

Crazy Christmas 2 – Crazy Travel

Merry Christmas from Redemption Church in Plano, TX - My name is Chris Fluitt and I wish you all a crazy wonderful Christmas.

The name of our sermon series is Crazy Christmas.

Crazy Christmas (title slide)

Last week we talked about crazy family. If you missed it, you can find it at redemptionplano.com.

Today I want to talk to you about your travel plans this Christmas. Raise your hand if you already have travel plans for

Christmas. Traveling for the Holidays makes for a Crazy Christmas.

Crazy Travel

Do you have any crazy Christmas travel stories?

Some of our favorite Christmas movies involve crazy travel. See if you can recognize these movies...

- Home Alone

- Elf

- Planes, Trains, & Automobiles

- Christmas Vacation

I have a crazy travel story...

I remember a time when Sarah & I were traveling north to Dennison, TX. It was Christmas Eve and we had finished a

worship service and were excited to take a young baby, Will and a Sarah, pregnant with Hudson, to see family.

Dennison is 55 miles from here. It is usually a little under an hour's drive, but on this night we wondered if we were even going to make it. To really be honest, let me say that my very wise wife did say before we ever started this drive "perhaps we should not drive in tonight." As any husband would do, I did not listen... I thought it was my duty as a husband & a father to get my family to a Christmas celebration.

The roads were completely iced over. It was the scariest, most intense trip I can think of. There were cars stuck in ditches... There were a lot of cars on the

road. For some reason, I think it was God, I decided to exit randomly, and as soon as we passed over the hill we saw the entire I-75 northbound lanes had come to a complete stop. There was some crazy 18-wheeler accident and for at least a mile the cars were just stacked up - no one going anywhere. We were able to drive by all of that craziness on a frontage road going about 17 miles per hour.

What should have been an hour drive, ended up being over 3 hours of 'white knuckle' driving. BUT we did make it! We had a great Christmas and I still thank God for seeing us through that journey and causing me to take that random exit.

Christmas travel is usually crazy: Long distance. Too many people jammed into too small of space. Airports, The sounds of “Are we there yet?,” “I’ve got to use the bathroom,” and a call & response of “He’s touching me,” “She started it.”

If you are experiencing anxiety just thinking about Christmas travel, I want you to know that the 1st Christmas had crazy travel experiences, as well.

The 1st Christmas had Crazy Travel

Joseph & a very pregnant Mary traveled a great distance on that first Christmas.

Luke 2:4 (NIV) So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in

Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

The distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem is nearly 100 miles.

Journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem Map

On this map you can see Nazareth is northern Israel and Bethlehem is southern Israel. Israel is south of the capital city of Jerusalem.

Highlighted on the map are 2 possible routes taken.

1. Route A – More direct (75 miles), but if you look at the map there are 2 major obstacles with this map.

Obstacle 1 – Mountains! This pathway is straight through the Judean hill country... and the word “hill” is underplaying actual mountains. Any terrain elevation with a height over 2000 ft is considered a mountain. A quick google search will tell you the Judean mountains are over 3000ft in height.

Obstacle 2 – This path travels through the unfriendly area of Samaria. Your average Hebrew would travel further in order to avoid Samaria.

2. Route B – This route is further (90 miles), but it avoids Samaritan hostility & the majority of the mountain ranges. This path that travels along the Jordan River is likely the path Joseph and Mary took on that first Christmas.

Difficult rocky terrain made this a grueling trek to Bethlehem. It was dangerous! There was also the danger of being robbed on the isolated pathways outside of cities. Add to that the fact that Mary was in the last portion of her Pregnancy makes me marvel. How could she have possibly done it?

Scriptural Scholars write that on average someone traveling these paths could expect to cover 20 miles per day. For an average person, they could expect to take around 3½ to 5 days. This young, pregnant mother, Mary was certainly not your average traveler.

The artwork illustrations we see usually show what?

Joseph & Mary Travel Painting

It is practically universal that every artist's rendition of the journey to Bethlehem includes Mary riding on a donkey and Joseph holding the reins. Scripture does not say there was a donkey, nor does scripture say she walked every step of the way. Scripture is silent on the donkey debate.

What we can say though, is that people who ride donkeys will tell you it is neither a pleasant nor speedy form of travel. Donkeys go their own pace and when they are tired they just kind of stop. So, if there is a donkey we are looking at a journey that took longer.

A Journey no one signed up for

I want to remind to you that Joseph & Mary were not traveling to celebrate a Christmas holiday. Joseph & Mary did not choose this journey... The tyrannical government of Rome forced them to make this journey. If they survived they were given the great honor of... Paying their Taxes!

They traveled a journey they had not signed up for. Do you travel a similar journey? What is your journey?

How far are you from your destination? Do you ever catch yourself asking “are we there yet?”

-On your destination to happiness & peace, will you have to climb some mountains?

-I know so many of us started the year with a destination to get out of debt and to make headway in our careers... This year might seem like it has caused you to travel far out of the range of a direct route... you may feel completely de-railed from your destination.

-I know some of you have lost loved ones. I know this was not the journey you signed up for.

-Some of you have been forced to journey in a direction you would never have chosen. Of all the words you would use to describe this journey... blessing would not be one of them.

-Sickness. Some of you have received a

diagnosis that leaves you wondering “how?” “How am I going to walk this journey?”

-The feeling of being out of control...

There are so few things you can control in this world. You can't control your government, your health, the economy, what other people think, your relationships, your spouse, your children, your church, your job, the culture...

It's enough to make you scream “I did not sign up for this!”

I did not sign up for this

I don't know if I can go on... So many this Christmas season are thinking this. It has to be brought up that the amount of suicides spike during the holidays as

they contemplate a journey they did not sign up for.

I don't know if I CAN go on... I don't know if I WANT to go on... HOW can I go on?

Let a young and innocent Hebrew girl, who was completely over her head and out of her depth, yet never gave up, show you something today. ...Mary traveled with a **promise**.

Traveling with the Promise

Mary traveled with Joseph. She probably had a bag of clothes & personal items she traveled with. Yet she also traveled with something unseen. Mary traveled with a promise.

We took our text today from Luke 2. One chapter earlier Mary took another trip all by herself to the area of Judea. Why? She had a conversation with an angel. This conversation contained a promise.

Luke 1:35-37 (NIV) The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.”

The Angel of the Lord told her about her ‘birthing’. He promised her this birth was of God. Then the Angel told her about her old cousin who was also promised a birth from God. The baby of Elizabeth would be John the Baptist who would “prepare the way of the Lord” in years to come. But at this moment God was using Elizabeth to prepare the way of Mary - Beautiful parallel!

Luke 1:39-40 (NIV) At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth.

Mary traveled to see the promise. It was promised that a barren Elizabeth would be with child.

Luke 1:41-42 (NIV) When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!"

Luke 1:45 (NIV) Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

Elizabeth was pregnant. The promise was true. And Elizabeth speaks a prophetic promise to Mary!

Mary, you are blessed! Mary the promised baby you carry is blessed! Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill His... **PROMISES** to her.

Mary traveled in difficulty. Mary traveled in uncertainty. Mary traveled in weakened conditions. **BUT MARY TRAVELED WITH A PROMISE.**

Traveling with the Promise

Is anyone traveling with a promise today?

Mary, take that next step. You are blessed.

Mary, take that next step. Your child is blessed.

Mary, take that next step. Blessed is the

one who has believed.

Mary, take that next step. The Lord will fulfill His promise.

Mary, take the next step and remember what God has said... what Elizabeth has said... what the angel said...

Luke 1:37 (NIV) For no word from God will ever fail.”

Someone declare that today. NO WORD! FROM GOD! WILL EVER FAIL!

Your journey is hard, but have you ever just thought... you know the fact that I am still standing is proof of the promise.

-I should be dead...

-I should have given up like so many others...

-It should have been impossible for me to make it this far...

The fact you are still here is proof to me that the promise of God is true.

This Christmas you are dealing with Crazy Travel... a journey you did not sign up for. BUT PLEASE DO NOT GIVE UP and here is why...

**You carry someone else's
promise.**

Do you realize that Mary was carrying the promise of Eve? God promised her that her seed would prevail over the enemy.

Mary you carry the promise of

Abraham... God promised him that He would be the father of many nations... and that all nations would be blessed through his lineage.

Mary you carry the promise of that scoundrel Jacob... God showed Jacob the picture of a ladder to heaven and Mary's baby would be that ladder.
(Genesis 28:12 & John 1:51)

Mary you carry the promise of David... One would sit on the throne of David and bring peace to the entire world.

Mary you carry the promise of Job... I know that my redeemer lives.

Mary you carry the promise of every prophet... Isaiah said unto us a child would be born... Micah said a ruler

would come out of Bethlehem... Daniel said we would look upon the one who would be pierced...

Mary you carry my promise. You carry the promise for those you will never meet.

Blessed is the one who has believed that the Lord would fulfill His promises!

You carry a promise today. Do not give up.

Someone behind you, in the past, received a promise from God... and you are carrying it today.

Someone in front of you, in the future, is going to depend upon the promise

you are carrying.

We are going to pray. We are going to come. We are not giving up.

Carry your promise to an altar today.