

The Mystery of Our Religion (1st Corinthians 2: 1-9 & Luke 1: 26-35)

Let Us Pray:

Heavenly Father, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you, Amen.

Today is the second Sunday in Advent

And Advent is a time of waiting and preparation,

For the birth of God's Son Jesus.

And it's interesting, but I'm sure many of you are aware

That there are great numbers of people who have a problem with the birth of Jesus and especially everything that leads up to it.

Right?

It's often the elephant in the room when discussing the Christmas story!

(Pause) And because of this,

there are many people who cannot accept Christianity...

They simply can't come to grips with the Birth of Jesus.

(Pause) I think it's safe to say, that this is the age of technology...

Computers, smart phones, tablets, space travel, zoom meetings

We can google an answer to anything...can't we?

And many science fiction fantasies from ages gone by

have come to fruition, haven't they?

Science fiction books & movies from the 50's, 60's & 70's

Are in fact real inventions and products we use today...

Remember Dick Tracy's watch that was a phone?

That wrist phone is a reality!!

And for this reason,

many people are unable to accept the story

Of God being born to a virgin, or in a stable.

Some folks just can't comprehend the

angel Gabriel speaking to Mary.

It's hard for some to believe the angels

were singing to the shepherds or

That wisemen would follow a new star.

(Pause) You see....this event.... the birth of Christ,

Doesn't conform with modern science or current wisdom.

Our society seeks hard evidence.

Right? we've been hearing "follow the science...not politics"

We need a scientific fact.... something that computes.

(Pause) This isn't new thinking.

There has always existed those who

would like to demythologize the Bible.

And it's **not** a new phenomenon as a result of our technology.

For many years there have been sceptics

who have suggested that everything in the Bible, that cannot be scientifically explained should be eliminated.

If there's an event in the Bible, can't be proven scientifically, it should be scratched or eliminated from the Bible.

Basically forcing the Bible to conform to present day knowledge.

Could you imagine how the Bible would read if we did that?

You would end up with a sterile history book.

All the wonder, (pause) all the mystery would be removed.

Consider all the unimaginable events that take place in the Christmas story alone.

An angel Gabriel, comes to Mary

Mary, a virgin, is to conceive a child through the Holy Spirit.

Another angel explains things to Mary's soon to be husband Joseph.

An angel appears to the shepherds,

Then there is a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God.

Three wise men follow a star to Bethlehem.

Those same wise men were warned in a dream, not to return to Herrod.

Now what if you removed all of this from the Bible?

We wouldn't have a whole lot left would we?

We would remove the mystery...the wonder...the marvel.

Paul says in 1st Timothy

“Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion.” Chapter 3
verse 16

Great indeed is the mystery of our religion

Now I'll remind you again that I'm not ordained, but,

I very much believe that we need mystery...

I believe we need wonders.

We need marvels that are beyond our logic...

We need events that are beyond our understanding...

We need intrigue!

In this morning's Scripture lesson, **Nick** read, Paul is speaking to us
and he says :

“My speech and my message was not in plausible words or wisdom,
but in demonstration of the spirit and power.” ...1st Corinthians
chapter 2: verse 4

The story of the birth of Jesus Christ

The story of the birth of the Son of God....is not plausible.

Nor does it fit our wisdom.

What it does do, it demonstrates the power and the glory of God.

The wisemen didn't question the rational of following a star....

The shepherds didn't question the reasonableness of

Angels speaking and singing to them.

What they all behold is a great and wonderful mystery.

They see the marvel beyond logic.

They see a joy beyond reason and above all, beyond the mystery,

(pause) They see the hand of God.

The mysteries that surround the birth of Jesus Christ announce

the mysteries and wonders of a new way of life.

That is a life....a kingdom....in which God is with us.

Immanuel, the Hebrew word translates to "God is with us!"

The marvels surrounding the birth of Jesus point to,

The marvels of a new creation.

Again it's Paul in Romans (Chapter 11: verse 33) that says

"O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!"

Here is what we are to see at Advent!

"The riches & wisdom & knowledge of God"

The power and the glory of God!

The story of the birth of Christ reveals at the very outset

that there are forces and powers that are beyond our understanding,

beyond our control...

The story of the birth of Jesus reveals that
there are forces and powers beyond our finite wisdom.

The mysteries of Advent proclaim a whole legion of mysteries:

A new word.....a new creation.....a new reality

A life in which God dwells with man.

Immanuel....God is with us!

God's ways...God's thoughts.... God's plans

Are simply well beyond our limited wisdom

And the story of the birth of Jesus introduces all of this.

We need to cry out with Paul:

“O the depth of the riches & wisdom and knowledge of God!”

We need to feel this.....we need to sense this...

This is what we are to get from the story,

of the birth of Jesus....

The Infinite power of God.

(Pause)

How can you explain at this season...

This Advent season, this Christmas season...

How can you explain the love and kindness you feel towards others?

How can you explain the sense of joy and goodness...

and feelings of hopefulness?

How can you explain the desire to give and to share?

How do you explain the spirit of charity?

Can you explain to me why a Christmas carol lifts our spirits?

Can we explain the longing we feel for absent friends and family?

Our longing for peace and good will?

Can we scientifically explain how our memories go back in time,

to our own childhood? Or the old homestead?

Or fond & special memories of Our parents, grandparents

and our childhood friends....

Can we explain the need to have our family near to us?

And can anyone scientifically explain why the churches are filled

during this Christmas season?

(LONG PAUSE)

I can't explain any of these phenomena in terms of pure science

Just as I can't explain the events of the birth of Jesus...

The star....the angels...the wisemen...

All I can do is to marvel.....

To marvel over the power of God,
the love of God and the grace of God.

All I can do is embrace the mystery'

Embrace the wonder....and rejoice!

For there is a new love in the world and that love is God.

There is a new power in the world , and that power is God.

And there is a new comforter....

For unto us a child is born a son is given

And he shall be called Wonderful counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of peace.

Dwell not in the scientific wisdom of the 21st century,

But in the Power and the glory of God.

All the mysteries surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ point to this fact.

As Paul says to Timothy:

“Our religion abounds with mystery!”

This is good and this is the point!

Remember the word of Paul from 1st Corinthians chapter 2 verse 5....

“Our faith does not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God!”

Our faith doesn't rest on human wisdom,

Our faith rests on the power of God!