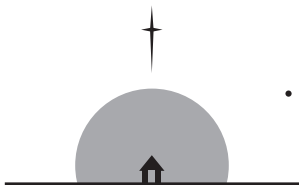


THE MESSAGE OF
CHRISTMAS



EUGENE H. PETERSON

THE MESSAGE OF
CHRISTMAS



EUGENE H. PETERSON

NavPress 

A NavPress resource
published in alliance
with Tyndale House
Publishers



NavPress is the publishing ministry of The Navigators, an international Christian organization and leader in personal spiritual development. NavPress is committed to helping people grow spiritually and enjoy lives of meaning and hope through personal and group resources that are biblically rooted, culturally relevant, and highly practical.

For more information, visit NavPress.com.

The Message of Christmas

Copyright © 2020 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved.

A NavPress resource published in alliance with Tyndale House Publishers

The Message, *The Message* logo, *NavPress*, and the NavPress logo are registered trademarks of NavPress, The Navigators, Colorado Springs, CO. Absence of ® in connection with marks of NavPress or other parties does not indicate an absence of registration of those marks.

Tyndale is a registered trademark of Tyndale House Ministries.

Cover illustration by Lindsey Bergsma. Copyright © 2022 by Tyndale House Ministries. All rights reserved.

The Message text may be quoted in any form (written, visual, electronic, or audio), up to and inclusive of five hundred (500) verses, without express written permission of the publisher, NavPress Publishing Group, providing the verses quoted do not amount to a complete book of the Bible and do not account for twenty-five percent (25%) or more of the total text of the work in which they are quoted.

When *The Message* is quoted, the following credit line must appear on either the title page or the copyright page of the work: "Scripture quotations marked *MSG* are taken from *The Message*, copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers."

When quotations from *The Message* text are used in nonsalable media, such as church bulletins, orders of service, posters, transparencies, or similar media, a complete copyright notice is not required, but "The Message" or "MSG" must appear at the end of each quotation.

Permission requests for commercial and noncommercial use that exceed the above guidelines must be directed to and approved in writing by Tyndale House Publishers. Send requests by email to permission@tyndale.com.

Published in association with Alive Literary Agency, aliveliterary.com

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com, or call 1-855-277-9400.

ISBN 978-1-64158-667-2 Softcover

Printed in the United States of America

28 27 26 25 24 23 22
10 9 8 7 6 5 4

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . *iv*

THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS . . . *I*

A Savior Foretold . . . 2

A Savior Is Born . . . 15

A Savior Lives On . . . 24

THE GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS . . . *31*

Love . . . 33

Joy . . . 37

Peace . . . 40

Hope . . . 42

Purpose . . . 48

Forgiveness . . . 51

HOW WE CAN KNOW GOD . . . *55*

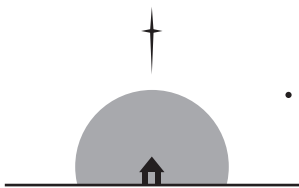
INTRODUCTION

The story of Jesus' birth has an immense progeny. Our planet fairly teems with stories and songs, paintings and drama that got their start from this story. The reproductive energies show no sign of tapering off. Writers and singers and artists, to say nothing of countless children and parents and grandparents all over the world, continue to find fresh and novel ways of keeping this story going.

But even more impressive are the lives that continue to get a fresh start—a new birth—in the story of this birth. Day after day, men and women who feel more dead than alive, in the hearing or singing or seeing of this story, rediscover the utter and unspeakable and beautiful preciousness of life. The story of Jesus' birth gets reproduced in these human lives still, over and over and over again.

The birth of Jesus is a birth with a message. It takes the entire Bible to bring the complete message, but this birth is the core of it: In Jesus, God is here to give us life, real life.

THE MESSAGE OF
CHRISTMAS



A SAVIOR FORETOLD

A RIGHTEOUS BRANCH

JEREMIAH 23:5-6

“Time’s coming”—GOD’S Decree—
“when I’ll establish a truly righteous
David-Branch,
A ruler who knows how to rule justly.
He’ll make sure of justice and keep people
united.
In his time Judah will be secure again
and Israel will live in safety.
This is the name they’ll give him:
‘GOD-Who-Puts-Everything-Right.’”

A CHILD WILL BE BORN TO US

ISAIAH 9:2-7

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light.
For those who lived in a land of deep shadows—
light! sunbursts of light!

You repopulated the nation,
you expanded its joy.
Oh, they're so glad in your presence!
Festival joy!
The joy of a great celebration,
sharing rich gifts and warm
greetings.
The abuse of oppressors and cruelty
of tyrants—
all their whips and clubs
and curses—
Is gone, done away with, a deliverance
as surprising and sudden as Gideon's old
victory over Midian.
The boots of all those invading troops,
along with their shirts soaked with
innocent blood,
Will be piled in a heap and burned,
a fire that will burn for days!
For a child has been born—for us!
the gift of a son—for us!
He'll take over
the running of the world.
His names will be: Amazing Counselor,
Strong God,

Eternal Father,
Prince of Wholeness.
His ruling authority will grow,
and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he
brings.
He'll rule from the historic David throne
over that promised kingdom.
He'll put that kingdom on a firm footing
and keep it going
With fair dealing and right living,
beginning now and lasting always.
The zeal of GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies
will do all this.

A RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

ISAIAH 11:1-5

A green Shoot will sprout from Jesse's stump,
from his roots a budding Branch.
The life-giving Spirit of GOD will hover
over him,
the Spirit that brings wisdom and
understanding,
The Spirit that gives direction and builds
strength,

the Spirit that instills knowledge and
Fear-of-GOD.

Fear-of-GOD

will be all his joy and delight.

He won't judge by appearances,

won't decide on the basis of hearsay.

He'll judge the needy by what is right,

render decisions on earth's poor with justice.

His words will bring everyone to awed attention.

A mere breath from his lips will topple the
wicked.

Each morning he'll pull on sturdy work clothes
and boots,

and build righteousness and faithfulness in
the land.

A SUFFERING SERVANT

ISAIAH 53:1-12

Who believes what we've heard and seen?

Who would have thought GOD's saving
power would look like this?

The servant grew up before God—a scrawny
seedling,

a scrubby plant in a parched field.

There was nothing attractive about him,
nothing to cause us to take a second look.
He was looked down on and passed over,
a man who suffered, who knew pain
firsthand.

One look at him and people turned away.
We looked down on him, thought he
was scum.

But the fact is, it was *our* pains he carried—
our disfigurements, all the things wrong
with *us*.

We thought he brought it on himself,
that God was punishing him for his own
failures.

But it was our sins that did that to him,
that ripped and tore and crushed him—
our sins!

He took the punishment, and that made us
whole.

Through his bruises we get healed.
We're all like sheep who've wandered off and
gotten lost.

We've all done our own thing, gone our
own way.

And GOD has piled all our sins, everything
we've done wrong,
on him, on him.

He was beaten, he was tortured,
but he didn't say a word.

Like a lamb taken to be slaughtered
and like a sheep being sheared,
he took it all in silence.

Justice miscarried, and he was led off—
and did anyone really know what was
happening?

He died without a thought for his own welfare,
beaten bloody for the sins of my people.

They buried him with the wicked,
threw him in a grave with a rich man,
Even though he'd never hurt a soul
or said one word that wasn't true.

Still, it's what GOD had in mind all along,
to crush him with pain.

The plan was that he give himself as an offer-
ing for sin
so that he'd see life come from it—life, life,
and more life.

And GOD's plan will deeply prosper
through him.

Out of that terrible travail of soul,
he'll see that it's worth it and be glad he
did it.

Through what he experienced, my righteous
one, my servant,
will make many "righteous ones,"
as he himself carries the burden of their sins.

Therefore I'll reward him extravagantly—
the best of everything, the highest honors—
Because he looked death in the face and didn't
flinch,
because he embraced the company of the
lowest.

He took on his own shoulders the sin of the
many,
he took up the cause of all the
black sheep.

BEHOLD MY CHOSEN ONE

ISAIAH 42:1-4

"Take a good look at my servant.
I'm backing him to the hilt.

He's the one I chose,
and I couldn't be more pleased with him.
I've bathed him with my Spirit, my *life*.
He'll set everything right among the nations.
He won't call attention to what he does
with loud speeches or gaudy parades.
He won't brush aside the bruised and the hurt
and he won't disregard the small and
insignificant,
but he'll steadily and firmly set things right.
He won't tire out and quit. He won't be
stopped
until he's finished his work—to set things
right on earth.
Far-flung ocean islands
wait expectantly for his teaching.”

YOUR KING IS COMING

ZECHARIAH 9:9-10

“Shout and cheer, Daughter Zion!
Raise your voice, Daughter Jerusalem!
Your king is coming!
a good king who makes all things right,
a humble king riding a donkey,
a mere colt of a donkey.

I've had it with war—no more chariots in
Ephraim,
no more war horses in Jerusalem,
no more swords and spears, bows and
arrows.

He will offer peace to the nations,
a peaceful rule worldwide,
from the four winds to the seven seas.”

A VIRGIN WITH CHILD

ISAIAH 7:10-14

GOD spoke again to Ahaz. This time he said, “Ask for a sign from your GOD. Ask anything. Be extravagant. Ask for the moon!”

But Ahaz said, “I'd never do that. I'd never make demands like that on GOD!”

So Isaiah told him, “Then listen to this, government of David! It's bad enough that you make people tired with your pious, timid hypocrisies, but now you're making God tired. So the Master is going to give you a sign anyway. Watch for this: A girl who is presently a virgin will get pregnant. She'll bear a son and name him Immanuel (God-With-Us).”

THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO MARY

LUKE 1:26-38

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to the Galilean village of Nazareth to a virgin engaged to be married to a man descended from David. His name was Joseph, and the virgin's name, Mary. Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her:

Good morning!
You're beautiful with God's beauty,
Beautiful inside and out!
God be with you.

She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured her, "Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus.

He will be great,
be called 'Son of the Highest.'
The Lord God will give him
the throne of his father David;

He will rule Jacob's house forever—
no end, ever, to his kingdom.”

Mary said to the angel, “But how? I've never
slept with a man.”

The angel answered,

The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
the power of the Highest hover over you;
Therefore, the child you bring to birth
will be called Holy, Son of God.

“And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth
conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called
her barren, and here she is six months pregnant!
Nothing, you see, is impossible with God.”

And Mary said,

Yes, I see it all now:

I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve.
Let it be with me
just as you say.

Then the angel left her.

ELIZABETH AND MARY

LUKE 1:39-56

Mary didn't waste a minute. She got up and traveled to a town in Judah in the hill country, straight to Zachariah's house, and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb leaped. She was filled with the Holy Spirit, and sang out exuberantly,

You're so blessed among women,
and the babe in your womb, also blessed!
And why am I so blessed that
the mother of my Lord visits me?
The moment the sound of your
greeting entered my ears,
The babe in my womb
skipped like a lamb for sheer joy.
Blessed woman, who believed what God said,
believed every word would come true!

And Mary said,

I'm bursting with God-news;
I'm dancing the song of my Savior God.

God took one good look at me, and look what
happened—

I'm the most fortunate woman on earth!
What God has done for me will never be
forgotten,
the God whose very name is holy, set apart
from all others.

His mercy flows in wave after wave
on those who are in awe before him.
He bared his arm and showed his strength,
scattered the bluffing braggarts.

He knocked tyrants off their high horses,
pulled victims out of the mud.

The starving poor sat down to a banquet;
the callous rich were left out in the cold.

He embraced his chosen child, Israel;
he remembered and piled on the mercies,
piled them high.

It's exactly what he promised,
beginning with Abraham and right up to
now.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months
and then went back to her own home.