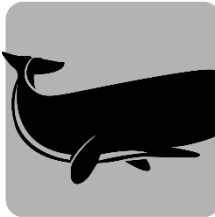
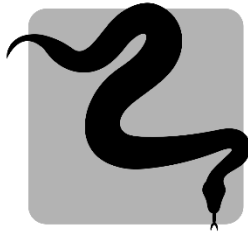


Illustrations



of
Immanuel

Christmas Eve Service
December 24, 2022

INTRODUCTION

Pastor: Have you ever heard the phrase “A picture paints a thousand words”? Sometimes things that are difficult to explain verbally can be better understood when depicted visually. Jesus often spoke using parables. These stories share spiritual truths using pictures of familiar things in our world: a mustard seed, a rebellious child, a wedding banquet, a lost coin. In the same way, God gives illustrations throughout Scripture that point to this central message of his Holy Word: He promised and sent us a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Let’s ponder, as did Mary, with wonder at some of those illustrations and renew our hearts and joy through our Savior Jesus.

1. FROM PROBLEM TO PROMISE

Pastor: In the first book of the Bible – Genesis, chapter 3 – we’re told that God created two perfect humans called Adam and Eve. Not long after they were created, they disobeyed God’s command and brought the corruption of sin into the world. When God gave the first promise of the Savior, he spoke to Satan the tempter, who was in the form of a serpent:

Congregation: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (Ge 3:15)

Pastor: God paints a picture of this offspring of Eve crushing Satan and all his power underfoot. But the serpent is not only a picture of the problem of sin; later in the Old Testament there was a time when the Israelites were plagued by poisonous snakes and were dying from their bites because of their rebellious sin. God commanded Moses to make a snake of bronze and hang it on a pole before the people. God promised that all who looked at the bronze snake would be spared from death. Jesus recalls this event in the book of John, chapter 3 - He shows how it points to the time when he himself would be hung on a cross to save all people:

Men: Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

All: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (Jn 3:14-17)

2. FROM SACRIFICE TO SUBSTITUTE

Pastor: After the fall, Adam and Eve's family grew and began to fill the earth. Many years later, God appeared to their descendent Abraham and promised him that his descendants would number as many as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. God also promised that the Savior would be born from his family. But then a little while later, God asked Abraham to do the unthinkable, something that seemed to contradict God's earlier promise to Abraham. God asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac.

Women: Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife.

Men: As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied, "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." (Ge 22:6-8)

Pastor: Isaac did not die that day. As Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, God stopped him and provided a ram to substitute for Isaac.

Each one of us could never make sufficient sacrifice for the sins we commit. Staring eternal death in the face, we see in 1 Peter that God himself provides his Son to pay the necessary sacrifice for our salvation. Jesus' perfect life provides the perfection we are unable to achieve on our own. Jesus' suffering on the cross at Calvary pays the price for our every sin. As God the Father rightfully raises his hand to kill each of us for our sins, he stops himself and provides his own Son as our substitute to die in our place. Here's how the apostle Peter explains:

Congregation: "[Jesus] committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate, when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live to righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." (1 Pe 2:22-24)

Hymn:

Let All Together Praise Our God | CW **355:1,2,6**

3. FROM LAMB TO LOVING SACRIFICE

Pastor: The grandson of Abraham was Jacob, whom God gave the name Israel. His descendants became the nation of Israel, and they were enslaved in Egypt for hundreds of years. God used the nation's exodus from Egypt as yet another illustration that points to our Savior, the Lamb of God. On the night before the Israelites were freed from slavery, God gave the following instructions to Moses and Aaron:

Congregation: "Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household ... Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs ... In that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt." (Ex 12:1,3,6,7,11,13)

Pastor: The blood of the slaughtered lamb protected the Israelites from the righteous wrath of God. Centuries later John the Baptist, who was Jesus' cousin, pointed to Jesus as the perfect sacrifice whose blood would cleanse the world from the sins. Recalling the final plague in Egypt and the blood of the lamb by which God's people were saved from death, John points to Jesus with these words as he saw him coming toward him:

Women: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29)

Hymn

Joy Has Dawned | CW **352:1&4**

4. FROM BRANCH TO BETHLEHEM

Pastor: After delivering his people from slavery in Egypt, God led the nation of Israel to the land of Canaan, which had been promised to Abraham. Here, Israel would become a great nation. They would be ruled one day by King David. The prophet Isaiah tells us that King David's father, Jesse, would be the stump from which the branch of the promised

Savior would come forth.

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD – and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. (Is 11:1-3)

Hymn: *Behold, a Branch Is Growing* | CW **360:1-2**

Pastor: The prophet Micah points to the Messiah who would be born in Bethlehem, the town of King David. Please join in reading this prophecy from Micah chapter 5 verses 2 through 4 responsively:

Women: “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah,

Men: out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

Women: Therefore, Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son,

Men: and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.

All: He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

Hymn: “Of the Father’s Love Begotten” | CW **358**

5. FROM MAJESTY TO MANGER

Pastor: Finally the time came for the Savior to come to earth, for the Messiah to be made man, for the promised and prophesied one to be born and placed in a manger. Isaiah clearly shows us this is no ordinary baby. He came from the majesty of heaven and became like us – human, born of a virgin, Holy God with us: Immanuel.

Isaiah chapter 9 verse 6 says:

Pastor: For to us

Congregation: a child is born,

Pastor: to us

Congregation: a Son is given,

Pastor: and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor,

Congregation: Mighty God,

Pastor: Everlasting Father,

Congregation: Prince of Peace.

Pastor: In Luke chapter 2, angels proclaimed the arrival of the long-awaited Savior of the world to shepherds watching their sheep just outside of Bethlehem. The message and the messengers were a spectacular sight and sound, but the Messiah would be found seemingly helpless and in a lowly place.

Congregation: “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” (Lu 2:10-14)

Pastor: The shepherds were filled with joy and responded immediately.

Men: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. (Lu 2:15,16)

Hymn:

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing | CW 350

6. FROM JONAH TO ETERNAL JOY

Pastor: The birth of the Savior would be meaningless had he not completed the work he came into the world to accomplish. Jesus himself pointed to his own death and resurrection when he talked with the Pharisees and the teachers of the law about the sign of Jonah.

Women: As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Mt 12:40)

Pastor: The final illustration of Immanuel points to his death and victory over the grave. Jesus completed the work of salvation when he rose from the dead. He crushed the power of Satan under foot and proclaimed victory over death – not just for himself but for all who place their trust in him. Paul writes to the believers in Corinth to assure them that through the resurrection of Christ Jesus, they too will live eternally with him in heaven.

Congregation: Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

Pastor: From beginning to end and everywhere in between, God illustrates pictures for us that point us to his Son, Jesus – the King of kings who came down from heaven and was born in a lowly manger. He became one of us. He lived perfectly in our place. He suffered the consequence of our sin. He completed the work of our salvation in his resurrection. Because of all this, we are guaranteed victory over sin and death and promised eternal joy in heaven, where we will join to sing the praises of the King of Kings forever.

Offering

[Your offering may be placed in the offering plate on the table just outside the church sanctuary as you leave this evening. We thank God for his greatest Gift to us; we give our greatest gifts to his glory!]

Hymn:

Now Sing We, Now Rejoice | CW **363:1&4**

Blessing

Please join us at 10:00am tomorrow morning for the Celebration of Christ's birth on Christmas Day in Word and song!

Welcome to Living Savior!

Welcome! We are glad that you have joined us to worship the Savior.

- Restrooms are in the second hallway on your right as you leave the church. There are also restrooms in the NW corner of the fellowship area.
- Please help us be a friendly church by filling out the Connection Card and placing it in an offering basket so we can reach out to you about our future activities.
- Would you like to know more about Jesus, the basic teachings of what it means to be a Christian, or the Bible? Please mark the box on the Connection Card or email Pastor for more information.

Living Savior Contact Information

Church Office: (406) 543-8222 pastor@livingsaviormissoula.com
Vacancy Pastor Steve Persons: (507) 340-6710 persons@1791.com
Preschool Director April Best: (406) 240-0625 aprilbest85@yahoo.com
4616 Gharrett St, Missoula, MT 59803
LivingSaviorMissoula.org

