

## Find Your Christmas Miracle

✧ **When God invites...** (vv.10-13)

✧ **Where God delivers...** (v.14)

In the name of Jesus-Immanuel, our newborn Brother and God-with us, dear family of God:

Have you ever really wanted to help someone, maybe be part of a **Christmas Miracle**? Imagine you're a single man in the checkout line. Right behind you is a mom and several kids. The cashier holds up a fish bowl. "Go ahead. Pick the winning number and all your groceries are free." You look back hoping for busy mom to win. Unfortunately, you win. What a waste for a loaf of bread and some milk. But without missing a beat you turn to the mom and call, "Look, Honey! We won! Our groceries are free!" She looks at you, shakes her head, turns away, "He's not my husband."

✧ **When God invites...** (vv.10-13)

Who would refuse a **Christmas Miracle**? A king named Ahaz did something far worse. He was the leader of God's chosen people in Judea, capital city Jerusalem where God's temple was to shine like a beacon of hope for all people. But Ahaz worshiped the idols of their neighbors and even sacrificed his own son in the fire. This led to serious problems for Ahaz with two enemies ganging up on him to the north. In the verses from yesterday's sermon we heard how the LORD was so kind to try to soothe King Ahaz' fears. After all, the LORD called Himself the husband of His chosen bride, the nation of Israel. God promised to defend His city and temple. Now the LORD was turning to Ahaz with a far greater promise than, "Look, Honey, we won!"

*Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."* What a great offer. The LORD is simply inviting Ahaz to pray. But like the make-believe woman in our imaginary check-out line, Ahaz scowls at God and answers: "**No! I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test.**" Somehow he tries to justify his stubborn pride by saying he does not want to tempt the LORD. But Ahaz was tempting God all the time with his sin.

*Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also?"* Literally he says, "*Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?*"

My dear friends and neighbors, don't we often complain about how tired we are, especially of problems, but also of blessings? The Israelites complained for forty years about God's blessings. In the wilderness with Moses, God gave them free groceries, an endless supply of manna and quail, water and protection all along the way. In response "*they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!'*" (Numbers 21:5 NIV84) What student does not get tired of school? It's easy to forget how blessed we are to get an education, to have the gifts and the time to study, to be able to pay our school bills with a job, a scholarship or our parents' hard work. We get tired of work, until the job or our benefits run out. Pastors can even get tired of preaching until a sore throat reminds us of how quickly God can take away this blessed privilege too. Do we ever stop to think how we weary God with our thankless Ahaz-hearts? Too busy to pray? We weary each other and we weary our God too. But His love is determined to give us a **Christmas Miracle**. Ahaz refused God's invitation. But look...!

## ✧ Where God delivers... (v.14)

*Therefore the LORD himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.* Ahaz should have seen that coming. God promised the virgin's Son at the very beginning. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, the LORD God said to the serpent: *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”* (Genesis 3:15 NIV84) With the man present the LORD promised that the Seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head. That's not the way the Creator ordered His creation. It's biologically impossible. But as the angel Gabriel said to Mary: *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God....For nothing is impossible with God.”* (Luke 1:35,37 NIV84) Lest anyone forget, the LORD repeated this awesome promise to a wicked king who did not want to hear it.

There's so much comfort here for us. You can **Find Your Christmas Miracle** right here. God is winning your heart with His love. You've accepted His gracious invitation to come and hear. You know that this Jesus was born to die on the cross for all your sins. You've heard how He rose again from the dead. Are you confident that He was born to live and die and rise again for you? Are you trusting in His words when He gave up His spirit on the cross? Do you believe Him when He says this? *“It is finished.”*

One of history's most spectacular miracles at Christmas happened in “No Man's Land” between two armies during the First World War. Remember how the fields of Flanders were filled with trenches in 1914? All the world was focused on those fields were bloody battles ended in one stalemate after another. Millions of men were dying in a conflict that started with celebrations and hopes of heroes and the title, “The War to End All Wars.” But there they were, armies so close they could hear each other's soldiers only about 60 yards away.

Maybe you've heard how British soldiers peered over the edge of the trench to see candles on branches in the enemy trenches. Little Christmas trees were going up over there. Soon the enemy was singing Christmas carols until the British soldiers joined in. Minutes before they had been ready to kill each other; now they were singing of the Savior's birth. But more miracles followed. British soldiers watched an enemy combatant carry a Christmas tree right into No Man's Land, but no one shot him. He walked right up to the British trench and shouted, “Merry Christmas!” On both side commanders ordered their men to stop. But the **Christmas Miracle** was on. Shaking hands, giving gifts, singing more carols, they even played a soccer game that Christmas Eve of 1914.<sup>1</sup>

Our newborn Prince of Peace says, *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”* (John 14:27 NIV84) Jesus has come to give us peace more lasting than peace between armies and nations. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And none of life's hardships, misery or sadness can take that peace away from us. We can hurry with the shepherds to kneel beside our Savior's manger and worship Him all the way back to our lives as students and workers, telling everyone we can that Jesus our Savior was born for them too. Why refuse God's blessings? **Find Your Christmas Miracle – When God invites and right here Where God delivers.**

Your shopping cart is loaded with things you need like joy and peace, kindness and gentleness, companionship and love that the world cannot know or give. Your heavenly husband paid the bill for all your guilt and sin when He died on the cross. He goes ahead of you in life's line as you follow with all your responsibilities, doubts and fears. On Christmas He turns to you and says, “Look, Honey, we won!” Go ahead. Slip an arm around His waist and smile. He chose you. He made you His own. Jesus is God's **Christmas Miracle** for you. Jesus is *Immanuel – God with us!* Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Details from “Find your Christmas Miracle,” a sermon on Luke 2:14, by Pastor Jonathan E. Schroeder, Faith Lutheran Church, Sharpsburg, Georgia for Christmas Eve, 2012.

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