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FIVE ENCOURAGEMENTS FROM THE FIRST CHRISTMAS SEASON

by Eddie Lawrence

Introduction

-- Did you hear about the little boy went Christmas carolling in the middle of January. He went to a house and a man sitting in his living room heard a thin, piping voice singing, "O Come All Ye Faithful." He went to his front door and opened it, and there was a little boy singing Christmas carols.

He said to the boy, "What are you doing?"

The child replied, "I'm singing Christmas carols."

The man said, "Why, Son, it s the middle of January."

The little boy said, "I know, but I had the measles during Christmas, and I'm just now getting around to doing my caroling."

Nothing could get in the way of his celebration, and it really didn't matter what time of year it was. (dabarorg)

Transition-- I pray that we will let nothing get in the way of our really celebrating what Christmas means to us. There is so much in the Christmas narratives in Scripture to encourage us. Let's read from Luke 2:

Luke 2:1 And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3 So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife,[a] who was with child. 6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

In reading the above passage, let us draw five applications of the text for our lives today that will be a source of encouragement to us during this Christmas season:

1. GOD CAN WORK THROUGH WORLDLY GOVERNMENT TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PLANS AND PURPOSES

Explain--God actually used a decree and a census from a pagan Roman government to position Joseph and Mary for the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem which fulfilled the prophecies given.

Apply--We are not to be discouraged by what happens in the world around us or through human governments. God is still God and the heart of the King is in the hand of the Lord. He is sovereign and can trump the plans of man in order to fulfill His purposes.

2. GOD CAN WORK THROUGH TRIPS WHERE WE GO HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

Explain--Joseph returned to Bethlehem the place of his lineage and what a wonderful event happened while he

was there.

Apply--During this Christmas season, be encouraged to know that God can do something strategic in and through you as you return home to be with family. Realize that there may be positive deposits from your heritage of which you are still unaware. Also go with the knowledge that you can be light, love, and life to others.

Relationships are so important and especially within our own family. Maybe there are some among us who will experience miracles during this Christmas season. Have faith that God is at work as you go.

3. WE HAVE TO TRUST GOD'S TIMING CONCERNING THE BIRTH OF WHAT WE CARRY FOR HIM

Explain--I imagine all of us have thought of the how that donkey ride fared for pregnant Mary. Surely it was a tough trip. Yet, it was part of God's plan and had to happen in order for Christ to be born in Bethlehem.

Apply--We can be pregnant with the things of God in our lives as well. We carry something that God has placed within us. At times, we may become impatient thinking, when will this ever happen. It actually can quiet a miserable time. Yet, it is worth the "donkey ride" so to speak, to bring it forth. We simply have to trust God to work and guide us where we need to be to deliver what we are carrying for Him.

4. GOD CAN MAKE ROOM FOR YOU WHEN MAN SAYS THERE IS NO ROOM

Explain--Though the hotel was empty, God's ability to create a spectacular setting was still at work. Don't be discouraged if men have shut the door on you. God opens doors that no man can shut. It could be that you are out of a job, or recently relocated, or facing some other obstacle. Allow the movement and work of God during the first Christmas season to encourage you during this holiday season.

5. WE NEED TO MAKE SURE WE MAKE ROOM FOR WHAT GOD WANTS TO DO IN OUR HOMES THIS CHRISTMAS

Explain--There was no room in the Inn for Jesus. Is there room in our homes for him this Christmas? Are we making sure there is room for Jesus?

Apply--Think of the blessing the Innkeeper missed because he was unable to find room for Jesus.

Illustrate-- I heard the story about an event that happened one Christmas in an affluent neighborhood in California. A family decided to go out on Christmas Eve and serenade their neighbors with carols. In one house where they stopped, there was hectic confusion with Christmas preparations and with rushing and tension; so the lady opened the door and said to the singers, "Not now, please; we're too busy." The gentleman in the standing outside with his family merely said, "Yes, ma'am," and they moved away. It was Bing and Kathy Crosby with their family. If Jesus comes to our house and we say, "Not now, I'm busy," how sad it will be.

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