

**THE BIG IDEA:** Hope is given on earth by those whose hope comes from heaven.

### The Take-Off

I am so stoked about this series!

If you stop and think about what a birthmark is, it's, well, a mark that comes at birth, evidence that a birth took place. A lasting mark of a moment in time when life began.

They're unique to the person who has them, and sometimes the markings can be pretty interesting.

I've brought a few curious markings on some animals to prove that point.

[IMAGES of animal markings]

Over the next month, we want to make the case that Jesus' birth made a mark, as well.

In history, for sure, but in our lives, too.

If we have an over-arching thought for the series, it would be simply that if the birth of Jesus changed everything, then it should change us, too.

## 1. The birth of Jesus changed everything

- a. Before we even begin to talk about how the birth of Jesus marks us, let's talk about how the birth of Jesus marked the world as we know it
- b. His birth split time into BC (before Christ) and AD (The Year of our Lord)
- c. His life caused everyone - believers and non-believers alike - to recognize that no one has impacted history like He has.
- d. H.G. Wells, a non-Christian historian, said, "I'm a historian. I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all of history."
- e. Napoleon said, "I know men, and I tell you Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires but upon what did we rest the creation of our genius, upon force. Jesus Christ founded his empire upon love. At this hour millions of men would die for him."
- f. Fidel Castro: "I have always considered Christ to be one of the greatest revolutionaries in the history of the world."
- g. Jesus gave dignity to children and women in a way that no one ever had or probably ever will.
- h. He touched the untouchable and loved the unloveable.
- i. It is not an exaggeration to say that Jesus changed everything.
- j. But don't just take my word for it, or Wells, or Napoleon, or Castro. Listen to these experts:
- k. [VIDEO - Christmas According to Kids]
- l. All of that leads us to this one statement that is kind of the Big Idea for this entire series: if Jesus changed everything, then those who follow Him will be marked by change.
- m. In short, we can't follow the greatest revolutionaries this world has ever known and not have a personal revolution in our lives.
- n. **It is impossible to fully encounter this man who changed the world and not actually be changed.** We can't stay neutral about Jesus because Jesus has not given us that option.
- o. So.....how do our lives change as a result of following the Savior who changed the world? What qualities will be the "birthmarks" that point to our new life? I'm sure there are many, but during the month of December, we're going to talk about 4 of them, and this morning, we're talking about **HOPE**.
- p. Let me give you 2 truths about hope and then we'll wrap it up with a Big Idea

## 2. Hope doesn't come from this world; hope came to this world

- a. The Christmas story that we know makes no sense unless we understand the backdrop, and the backdrop is 400 years of silence after an OT of stories of people who could not find their way back to the God they had sinned against
- b. 400 years of nothing. There was no hope in the world.
- c. This past week I learned the whole story behind Pandora's box, and it's the story of humanity w/o hope.
- d. In anger, the Greek gods sent Pandora to earth with a box that she opened and unleashed every misery possible but then closed it keeping one thing inside Pandora's box: hope.

- e. It was a myth made up by men to explain the seeming lack of hope in this world.
- f. They recognized the truth of this point: hope doesn't come from this world; hope came to this world
- g. The obvious question, then, is from who? from where?
- h. Scripture tells us:
  - **Romans 15:13** / from the God of hope
  - **1 Peter 1:3-4** / from the Savior the God of hope sent
- i. One of the commentaries I read this week said it like this: Jesus didn't just bring hope; Jesus IS hope.
- j. Christmas is when we celebrate the fact that hope has come

### 3. Hope holds us when everything around us is falling apart

- a. What do we do when the hope we have doesn't match the life we're living?
- b. We dig into the unchangeable character of God and let hope anchor us / Hebrews 6:19
- c. We remember that our hope is secure because it is held up by faith in a secure God
- d. **Hebrews 11:1** says that our faith in God is the very foundation for the hope that we have
- e. Hope isn't a wish; it's a real conviction in a real God who has a real track record of really coming through!
- f. **Romans 15:13** / We put our trust in that God of hope, and He causes us to overflow with hope!
- g. And here's why that's so important...

#### The Landing

**Hope is given on earth by those whose hope comes from heaven.**

That's the Big Idea today, and let me show you the scripture that I'm praying God burns on our hearts today.

Colossians 1:27 / Christ in you is the hope of glory

I used to see this as a ME verse, but now I realize that it's a WE verse: Christ in us is the hope for glory for others!

A world in need of hope gets it from those of us who have hope to give, because hope gives. Period.

In plenty and in lack. In calm and in storm. The hope in us can be given away because the God of hope holds us, and when we hope in God, Isaiah 49:23 says we won't be disappointed.

He comes through for us, and so we can give His hope to others through us.

When we have hope, we give hope, and in return, we get hope.

This is why our church has a culture of generosity, because giving isn't about money, it's about hope.

It's why Cody is being set free from alcohol, because hope gave so that he could get to Teen Challenge.

It's why our church is helping someone who needs shelter, and why that person gave away a book that we gave to them. Because they have hope, and hope gives.

It's why Paul Stanbrook would spend Thanksgiving away from his wife to serve and give hope to those in the mountains dealing with the fires.

It's why - in a year of more challenges than our church has ever faced financially - we've given more away in missions than any year previously, and it's not even close (\$77,000 to date).

Paul said it best in 1 Timothy 6:17-19 / When our hope isn't tied to this world, we give. We give because God has made us rich in this world, and being generous and willing to share strengthens our foundation of faith.

We give so that we can give hope away.

Never forget this: As followers of Jesus, we don't look for hope in this world; we carry hope in this world.

**Hope is given on earth by those whose hope comes from heaven.**

Let's pray.