

SERIES – “The Mission: Joining God in His Work”

Christ Came to Us – Matthew 1:18-25 – April 8, 2018

INTRODUCTION

“Here I come to save the day!” Do you remember the old *Mighty Mouse* cartoons? The main character was an animated anthropomorphic mouse in a suit and cape. He had a wide range of powers – flight, super strength, x-ray vision, telekinesis, and more – all of which he used to free victim after victim from the clutches of evil foes.

Each time Mighty Mouse achieved victory over his adversary, an unseen audience would erupt in loud applause as orchestral music played in the background. Then the narrator would say, *“What a mouse. What a mouse!”*

Most people enjoy hero stories. Whether real or imagined, we appreciate the thought of someone powerful coming to the rescue of those in need. We’re also grateful for the compassion, or even the sense of duty, that would compel one person to help another.

Perhaps what we like best about hero stories, however, is the way the rescue always seems to occur just in the nick of time. Can you picture that moment in your mind? The situation is grim. The forces of evil are on the cusp of accomplishing their goals, and the very lives of innocent people are about to be thrown away.

Then, right at the moment when the last of our hope slips away, we hear it: “Here I come to save the day!” Salvation has come.

All of us who have trusted in Christ have experienced that moment. When humanity was hopelessly snared in sin – when we had no hope of pulling ourselves away from the forces of evil inside our own hearts – God sent His Son to meet our most pressing need. Christ came to us with a mission, and He has won the day.

KNOW AND UNPACK THE STORY – Matthew 1:18-25

In today’s culture, we’re often tempted to think of the Christmas story as a self-contained event. We celebrate the birth of Jesus, but we don’t always remember that He was born with a purpose. Christ came on a mission to save us from our sin.

SALVATION COMES THROUGH A PERSON

We can’t properly appreciate the concept of salvation until we think deeply about the person of Jesus Christ. Why? Because Jesus is more than the One who accomplished our salvation; He’s not simply the Being who made salvation possible. Instead, Jesus *IS* our salvation.

When you embraced the call to follow Christ, you didn’t respond to a concept or a message. You responded to a Person. You followed Jesus – the same Jesus who was born of a virgin, grew, learned, lived, and died almost 2,000 years ago. The same Jesus who is the Lord of God’s kingdom and Master of your life.

When you consider your coworkers, friends, and family members who have not yet experienced salvation, you want that to change. You want them to experience the joy that comes with the forgiveness of sins – and that's good. That's natural. But they won't experience that joy by better understanding a doctrine or by reciting a prayer. They need to meet Jesus. They need to experience Him.

SALVATION COMES WITH A PLAN

The message of the Gospel is simple: By sending Jesus to us, God made a way where there was no way. God has a plan of rescue for all humanity. God's plan is not just a good plan, or even the best of many plans – it's the only plan sufficient to meet the most pressing need in our lives: the need to be rescued from our sin.

That salvation is anchored in the person of Jesus Christ. But simply knowing who Jesus is and what He's done isn't enough to actually accomplish the forgiveness of our sins. God's plan involves each person encountering Jesus in a way that leads to a relationship with Him. Once we encounter Jesus, we must respond to Him with faith, which is an act of the will in which we place our trust in Him.

To think about salvation in another way, God's plan requires that all people:

- **Realize:** The first step in being rescued is to realize we're in trouble. God's plan is for everyone to realize that they're not sufficient to save themselves – that Jesus is the only way of rescue from the corruption of sin.
- **Repent:** Once we realize our situation, we must repent. To repent involves being genuinely sorry for sin. It means changing our minds about our behavior and actively turning away from sin toward God.
- **Receive:** Salvation comes as an offer – a gift- of God's grace. And that gift must be accepted as an act of faith.

Christ came to die in order to save the world; to save you and me. That was His mission. We're called to die with Christ, to go with Christ as individuals, and to go with Christ as a community to advance His kingdom in our world. That's our mission.