

## “Have a Spirit-filled Christmas”

Matthew 1:18

“Have a Spirit-filled Christmas.” I had never thought about Christmas in that sense before this past Thursday when I was reading the verse that I’ll be working from this morning. That’s a unique approach to Christmas. “Have a Spirit-filled Christmas.” That’s a little different than most of the Christmas songs Beverly and I have been hearing on the radio this week. We have it set on a station that plays holiday music so we’re hearing songs by Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby and Dean Martin and Perry Como and Ella Fitzgerald and Peggy Lee so forth and so on. I like hearing those deceased artists singing. They had amazing voices. One of the dj’s on this particular station on Sirius XM said, “Here’ a song Frank Sinatra recorded before he died, “The Christmas Song,” on Sirius XM.” I guess that’s as opposed to the numerous songs he recorded after he died.

But the song my sermon title reminded me of is one of the old Christmas songs from back in the ‘60’s by Burl Ives. Can anyone guess the title? Burl wanted us to, “Have a holly, jolly Christmas this year.” I guess Mr. Ives didn’t see the COVID19 coming.

I want to encourage us to be filled with the Spirit this year while we’re in the midst of all that we’re going to be in the midst of. It can be done. In fact, we’re commanded to be filled with the Spirit every day. But we’ll get to that commandment later.

Take your Bibles and turn to Matthew’s gospel, chapter 1 and v.18 (repeat). *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 1:18 NAU)*

I’m going to make just a couple of observations this morning that I have pulled out of this one verse from Matthew’s gospel.

My first observation is this, **“Matthew’s first mention of the Holy Spirit lays the foundation for the coming ministry of the Spirit.”**

There is a law or principle that the student of the word of God needs to be made aware of when it comes to first mentions of people or

concepts found in the Bible. It's called "**The law (or principle or rule) of first mention**" and it's a guideline that some people use for studying Scripture. The law of first mention says that, to understand a particular word or doctrine, we must find the first place in Scripture that word or doctrine is revealed and study that passage. The reasoning is that the Bible's first mention of a concept is the simplest and clearest presentation; doctrines are then more fully developed on that foundation. So, to fully understand an important and complex theological concept, Bible students are advised to start with its "first mention." In our case this morning it's the Holy Spirit's first mention.

Notice what Matthew wrote in that verse, "*she was found to be with child **by the Holy Spirit.***" That is the first time the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the New Testament. And He's first mentioned in a situation that conveys to us the power of the Spirit in doing what was impossible, like the two women becoming with child.<sup>35</sup> *The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and **the power of the Most High** will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.*

<sup>36</sup> *"And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month.*

<sup>37</sup> *"For nothing will be impossible with God."* (Lk. 1:35-37 NAU)

There is a word in v.37 that we have grown rather fond of. It's the word "nothing." We use it a lot, don't we? "Whatcha doin'?" "Nothin.'" "Whatcha thinkin' about?" "Nothin.'" "What's wrong?" "Nothin.'" And what does nothing mean? Nothing. Here's how Webster's defines it, "not any thing : no thing." If it were true that we can literally think about nothing, that would have to mean that our minds are absolutely blank. I have worked with a couple of people who seemed to actually think about nothing.

Listen to it again, "*For nothing will be impossible with God.*" And a verse we saw just a couple of weeks ago,<sup>6</sup> *Be anxious for nothing.*

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And when we read v.37 now <sup>37</sup> *"For nothing will be impossible with God,"* it should build up our faith in the possibilities of how God can work in our lives.

Ok, that's what we expect with God, nothing will be impossible with God. We get that. God is omnipotent and omniscient and omnipresent. But did you know that God says the same power that worked in Jesus can work in us? And what, prey tell, worked in Jesus? It was faith. Listen to this: *for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.* (Matt. 17:20 NAU)

*But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!"*

<sup>23</sup> *And Jesus said to him, "If You can?" All things are possible to him who believes."* (Mk. 9:22-23 NAU).

And this is where the Person of the Holy Spirit connects us to those possibilities. Put Mt. 1:18 in context. *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.*

**This is where we come in.** <sup>17</sup> *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.*

<sup>18</sup> *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,*

<sup>19</sup> *and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might*

<sup>20</sup> *which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, (Eph. 1:17-20 NAU)*

One of the truths of Scripture that the very faulty Charismatic Movement brought to the forefront of our faith is the Person and work of

the Holy Spirit. The visible church had neglected Him for a very long time until someone somewhere woke up to His presence in his life. The Charismatic Movement did what the early church did when it comes to the Holy Spirit and turned their eyes off Jesus and made the Spirit and man the center of their faith, but just the same, it seems the whole world overnight became acutely aware of the Person and work of the Spirit.

Do you know what makes *All things possible to him who believes?*" It is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's life.

I am not talking about the false teachings on possibilities that come from the mouth of preachers like Joel Osteen or Kenneth Copeland. I'm talking about the kind of possibilities Paul prayed for us to know about in his prayer for the Ephesians.

Beloved, **the Christian life is nothing if not life in the Spirit.**

And what does the Spirit do in the lives of the disciples of Christ? He points us to Jesus. The word of God is all about Jesus. The gospel is all about Jesus. Christmas is all about Jesus. Easter is all about Jesus. Life for the disciple is all about Jesus.

*"she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit."*

**What the Spirit birthed in Mary's womb, He has birthed in our inner man. Jesus was birthed in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit, and don't miss it, beloved, He is birthed in our spirit by the Spirit in the same way. Jesus is birthed in us by the Holy Spirit.**

I was born again in the cafeteria of CPCC but at that moment I only knew that I suddenly knew what the gospel was all about, it is about Jesus. I knew in an instant that all my sins had just been forgiven and that I was at peace with God. I didn't think "Hey, I'm born again. I just received the Holy Spirit." I was just born again. I had never even heard that there was a Holy Spirit. I only knew that life looked different then and there. At that moment, Jesus was birthed in me by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, *"It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh profits nothing."* That Tuesday morning, the Spirit gave me light and life and faith. I knew in an instant that it was all about Jesus.

Do you realize what a Christmas miracle we are, you are? We were all at one time dead in our trespasses and sins. We were all at one time separated from God and we were His enemies. We were barren inside like Sarah and Rebecca and Rachel and Elizabeth were. But then God graciously and freely with absolutely no contribution from us, rescued us from the kingdom of darkness. God gives life to the dead by His sovereign choice and out of the abundance of mercy and love He possesses. <sup>4</sup> *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,*

<sup>5</sup> *even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),*

<sup>6</sup> *and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (Eph. 2:4-6 NAU)*

I hope somehow during this COVID 19 kind of Christmas you can have a holy faith-filled and Spirit-filled experience. It may not be a holly jolly Christmas, but it can be better than what Burl sang about. We can spend this Christmas with the Person of Christmas, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' name. Amen.