

Joke: Little Johnny went to his mother demanding a new bicycle. His mother decided that he should take a look at himself and the way he has been acting. She said, "Well Johnny, it isn't Christmas and we don't have the money to just go out and buy you anything you want. So why don't you write a letter to Jesus and pray for one instead." After his temper tantrum his mother sent him to his room. He finally sat down to write a letter to Jesus.

Dear Jesus,

I've been a good boy this year and would appreciate a new bicycle.

Your Friend,

Little Johnny

Now Little Johnny knew that Jesus really knew what kind of boy he was and it wasn't all that good.

So, he ripped up the letter and decided to give it another try.

Dear Jesus,

I've been an OK boy this year and I want a new bicycle.

Yours Truly,

Little Johnny

Well, Little Johnny knew this wasn't totally honest either so he tore it up and tried again.

Dear Jesus,

I've thought about being a good boy this year and can I have a new bicycle?

Signed,

Little Johnny

Well, Little Johnny looked deep down in his heart, which by the way was what his mother was really wanting. He crumpled up the letter and threw it in the trash can and

went running outside.

He aimlessly wandered about; depressed because of the way he treated his parents and really considering his actions. He finally found himself in front of a church.

Little Johnny went inside and knelt down, looking around not knowing what he should really do. Johnny finally got up and began to walk out the door and was looking at all the statues. All of a sudden he grabbed a small one and ran out the door. He went home and hid it under his bed and wrote this letter.

Jesus,

I've broken most of the Ten Commandments; shot spit wads in school, tore up my sister's Barbie doll and lots more. I'm desperate. I've got your mama. If you ever want to see her again, give me a bike.

Signed,

You know who

We've been looking at The Wonder of Christmas during this season here we are the last message in the series.

Where has this year gone?

For those who couldn't make it tonight we would love for you to join us for the communion service at your home so if you can grab some bread and juice so after the message tonight is done you can partake of it with us.

The Wonder of His Birth - Week 5

Play TWOC - Birth (skitguys.com)

That video reminds us in a fresh way that what happened on the first Christmas when Jesus was born looks a lot more like that messy barn than the clean little manger in our Nativity scenes that sit in our homes and offices and are depicted in the Christmas cards we receive in the mail.

Truth is church, Jesus came to get messy. And the birth that took place in that messy barn on the outskirts of Bethlehem was anything but a clean and sanitary sight. As

beautiful as a new birth is, a bit of messiness goes with eventually seeing and holding that precious new baby.

If you've had the privilege of being in the birthing room when a baby was born, you probably can testify that the miracle of childbirth comes with sights, sounds, and a few other sensations that can be described at times as a bit messy. After growing in a womb for nine months, there is a clean-up process that always takes place when a baby makes their arrival on delivery day.

It's never as clean as they show in the movies.

No matter how sanitized and scrubbed everyone in the room may be, before it's all said and done, there will be some beautiful mess that accompanies that bouncing baby boy or girl.

Do you know who got invited into the middle of the birth mess when Jesus was born? Not only Joseph who probably helped Mary through the beautiful mess of the

birth, but also the shepherds shortly after the baby Jesus arrived.

If one word was used to describe shepherds in the first century, it would undoubtedly be “messy.”

The shepherds were the roughnecks and the wrong kind of crowd who were anything but sanitized and saintly.

Shepherds were messy people with messy lives.

Regardless, the angels invited them to come close to the birthplace of the manger, where the long-awaited Messiah was finally born.

If the messy shepherds were invited in to see the newborn King Jesus, then a precedent was set for all of us who may have some mess in our own lives.

And because that precedent was set, that means we too have a shot at also being close and drawing near to Jesus as we open our lives to the wonder of Christmas this year.

Our imperfect and sometimes messy lives do not disqualify us as people who can encounter Jesus the Messiah. He is the one who came to get messy. And He invites us to draw near to Him this Christmas. The writer of Hebrews says it like this:

Hebrews 4:14–16 (NIV): Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

In other words, Jesus invites us to come close to Him to help us in the middle of our mess. He was tempted to get tangled up in the same kinds of sinful messes we find ourselves in, but He never let the mess invade His perfect life.

And here's some good news church, He knows where we are and how to get us out of our messes.

The Apostle Paul writes about this in a few of his letters. One place in his letter to the Romans he talks about how He came to save us from our mess because He loved us so much. Listen to what Paul writes:

Romans 5:6–9 (TPT): For when the time was right, the Anointed One came and died to demonstrate his love for sinners who were entirely helpless, weak, and powerless to save themselves. 7 Now, who of us would dare to die for the sake of a wicked person? We can all understand if someone was willing to die for a truly noble person. 8 But Christ proved God's passionate love for us by dying in our place while we were still lost and ungodly! 9 And there is still much more to say of his unfailing love for us! For through the blood of Jesus we have heard the powerful declaration, "You are now righteous in my sight." And because of the sacrifice of Jesus, you will never experience the wrath of God.

This passage is talking about the big mess we were in with God due to the sin in our lives that had so entangled us and messed everything up.

However, Jesus loved us so much that even while we were in the biggest sin-mess we could ever create for ourselves, Christ came from heaven to earth and was born so that ultimately He could one day die in our place on the cross. This ultimate act of love took care of the sin mess that was running rampant in our lives and throughout the world.

He made a way back to wholeness, and singlehandedly cleaned up our mess once and for all.

Eugene Peterson says it like this: “When we sin and mess up our lives, we find that God doesn’t go off and leave us—he enters into our trouble and saves us.”

This is part of the wonder of Christmas that started at the birth in Bethlehem and culminated on the cross at Calvary.

Jesus loved us so much that He chose to come close in the middle of our mess.

Mike Yaconelli in his book *Messy Spirituality* talks at length about Jesus' desire to get close to messy people just like you and me. Jesus actually came to meet us in the middle of our mess. Yaconelli writes:

“Jesus wants people just like you and me to get close to Him. Jesus loves people just like you who live in a city, have a wife or a husband, three kids, two cats, and a washing machine that has stopped working. Jesus loves people who are single, work sixty to seventy hours a week, and have parents who wonder why we're not married, and have friends who make much more money than we do. Jesus loves people who are divorced, still trying to heal from the scars of rejection, trying to cope with the single-parenting of children who don't understand why this happened to them. Jesus wants all of us who do not necessarily live life in a monastery, who don't have it all together, and probably never will to feel welcome in His

presence. He welcomes you in the midst of your messy life.”

It is part of the wonder of Christmas to realize Jesus is not afraid of our messy spirituality. What is true about many of our lives is that messy spirituality is an accurate description of the Christianity most of us live and few of us admit.

However, it is such a relief when we realize the truth that Jesus is not repelled by our lives no matter what kind of mess they may be in or how inadequate we may feel this Christmas.

No amount of mess can discourage Jesus from loving us fully in our humanity. He came to get messy because He knew that is where we were in our lives: right in the middle of a mess of sin. Regardless, He persistently pursues us in the face of it all with love bigger than whatever mess we find ourselves in today.

In his book *The Kingdom of God is a party*, Tony Compolo writes about a prostitute who while he was at a diner in

Honolulu, and it was early morning folks, but he couldn't sleep because of Jet lag so here he was at 3:30 AM in this diner.

And all of a sudden these woman of the night, prostitutes, came in and sat on both sides of him. They were very crude and very loud.

But he over heard one of them named Agnus who was having a birthday the next day, her 39th. He also heard the conversation among her friends when she was talking about her birthday they jokingly asked so what do you want a cake and a party? Agnus said no she never had one and didn't need one.

After they left, Tony went up to the bartender and asked if they come in every night to which he replied yes same time every night.

So Tony asked the bartender if he would help him throw a party for Agnus. He loved the idea and made the cake

and Tony came early and decorated the room with a Happy Birthday Agnus banner and all.

Long story short, she was in tears as Tony displayed the love of Jesus into her messy life.

We need more Tony's who are willing to be with the messy people. Jesus wasn't bothered by it why are we?

The Psalmist talks about God pursuing us no matter how much mess we may be living in and experiencing in our messed-up lives.

Psalm 23:6 says,

Psalm 23:6 (ESV): Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

What that verse reminds us about is that no matter how much of a mess our life may be in today, there is still a great wonder to behold this Christmas.

The reason is because the God we are celebrating who was born in a manger as our Savior is the One who came from heaven to earth to show us the way to new life.

He is the God who continues pursuing us in the middle of our mess with His goodness and His mercy. It is what Jesus described about the Good Shepherd going after the one lost sheep that found itself in a real mess when it got separated from the rest of the flock by wandering off.

Jesus asks the question found in Matthew 18:12-13 when He says,

Matthew 18:12–13 (TPT): Think of it this way: If a man owns a hundred sheep and one lamb wanders away and is lost, won't he leave the ninety-nine grazing on the hillside and go out and thoroughly search for the one lost lamb?
13 And if he finds his lost lamb, he rejoices over it, more than over the ninety-nine who are safe.

The Good Shepherd, Jesus, was talking about pursuing the one sheep that was in a mess because it had

wandered off. And He was pursuing that one with goodness and mercy in his heart and mind.

This Christmas you and I just need to slow down long enough in our wanderings to let His goodness and His mercy catch up with us.

If we choose to put our messy lives into His Holy hands, we can have confidence based on all that is written about Jesus in the Bible that He specializes in dealing with our mess in such a way that He knows how to make something new beautiful, and clean.

He knows how to turn sorrow into joy, graves into gardens, mourning into dancing, and give freedom to prisoners

Jesus is all about giving people a fresh start in life when they trust Him.

Perhaps this Christmas, you just need a fresh start with Jesus. Maybe you need to go back to where it began in the Christmas story and remember that innocence in the form

of a baby stepped into a mess to save us from the mess of our lives in this world.

If you've missed it earlier, read that part about the messy shepherds being invited into that messy little manger to worship divinity in human flesh once more.

Luke 2:16-19 reminds us of this truth concerning the shepherds:

Luke 2:16–19 (TPT): So they ran into the village and found their way to Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in a feeding trough. 17 Upon seeing this miraculous sign, the shepherds recounted what had just happened. 18 Everyone who heard the shepherds' story was astonished by what they were told. 19 But Mary treasured all these things in her heart and often pondered what they meant.

What must have been going through her mind? What was she pondering? Perhaps it was just a blur of how that was not how she thought her first hours of motherhood would

play out. What a mess! What an unbelievable, unique, and holy mess.

What a delivery; what a special delivery! Mary delivered the Savior of the world, who would in turn, in time, deliver us from our sins.

Jesus would rescue us from the mess we made of things and the mess we made of our lives. Mary had a special delivery of the Son of God who would grow up to make way for a special delivery from the sin of the world that separates people from God, and the eternal mess all of humanity was headed toward before He arrived.

In time Jesus would grow into a mature man and teach His disciples how to pray. At the end of that prayer that has come to be known as “The Lord’s Prayer, Jesus prays, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil...”

Matthew 6:13

Jesus is helping us know how to pray when trying to navigate the mess around our lives.

Deliver us from our mess, Lord Jesus. That is what the special delivery of the Messiah in the manger would lead to in time.

Yes, the wonder of Christmas is about the special delivery that would one day lead to our special delivery when Jesus would grow up from the baby born in Bethlehem into a man who lived a perfect life and went all the way from the manger to the cross to deliver us from the mess of our sin.

All who admit the mess that their sin has caused, who believe in this special delivery of the Savior named Jesus, and who call on His name as the one who is our deliverer can have a fresh start this Christmas with Jesus.

Jesus is the Savior who meets us in our mess because that is the reason He was born; He came to get messy.

If you need to experience the wonder of Christmas, today is the perfect time to ask Jesus to meet you in your mess and help give you a clean heart and fresh start.

He invites us today to receive the gift, to encounter Him in a fresh new way.

Prayer

We will now move ahead and get ready for the candlelight and communion part of service.