



Unexpected Love

Key Texts: Luke 1:31-33, Gen 3, Gen 22, Matt 1:23, Matt 28:20

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OPEN

This is the first week of our new Christmas: An Unexpected Story series. Over the next four weeks as we approach Christmas, we are going to look at how the Christmas Story is in many ways an unexpected story. We are going to see how it is a story of unexpected love, unexpected joy, unexpected peace, and unexpected hope.

This week we are going to see how the story of the nativity is a miracle that was so much bigger than we happened in a barn because it was a miracle that started at the beginning of all things. As we examine the story of scripture we see God revealing his plan and promise to destroy sins curse and restore the broken relationships caused by sin. God not only *declares* this promise but he steps into the story *demonstrating* the cost to make things right again.

REFLECT

- Read Luke 1:26–38, Luke 2:1–7. What surprises you about the birth story of Jesus?
 - What encouragement does it provide for you?
 - What questions does it create in you?
- The Christmas story is bigger than what happened in the barn. The incarnation of God becoming flesh in Jesus was planned from the very beginning. Where, when, and how Jesus was born was no accident but was prophesied about centuries before it happened.
 - Read Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:6–7. How does it make you feel when you reflect on how detailed God plan was centuries before Jesus was born?
 - What does this teach you?

DISCUSS

Even before the prophets God's story to send a saviour goes back to the very beginning. Before the prophets, before the law, even before Israel existed, God announced the good news at the beginning of the world in the garden of Eden.

- Read Genesis 3:1–15. God declares the good news in the middle of the curse (v 15). How does this impact your view of God?
- How does this impact your view of the Christmas story that it was planned before the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8)?
- God not only *declares* the good news but he *demonstrates* it. Compare Genesis 3:21 with the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22:6–14.
 - How does God provide the sacrifice for both Adam and Eve's clothing (animal skins) and the sacrifice for Abraham?
 - How do these stories point forward to how God provides the ultimate sacrifice in Jesus?
- God's plan was not simply to provide a solution for sin but more than that to once again be present with his people. The gospel of Matthew opens and closes with the same message about Immanuel, "that God *with us* desires to be present with us and that this presence will remain, "...with [us] always, until the very end of the age." (Matt.1:23, 28:20).
 - The story of Christmas is bigger than providing a solution for sin but providing a way for God to be present in your life. How does that truth impact your view of the Christmas story?

PRAY

- Jesus came to be Immanuel "God with us". How do you need to experience God's presence this Christmas season? Pray for each that that God's presence would be known:
 - In your work or school.
 - In your family or marriage.
 - In your own person life.