not very appealing. Picture this in your mind, if you will.

[9 : 10] Let me read to you from Luke 2, verse 7. It says that she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

Consider that. No room for them. What a shame. I wonder, weren't any of Joseph's relatives around to help them in their time of need?

Or perhaps maybe the rumor mill was active. Maybe you'd hear people say in the background, this woman's pregnant. But I don't remember there being a wedding.

We would have been invited. If that's the case, Jesus' situation went from humble to humiliation.

Fourthly, consider who were the first visitors to see this new baby?

Of course, when there's a new birth, usually there's lots of visitors. Right, ladies? Yeah. Yeah. Well, it's not by accident that shepherds would be the first human beings outside of Mary and Joseph to see the Messiah.

[10:26] We don't know their names. We're not told how many, even how many there were. But shepherds were among the lowest in social rank, right next to lepers.

And that's because they lived outdoors. They lived in the fields. And therefore, they would be perpetually ceremonially unclean.

But God chose them to be the first ones to see the Messiah. When the angel told them about the birth of Jesus, it recorded in Luke 2, verse 12. This is what the angel said.

This will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger. In other words, here's how you'll know that it's the Messiah.

You'll find him in a feeding trough. In other words, you'll know him by his humility. It's kind of interesting that in some studies done on the shepherds that because of their location, it's possible that these shepherds were in charge of the temple flocks that were being supplied, that were the sacrificial lambs being supplied for the sacrifices in Jerusalem.

[11:44] But that would be a great study. Also, we see that Jesus himself later on will describe himself as a shepherd. In one discussion with the Pharisees, Jesus said, I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. Fifthly, I want to ask us to consider his life, that humility followed Jesus most of his earthly life.

Jesus was not born into a wealthy family. I want to ask you, have you noticed how common it is today to hear about billionaires?

Have you noticed that? When I was growing up, I've never heard of billionaires out there. But today, it's common. In fact, this past week, it was announced that one guy's net worth exceeds \$400 billion.

That's amazing. But here's another thing that's amazing. We can't say that about Jesus' family. When it came time for Jesus to be circumcised, according to the Mosaic Law, his parents were so poor, they couldn't pay the fee.

[12:58] And so they had to take advantage of the optional sacrifice that was permitted under those who had humble circumstances. a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.

During his public ministry, Jesus didn't have a home. Jesus, it says that, Jesus said that the foxes have holes, the birds of the air have their nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. As far as we know, Jesus never traveled outside of Israel. He ministered to those who were least esteemed in society, those whom the religious leaders would have nothing to do with.

I'm talking about the downtrodden, the sick, the handicapped, women and children. Yet these are the very people that Jesus, who saw Jesus as their friend.

Jesus taught great lessons on humility. In Mark chapter 9, it says that he was sitting down, he called the 12, and he said to them, if anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.

[14:11] In John chapter 13, Jesus washes the disciples' feet. And then he says, if I then, your Lord and teacher, wash your feet, you also ought to wash another's feet.

Jesus' entire, his entire mission, his words and his works, was to honor God the Father. He says in John chapter 6, I've come down from heaven, not to do my will, but the will of him who sent me.

What great humility that is. Last of all, I want to consider his suffering and death. At the age of 33, Jesus was brought before the religious authorities under false accusations he stood before these pompous and petty rulers and he didn't say a single word to defend himself.

He allowed himself to be made fun of. He allowed himself to be beaten, to be scourged. He allowed himself to be crucified. And it was a humiliating public execution.

The apostle Paul sums it up in his letter to the Philippians in chapter 2. Speaking of Jesus, he said, although he existed in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God, a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself.

[15:35] Taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men and being found in the appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jesus. What a life of humility. What a great thing that we see of our Lord and Savior Jesus. I want to ask this question.

Why did Jesus come in such humility? I'd like to offer these three reasons. I'll go through this as quickly as I can. First of all, Jesus, the second person of the Godhead, entered humanity as a little baby, one, so that we would not fear him.

I want to ask you to consider this. What if Jesus just showed up one day in all his glory? People would scatter. People would hide themselves.

You may have heard this story about this. It was a raw winter night, maybe similar to tonight. There was a fire in the fireplace and this man heard this thumping sound on his kitchen storm door.

[16:49] And he looked and he saw that these birds were being attracted to the warm glow of that home. Well, feeling sorry for them, he went out and he opened the doors of his barn.

He turned on the lights, tossed some cornmeal in the corner, waiting for the birds to come. The birds didn't show up. In fact, they scattered in all directions.

And so this guy tried all these various things. He tried driving them into the barn with a broom, but nothing worked. You see, his intentions were good, but what a sight.

All those birds could see was this huge alien creature running in circles, swinging a broom in the air.

The man thought to himself, if only I could become a bird myself, I could lead them to safety.

What occurred to him was the principle of the incarnation. God entered humanity in the most unassuming, unthreatening way.

[17:57] He came as a little baby, innocent, approachable, lovable. Jesus would say, take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls.

So he opens his hands to us. He bids us to come to us, to come to him. What a great invitation. Here's a second reason for Jesus' humility.

It was so that we could relate to him. Jesus thoroughly participated in the human experience, starting as a baby.

He understands us. Let me give you some takeaways here from that. Maybe some of you are troubled right now. Jesus had some troubles.

Do you feel oppressed? Jesus was born into an oppressed family. Imagine a government where a king can order the slaughter of innocent babies, and there's no one who can stop him.

[19:07] Have you ever been lonely? Jesus was. It says in scripture in John chapter one that he came to his own, and those who were his own, in other words, his family, did not receive him.

Even the religious leaders took offense at him. They wanted to kill him. I ask you, have you ever felt betrayed? Yeah, one of his disciples, apostles, betrayed him, and the rest of them scattered when he was arrested.

Have you ever felt abandoned by God? Jesus felt that. During his final moments on the cross, Jesus said, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

That's when our sins were laid upon Jesus, the Lamb of God. So Jesus entered humanity so that we could relate to him.

And here's a third reason. Jesus entered humanity and became one of us so that he could represent us. What I'm saying, what I mean by that is so that he could take our place on the cross.

[20:21] In Mark 10, it says that even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and here's the key, to give his life as a ransom for many.

Maybe some of you have heard Max Lucado say this, that God sent us what we actually needed. If all we needed was more information, God would have sent an educator.

If all we needed was technology, God would have sent a scientist. If all we needed was more money, God would have sent an economist. If all we needed was more fun, God would have sent an entertainer.

But Jesus came to earth because we needed a savior. So I want to end here with this question.

What does his humility mean for you and me?

I just have three important takeaways here. First of all, I think it's for us to know the heart of God.

[21:26] What does God value? Did you know the humility is a major theme that we find in scripture? In Peter's first epistle, he says, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another.

For God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Secondly, in spite of his humility, I ask you this, consider everything that humble Jesus accomplished while he was here.

His birth split history into two. You have B.C. and now you have A.D. and O.D. How about this?

Within a single generation after his death and resurrection, this humble person changed the whole world. Today, this week and next week, roughly two billion people in this world who claim to be Christians will be celebrating Christmas.

Christmas. And it all came from this one man who entered humanity as a baby. I think that really says a lot, doesn't it? No other system of beliefs is based on God becoming one of us.

[22 : 45] Who else can claim this? Muhammad? Can Buddha claim this? Here's the last reason. I think it's for us to understand God's plan for humanity.

When you and I celebrate the Christmas account, we come face to face with the humility of Jesus Christ. But here's the key, friends.

Jesus is no longer in a state of humility. He's no longer in a manger. Here's some good news. Right now, Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father.

After Jesus rose from the dead, and right before his ascension, he says, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Here's some more good news. Jesus will come again a second time.

Not as a lamb, but as a roaring lion. And he will correct everything that has gone wrong with humanity. Consider, no more school shootings.

[23 : 52] No more war in the Ukraine or in the Middle East. violence in the streets will stop. No more senseless deaths from fentanyl overdoses.

No more hurricanes or tornadoes. And there'll be no more government shutdowns. We can go on and on about what Jesus did. So I want to ask you this.

Where are you with the Lord Jesus? Is all this what you saw with what the children sang about and what I've been talking about? Is it just a story that we look at once a year?

Is Jesus still an infant to you? Meek and mild? The truth is, is that we can agree with Mary. Each one of us needs a savior.

And God sent Jesus. Amen. He did. At this time, if I could invite the musicians to come. In a moment here, we're going to be turning out all the lights and clothes with a time of worship.

[25 : 14] You realize the Bible doesn't command us to remember the Lord's birth. But we do celebrate it. And we do that out of respect for him and also because of all the joy that comes from, that he's brought to us.

But scripture does command us to remember his death. And we do this every week, friends. We have these emblems before us. And if I could ask one of the fellows here if you'd bring that table up. because we're going to pass out the emblems here in a minute. And go ahead and pass them out. And I'd like to ask those in the back, if you'd pass out those candles that we have.

And you can turn out the lights as you do that. But as these things are being done, I'd like to read to you what Paul said to the Corinthians.

Go ahead, pass it on. In chapter 11, Paul says, I received from the Lord that which I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed.

[26 : 36] it says that he took bread. And when he had given thanks, it says that he broke it and he said, this is my body which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. Amen.