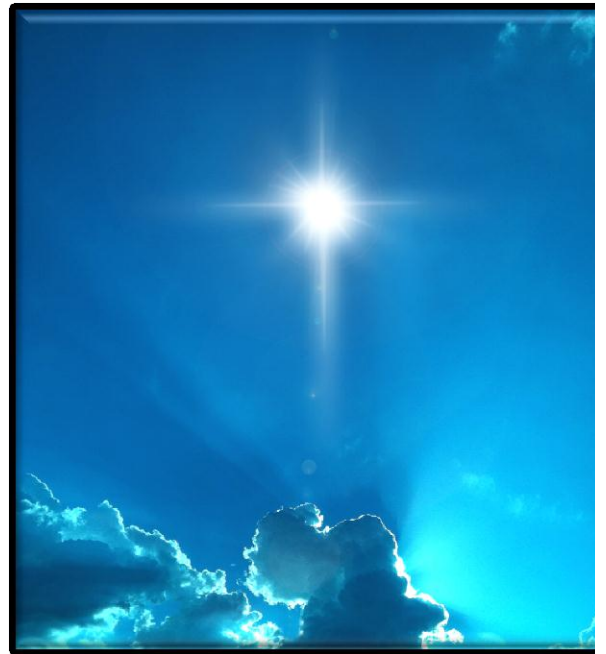


Jesus

Our Silver Lining

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

John 8:12



There were dark clouds of oppression during the first century of Roman occupation and the Jewish people were eager for their Messiah to rescue them. Little did they know that their long awaited Messiah had arrived – Emmanuel (God with us) appeared in relative anonymity. While born in a lowly manger, Jesus was heralded by a great host of angels singing his praises in stark contrast to the simplicity of his obscure Bethlehem cradle. Shepherds watched in amazement and eagerly searched for this miracle baby. A brilliant star shone to light the way of distant wise men who journeyed from the east to honor him with gifts fit for a king. Mary and Joseph, obedient and humble servants of God, knew of their holy infant’s heavenly identity, but few others understood his world changing mission.

At the rabbinical age of maturity, Jesus came out of obscurity and began his ministry as he was baptized by John, God’s prophetic wilderness messenger who called

His people to repentance. It had been 400 years since His chosen people had been visited by a prophet. After calling Abraham to faith, God progressively revealed His redemptive plan to the prophets who chronicled it in His Word. God announced Jesus’ divine identity as the Spirit of the Lord descended upon Jesus and God’s voice was heard saying, *“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”* Matthew 3:16

Later Jesus, the living Word, proclaimed: *“...Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”* Luke 24:44 In miracles, signs and wonders he demonstrated his authority: *“The spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor... Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”* Luke 4:18-21 (Fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-2)

At the appointed time to offer his life a sacrifice for all mankind, Jesus submitted to the cruel cross as prophesied by Isaiah: *"...He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."* Isaiah 53:5. Jesus, the Son of Man and God, lay down his life a ransom for the world. Resurrected on the third day and appearing to over 500 witnesses in a period of 40 days, Jesus declared to his disciples, *"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."* Mark 16:15-16 His redemptive mission complete, Jesus ascended into the clouds and unto the Father.

From humble stable to heavenly throne, Jesus is the light of the world! *"Nations will come to our light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn."* Isaiah 60:3 To Israel whose leaders rejected his divinity, Jesus was a blasphemer. Yet for those whose eyes and ears were and are open to see and hear his truth, Jesus was and is the *silver lining* in every dark cloud. Persecution could not extinguish his bright light, as the early church exploded in exponential growth. Whenever there is repression, the church thrives as darkness cannot snuff out his light.

Today the world is increasingly shrouded in billowing dark clouds of war, oppression, persecution, terrorism, violence, economic and political upheaval, godlessness, and strife among people of every ethnicity and nationality. Drought, floods, hurricanes, typhoons, tornados, earthquakes and every possible natural disaster have wreaked havoc across the nations. On a personal

level, people suffer great losses with homes and businesses destroyed, and struggle with familial estrangement and unforgiveness. No one seems exempt from the ominously threatening clouds. Sickness, death, joblessness affect every family, rich and poor. Many people look to governments to solve these overwhelming disasters, persistent social and economic problems, and personal trials, but governments are bankrupt, inept and corrupt.

Thankfully, Christmas reminds us that Jesus is our silver lining in every dark cloud. Just as Jesus performed miracles during his brief time on earth, so too through the power of the Holy Spirit, miracles are commonplace today. He brings light where there is darkness. He provides a way when there seems to be no way. His *love* comforts the physically, emotionally and spiritually wounded and heals the broken hearted. He brings *joy* where there is discouragement and *peace* where there is strife. Jesus is the *hope* of the world. By faith these four familiar Christmas Advent themes can be a reality in our daily lives throughout the year. By receiving Jesus, we appropriate his grace illuminating every circumstantial cloud.

Do dark clouds envelop you or a loved one? Have you seen His silver lining? Jesus promised, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* John 8:12 Ask him to shine his transforming light on you and brighten your life. This Christmas, turn to the one true light of the world for *love, joy, peace and hope*.

By Sheryl Dawson
Christmas 2012

www.CelebratingChrist.com

(Photograph: Houston 2012 by Sheryl Dawson with Christmas Star superimposed)