

**Introduction:**

- Christmas An Invitation To Life - New series
- Today's title is Christmas An Invitation to Life. An invitation is given in order that we may prepare to participate in relationship. It is about saving the date. It is about choosing what you will wear. It is about celebrating what is in the heart of the sender of the invitation.
- We have arrived at that time of the year when invitations are going out to family and friends to come and assemble together. People are making plans. They are choosing whether to accept or reject the invitation.
- Invitation, Websters dictionary: An invitation is to request the presence or the participation of those who receive the invitation.
- What we call Christmas is really the beautiful illustration of heavens invitation to all humanity to come to know God. In other words, **God requests our presence.** It is beautiful!
- The account of the incarnation of Christ is mysterious and told in such a way it draws people into it. What is it that God is doing in this story and why? He is drawing us in and giving us an invitation to believe.

**I. God Gave Zechariah and Elizabeth An Invitation...to Believe**

- A. God sent Gabriel to announce the birth and mission of John The Baptist. When God speaks we call that prophecy. The angel says of John: *"He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly."* (Luke 1:17, NLT) You are going to have a child and he is going to do a lot of turning in Israel!
1. First he will turn many Israelites to the Lord. 1:16 This is what he will do. He will bring the invitation to Israel to draw near to God. In other words, he himself will call people to repentance so that their hearts would be ready to receive the Word, The Messiah, Jesus. John prepared men's hearts for the entrance of the word. This is the heart of God: to see that people are prepared to be with Him.
  2. Secondly, this is what he will be- a man with the Spirit and Power of Elijah. He will have a powerful prophetic Spirit upon him. This anointing is needed to breach the callousness of mens hearts. What what this anoint does:
    - a) He will prepare people for the coming of the Lord.
    - b) He will turn the hearts of fathers to their children
    - c) He will turn the rebellious to accept wisdom.
- B. God sent Gabriel to prepare Zechariah and Elizabeth. Who in their old age are about to be parents. To them, the angel was...
1. It was an invitation to participate in what God was doing. God was doing some things and He wanted them to be a part.
  2. It was an invitation to prepare for what God doing. If Go is moving you want to move with Him.
  3. It was an invitation to believe, in which Zechariah originally failed.

- C. Prepare - (Webster) - to make ready beforehand for some purpose, use, or activity. Invitations give us the opportunity to get ready.
1. Readiness give the sinner opportunity to prepare for what they are being invited to...a relationship with God.
  2. Readiness gives the Christian life a distinctive dynamic character as expectation of the goal of salvation and openness to the possibilities of action determined by this goal

## II. God Gave Israel An Invitation To Believe

- A. God sent John the Baptist to announce the Coming of Messiah and His mission. *""And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord." (Luke 1:76, NLT)*
1. You will be the prophet/announcer! The announcer of the invitation to Israel "To come to Me."
  2. You will call them to get ready for the BIG EVENT! Here is what John would do: *""And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins. Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace." (Luke 1:76-79, NLT)*
    - a) You will prepare the way of the Lord - the invitation gets more specific...
      - (1) You will tell His people how to find salvation...
      - (2) Through forgiveness of sin. To arrive at salvation you must experience the forgiveness of sin.
    - b) Because of God's mercy, mercy and forgiveness go together.
      - (1) the light of heaven is about to break upon you;
      - (2) to give light to those in darkness;
      - (3) and, to guide us to the path of peace.
    - c) These two things gave hope to those who were lost, living in sin, trying to find a way out.
- B. God sent John the Baptist to prepare Israel for what was coming to them spiritually...the Son of God.
1. It was an invitation to participate in what God was preparing to do. God was doing some things and He wanted Israel to be a part.
  2. It was an invitation to prepare for what God was doing. If God is moving you want to move with Him.
  3. It was an invitation to believe, thus making their hearts ready for God.
- C. John the Baptist was calling Israel to make ready beforehand for the purpose of the coming of Jesus the Christ.
1. He was giving the opportunity/invitation to backslidden Israel to get right with God before Messiah arrived.

2. This readiness gave them a distinctive dynamic character as expectation of the goal of experiencing what the Savior would offer them.

### III. God Gives Us An Invitation To Believe

- A. God gave Zechariah an invitation to believe. God gave Israel and invitation to believe. And God gives us and invitation to believe and find life, too!
- B. The purpose of the invitation is to announce something so that we would believe that an event is going to happen in which the Sender of the invitation desires us to participate in. In other words our presence is requested, we are desired by the host to be there. Therefore prepare for that day.
  1. He is Savior Lk 2:11 - Salvation
  2. He is Christ the Lord Lk 2:11 - The anointed one
  3. He is God with us. Mt 1:23 - Never alone
  4. He is a Light for the Gentiles Lk 2:32 - He is the way
- C. God sent His One and only Son to announce that the Kingdom of God is here! And that you are requested by the host, God himself, to participate in this event!
  1. It is a 'who so ever' event. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16, ESV)
  2. This is the announcement of the ages through Jesus! 1 Peter 1:12 says that even the angels long to look into this!
- D. Jesus is returning again if we live long enough to see it. It is called the second Advent or Coming of the Lord. It has been announce but are we ready? Well, what happens if we die before His second Advent? It all goes back to how we have prepared. That is why I have always loved Amazing grace.
  1. Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I am found twas blind but now I see. Twas grace that taught my heart to fear...and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.
  2. Grace prepares our hearts for the entrance of God's Word. Jn 1:1-12
  3. Grace saves us. Eph 2:8,9 We are saved by grace through faith.

### Conclusion:

- Is 53:6 *“All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.”* (Isaiah 53:6, NLT) Max Lucado writes in: No Wonder they call Him Savior:
  - A young Brazilian girl, Christina, longed to experience life beyond the confines of her poverty stricken village and her humble home. With no modern conveniences and nothing but a pallet on the floor to call her bed, she fantasized about how much better life would be in the city. Discontentment finally got the best of her and she ran away. Her distraught mother, Maria, immediately set out to find her. Max Lucado tells the story:
  - “On her way to the bus stop Maria entered a drugstore to get one last thing. Pictures. She sat in the photograph booth, closed the curtain, and spent all she could on pictures of herself. With her

purse full of small black-and white photos, she boarded the next bus to Rio de Janeiro. Maria knew Christina had no way of earning money. She also knew that her daughter was too stubborn to give up. When pride meets hunger, a human will do things that were before unthinkable. Knowing this, Maria began her search. Bars, hotels, nightclubs, any place with the reputation for street walkers or prostitutes. She went to them all. And each place she left her picture—taped on a bathroom mirror, tacked to a hotel bulletin board, fastened to a corner phone booth. And on the back of each photo she wrote a note. It wasn't too long before both the money and the pictures ran out, and Maria had to go home. The weary mother wept as the bus began its long journey back to her small village. It was a few weeks later that young Christina descended the hotel stairs. Her young face was tired. Her brown eyes no longer danced with youth but spoke of pain and fear. Her laughter was broken. Her dream had become a nightmare. A thousand times over she had longed to trade these countless beds for her secure pallet. Yet the little village was, in too many ways, too far away. As she reached the bottom of the stairs, her eyes noticed a familiar face. She looked again, and there on the lobby mirror was a small picture of her mother. Christina's eyes burned and her throat tightened as she walked across the room and removed the small photo. Written on the back was this compelling **INVITATION**. 'Whatever you have done, whatever you have become, it doesn't matter. Please come home.' She did." **APPLICATION** That's God's message of grace to you, this morning. "Whatever you have done, whatever you have become, it doesn't matter. Please come home." It is the best invitation you will ever receive and it goes to everyone. And 'who so ever' will believe shall receive...LIFE!