

CHRISTMAS INSIDE OUT - *FROM FEAR TO FAITH*

Luke 1:11-2:10, Matthew 1:18-20

- **Christmas is marketed as *The Most Wonderful Time of the Year,* however for some it is more like *The Nightmare Before Christmas.***
- **The Bible encourages Christians to not be anxious and fearful.**
- *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind."* (2 Timothy 1:7)
- **Since its inception, people have experienced fear around Christmas; Zechariah, Joseph, Mary, and the Shepherds all experienced fear connected to Christmas.**
- **We can all learn how to better cope with fear at Christmas from the stories of those who experienced the first Christmas.**
- ***How can I move from Fear to Faith this Christmas?***

Moving From Fear to Faith at Christmas Requires:

REMAINING FAITHFUL TO THE LORD IN SPITE OF CHANGE

- **Apparently, Zechariah was afraid of the changes happening in his life.**
- "*While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him... Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John... He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth."* (Luke 1:11-15)
- **God hears our prayers and cares about our future, even when we do not understand what is happening.**
- *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take."* (Proverbs 3:5-6)
- **God is faithful to complete what He begins if we remain faithful.**

- *"I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns." (Philippians 1:6)*
- **Many of us will experience fear because of change this Christmas; we must remember that God will never leave us nor forsake us.**
- ***What changes in my life are causing me fear this Christmas?***

Moving From Fear to Faith at Christmas Requires:

SURRENDERING OUR FEAR OF THE <u>FUTURE</u> TO THE LORD

- *"God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary…Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you." Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus."* (Luke 1:26-31)
- **Mary was "confused and disturbed" and was afraid because of the uncertainty of her future.**
- *"Mary was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit."* (Matthew 1:18-20)
- **Joseph must have experienced fear regarding taking Mary, a "pregnant virgin," as his wife.**
- *"Because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child."* (Luke 2:4-5)
- **While we don't know the details of their conversations, we know that despite their fears, Joseph and Mary followed God's plans for their lives.**
- **Many of us will experience fear over the future this Christmas, but the Lord will be right there with us through life's changes.**
- *"Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you."* (Deuteronomy 31:8)
- ***What about the future frightens you, especially at Christmas?***

Moving From Fear to Faith at Christmas Requires:

ACCEPTING AND CELEBRATING GOD'S <u>GOOD</u> <u>NEWS</u>

- ***"****That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem!"* (Luke 2:8-10)
- **The angel brought good news to the shepherds, but they were anxious and afraid because of the glory of the Lord.**
- **Even when it doesn't make sense to worry, many of us worry anyway.**
- *"Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And if worry can't accomplish a little thing like that, what's the use of worrying over bigger things?"* (Luke 12:25-26)
- **Fear often accompanies the possibility of good outcomes, especially for those who have experienced hope followed by disappointment.**
- *"Give your burdens to the Lord, and He will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall."* (Psalm 55:22)
- *"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:6-7)
- **We need to look for messages of hope and joy amidst our fears.**
- *"The Lord is for me, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?"* (Psalm 118:6)
- ***What positive changes are happening in my life that may be causing me fear this Christmas?***