

The Taxing Season of Christmas

How would you like to go with me to Columbia the rest of the month of December, camp out in a barn, waiting to pay our taxes, let's carry a pregnant lady about to give birth, and just to make it interesting let's walk down some unpaved roads all the way there! How many of us would sign up for that? Talk about a merry Christmas. What the parents of Jesus experienced the day of His birth was not ideal. That first Christmas was great, but it was extremely taxing. Luke 2 opens with it being tax season. This meant a good journey for Mary and Joseph awaited them. Nazareth to Bethlehem could take up to 10 days. The first Christmas season was taxing financially and physically. This Christmas season can produce a taxing time for believers. Now I cannot relate with what Mary and Joseph went thorough, but I can learn from them and others that experienced Jesus with them.

- 1) **Do What is Right (Luke 2:1-4)**- Life is not an excuse to do wrong. Joseph and Mary were in a fix. Young Mary, heavy with her first pregnancy, Joseph with the stress of business of life, and a week or more trip of travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Worse yet the government that ruled over them were oppressive. If I were staring this obstacle in the face getting out of it would be a priority. I have traveled a distance with a pregnant lady in a comfortable vehicle and that was no walk in the park, and she would say worse about having to deal with me! For some the circumstances of pregnancy would be reason enough to break the law, for others giving money to a government that supported everything

you didn't believe in would generate a noble excuse, and for others just not wanting anyone to command you to travel so far to register for something you didn't want in the first place would lure you to law breaking. None of these things moved Mary or Joseph. Doing what was right was at the top of the list for them. Doing right can be very taxing, but do it regardless, knowing that there is the truth of "all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2nd Timothy 3:12).

- a. *Do Right Concerning the command of God (3rd John 1:11)*-John says that believers in Jesus should not imitate or follow anything that is evil. Paul tells us to avoid all appearances of evil. Good is not the mere subtraction of evil, but also the exercise of that which is good. Good is what is God approved. We know what is God approved from His Word and Spirit. Mary and Joseph are great example of avoiding evil and doing right when circumstances made it inconvenient to do. When you do right when times are taxing it truly proves your love for God. Mary and Joseph loved the Lord God with all their hearts!
- b. *Do Right Concerning government (Romans 13:1, 1st Peter 2:13-17)*- The church over the years has lived under governments that were unkind and unchristian, and while these institutions may have not aided the church in the mission of Christ, the Church often aided them by being obedient citizens. There are often difficulties for many Christians when it comes to politics, but for Mary and Joseph it was simple at this time. It would become more complex when they had to flee to another land because of

the oppressive government they lived under. The solution that Mary and Joseph had to their governmental problem was simply to obey. They went to be registered and taxed. Their taxes paid for good things that were needed and funded things that were ungodly and abusive. Jesus taught us to “render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s” once they turned money over to Rome it was Rome’s business. As hard and taxing as it was to do, Mary and Joseph did what was right by the government over them. Jesus was the greatest example of living righteously under an oppressive government and leadership. The mission of the church is not to overthrow the governments over us, but to teach that Christ will rule the nations and invite nations to worship Him.

- c. *Do Right knowing it’s a light (Matthew 5:16)*- Today Mary and Joseph are still lights to the church. The hardships that they encounter and overcame on the very first Christmas season still inspire hope in those who pay attention to the birth of Christ. Doing right produces radiant beams of hope that travels past our short lived lives.

Application: What do you need to do that is right this Christmas Season?

II. When it appears you don’t have anybody there is always somebody (Luke 2:5, Luke 1:40, Luke 2:16, Matthew 2:11)- Loneliness is taxing., and the Christmas season can be very lonely. Mary understood loneliness, but she did not succumb to loneliness. Here is how Mary lived in and through a happy but difficult time.

- 1) *She sought another Believer*- There was no waiting on someone to come along and understand, instead there was hot pursuit of someone else she knew God had touched. Pursuing others does make you vulnerable. What if they turn you away, reject, or mock you? This is why you cannot just seek out any person. The person you reach out to must know God and walk with Him. This Christmas go out and seek other believers to share life with. Refuse to do loneliness alone! When Mary found out she was pregnant with Jesus it placed her in an awkward social situation. Joseph planned to divorce her, but there was Elizabeth who would understand, and Mary and Elizabeth would sing together.
- 2) *Trust in God's Promise*- Mary would give birth to Jesus. Joseph may not understand at first, but God will handle what she could not. God will also handle what you cannot handle. Trust in His plan and lean not into your own understanding.
- 3) *Mediate on God sent people (Luke 2:19)*- The Shepherds came when Jesus was born. They were informed about the new born King by an angel and a multitude of heavenly creatures. Needless to say their arrival was a "God thing". They came to worship and adore the young couple's baby. There is nothing that parents like more than people who really adore their children. Mary did not forget these men and their reaction to

her Son. When God sends people your way, do not blow them off, but ponder in your heart the purpose and meaning behind their arrival. God always has somebody when there seems to be nobody! When Mary and Joseph found themselves alone in a stable giving birth to their first Son, shepherds show up to worship God and were in awe of their position.

- 4) *Accept Good Gifts*- Our level of humility can be measured by how we receive good gifts from others. Mary and Joseph were honored by a caravan of foreigners bringing good gifts to them. Receive gifts happily and humbly knowing that God will soon put those gifts to good use for His glory and your sake. When time past wise men brought glorious gifts to show their gratitude to God for the birth of His Son.

Application: Will you be the somebody for the person that has nobody?

III. The Season Will End, but the Story Will Continue (Luke 2:39-40)- I remembering growing up watching the Wonder Years, Full House, Family Matters, boy meets world, and Seinfeld. I remember watching the finales of these shows and feeling a bit empty and curious. I wanted to know what happened after Seinfeld and the gang were locked up in prison. I wanted to follow the cast beyond their season, but if we could truly follow all of our favorite shows past their season we would really only find death. The story would end sooner or later, but in Christ the story goes on even when

seasons have ended. The birth of Christ quickly moved to the 12th year of Christ, and then He is with John the Baptist in His late 20's or Early 30's. Then He is leading a group of men, His fame catches on, stalls, He is betrayed, and crucified. The curtain seems to close, but resurrection burst forth and Jesus lives, and because He lives we live as well. If your Christmas season is a hard one, remember it does not last forever. If your Christmas season is a delight remember it does not last forever and enjoy it completely. The taxing times of life have a great purpose that will be in full bloom come eternity.

Application: What will you do with the lessons from Mary and Joseph?