

Crazy Christmas 3 – Crazy Unexpected

Merry Christmas from Redemption Church in Plano, TX! It is getting very close to the 25th! My name is Chris Fluit and I wish you all a crazy wonderful Christmas.

The name of our sermon series is Crazy Christmas.

Crazy Christmas (title slide)

We have talked about crazy family and crazy travel. The original Christmas story has a lot to teach us. That original Christmas was difficult. Most Bible scholars agree that Joseph & Mary would not have agreed with the lyrics “It’s the most wonderful time of the year... With the kids jingle belling and everyone telling you be of good cheer.”

As your pastor I take the Biblical study of the theological ramifications of Christmas

carols very seriously. After looking into the Greek and doing a complete exposition of the Gospels... I feel confident that there were NO

- parties for hosting
- Marshmallows for toasting
- And caroling out in the snow

Today we continue our craziness by discussing the crazy unexpected.

Crazy Unexpected

Christmas can have some crazy unexpected moments.

- Unexpected news, sometimes good (“We are pregnant”) other times bad (“I was laid off”)...
- Something breaks. Unexpected cost.
- Unexpected sickness. -Unexpected loss.
- Unexpected change.

I remember 1 time my whole extended family came to stay with us at our house in

Waco. There were so many Fluitts! Out of nowhere the unexpected happened. Our toilet broke and would no longer flush!

We had over 10 people in our house... and no bathroom. I remember fondly there being a bucket in the bathroom. I still insist on calling this the Christmas Bucket.

I also remember that someone went “potty” in the broken toilet and I am willing to go on record today and confess... that I think it was my cousin Frank.

That was such an unexpected time. I wish I could relive it.

I also remember the Christmas of 1996. I remember my grandmother Hazel Fluit on hospice. I remember the pain of that loss.

Maybe you are dealing with the unexpected right now. If you are thinking to yourself,

“No: Nothing unexpected going on in my life!” ...Well just wait, because sooner or later the unexpected has a way of showing up in all our lives.

The first Christmas was crazy unexpected

Very little about the story of Christmas was expected. This story is filled with a lot of surprises. The characters are unexpected; the setting is unexpected, and the meaning of the story is unexpected.

There are many examples of the unexpected we could look to... but I want to talk about a part of the story that never seems to make it into the Christmas nativity and children's pageants.

I want to talk about the villain of the Christmas story. Think for a moment... You have these young innocent people named

Joseph & Mary. They are caught between what God has planned and what a tyrannical government had planned. Joseph & Mary are doing their best and then out of nowhere... the unexpected.

“King” Herod “The Great”

There was a family who rose to power in Israel. What they desired more than anything was POWER.

In his quest for power, Herod, developed close ties with a Roman senator named “Octavian.” Octavian did not stay a senator, but he rose to the seat of emperor and you probably know Octavian best as Augustus Caesar.

Rome captures the nation of Israel and Augustus Caesar sets up a king of Judea. Herod was named the king of Judea.

- Herod was hated by the Jews.
- He was a puppet of Rome.
- He was not full blood Hebrew.
- He was a descendant of Esau, an Edomite.
- He did not keep the law and his behavior was scandalous.
- Herod did not care for the people. He only cared for gaining & maintaining power.

Herod was willing to kill for power. He killed 3 of his sons (Alexander, Aristobulus, & Antipater) out of suspicion they were going to take his power. He killed one of his many wives. He had 1 son disinherited and another banished.

Herod valued power above everything and would do anything to gain & maintain power. He is “king...” but not really. He is “the great” but no one would really call him great.

This Herod appears unexpectedly in the first Christmas story.

Matthew 2:1-8 (NIV) After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: ““But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among

the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’ ” Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

Herod was a liar. Some might even call Herod ‘a lying, dog-faced pony soldier.’ (Secret Political Reference – Joe Biden)

Matthew tells us that Herod was disturbed when he heard about a child being born who would be “King of the Jews.” This struck right at the nerve of his narcissism, greed, and ego.

These Magi are often in the Christmas plays and nativities. They play a major role in the

story... but one role that is always left out is that they unknowingly alert the villain of the Christmas story to the presence of a baby destined to be king.

Herod has the Magi go do his dirty work for him.

Matthew 2:8 (NIV) He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

Of all the nativity sets you have ever seen, have you ever seen one with “king” Herod “the great” worshipping around the manger? Isn’t this what Herod said he wanted to do? But this power hungry villain wanted to do quite the opposite.

Matthew 2:16 tells us that Herod later gave orders to kill every young boy in Bethlehem. He never intended to worship.

The first Christmas was crazy unexpected

Here is Joseph & Mary... they are literally doing nothing illegal or seditious. They are just doing their best to live their life, love each other, and honor God... and yet there is a king sharpening his sword to use on their family. So unexpected!

Are you dealing with the unexpected this Christmas? Is there an unexpected villain in your story?

-A person, A loved one? - A boss? - A next-door neighbor?

-Depression. - A bad habit. Fear of the future? - Failure of the former? - (guilt of your past)

-Sickness. -Loss.

-A culture. - Things so completely out of our control. - A microscopic virus that started in a country on the other side of the planet, sweeping over your city. You can't begin to control such things.

You can't control the unexpected

Do your pastor a favor. If you could do this one thing for me,... STOP ATTACKING YOURSELF.

The majority of these unexpected tragedies are completely out of your control. Do not attack yourself... do not tear yourself down... do not commit physical, emotional, spiritual, or mental suicide.

You know that it works this way right?

Parents get an unexpected divorce... the kids blame themselves.

Someone passes away... those left behind feel the guilt of not doing enough.

Financial problems that extend from an unstable economy mixed with your car that breaks down... do not hate yourself.

You can't control the unexpected. You have to learn to "roll with the punches." You have to learn how to deal with disappointment. You have to learn to find God in the valley, and not just on the mountain top.

I want you to know that God can handle the unexpected.

God can handle the unexpected.

Imagine if Herod had come in and killed baby Jesus. Don't imagine it actually... because most Bible scholars agree that if Herod had assassinated baby Jesus, it would have been the worst Christmas ever.

Let's continue in Matthew 2.

Matthew 2:8-15 (NIV) He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned

to their country by another route.

When they had gone, an angel of the

Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream.

“Get up,” he said, “take the child and

his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay

there until I tell you, for Herod is going

to search for the child to kill him.” So

he got up, took the child and his

mother during the night and left for

Egypt, where he stayed until the death

of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the

Lord had said through the prophet:

“Out of Egypt I called my son.”

When the villain unexpectedly planned to destroy the child, God reveals His unexpected plan.

God has an unexpected plan

The Magi come to worship the Messiah. They open up treasure before Him. And God warned them in a dream about Herod's unexpected plan, so they went another route home to avoid Herod.

Aren't you glad for a God who talks to people?

Aren't you glad for people who hear the voice of God and obey it?

And the Lord also spoke to Joseph. "Escape to Egypt!" Stay there until I tell you.

The plan was unexpected to the Magi, Joseph, & Mary... but it was not unexpected for God. Your villains will never get one over on God. Nothing catches your God off guard. In fact God will use the plans of the wicked to coronate the righteous.

So Joseph leaves that very night to travel with his wife and the baby Jesus to the far away land of Egypt. 4000 miles away!

Wait... How do you just do this? How do you just leave everything behind and just go into hiding? How could they begin to afford the travel and cost to stay in Egypt?

We have done entire sermon series' on the gifts of the Magi. These gifts were prophetic and revealed the kingship, the priesthood, and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But these valuable gifts also gave Joseph the currency to make the travel and stay in Egypt.

Do you think the gifts of the Magi were a part of God's unexpected plan? YES!

God has unexpected gifts for you that are more than just symbolic. These gifts are currency! He has gifted you with everything you need to make it through your difficulty.

Joseph, Mary, & Jesus are safe in Egypt, and back in Bethlehem Herod searched for babies to kill.

Matthew 2:16-23 (NIV) When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.” After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Get up, take the child and his

mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead.” So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

The unexpected plans of the villain Herod all failed. His plans did more than fail. His plans backfired and actually crowned Jesus to be everything Scripture proclaims Him to be.

Because of Herod's plan...

Jesus was "drawn out of Egypt", fulfilling prophecy;

The death of innocent children fulfilled the prophecy of "Rachel's sorrow;"

When Herod died, his son took the throne and fearful for Jesus' safety, Joseph decided to settle back in the district of Galilee in the town of Nazareth, fulfilling the prophecy of the Messiah being a Nazarene.

3 seemingly impossible prophecies...

1. Messiah would be born in Bethlehem
2. Messiah would be drawn out of Egypt
3. Messiah would be from Nazareth

God actually used the villain to fulfill His promise.

God has an unexpected plan

I have seen God use sickness to further His plan...

I have seen God use a divorce to further His plan...

I have seen God use a funeral to further His plan...

I have seen God use tragedy to further His plan...

I have seen God use the unexpected to fulfill His unexpected plan.

{musician}

All these crazy unexpected events happened so that the plan of God would be fulfilled in you.

Jesus was born.

Jesus lived a sinless life.

Jesus died upon the cross.

Jesus was buried.

On the 3rd day He rose again.

Jesus is alive today and there is just no telling what He can do in your life right now. You talk about unexpected...

If you are struggling with the unexpected I want to pray with you today.