**Transcript**

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Missing Peace – Disappointed by God 12/15/24

How many of you remember New Year's Eve last year? How many of you remember New Year's Eve last year? How many of you were incredibly optimistic as you looked forward to a new year? How many of you experienced some disappointments along the way in the upcoming year? We are talking today about disappointment.

What do you do when you feel disappointed in God? Some of us right now may feel like God has let us down in some area. It could be that you did everything you could to raise your kids in a way that you thought was wise, and now you've got a child making decisions that is really upsetting to you. It might be that you didn't plan on homeschooling like ever. And now you're in a very complicated season of parenting with your kids. It might be that you had dreams to have a great marriage one day and you didn't plan on being single, or you are married and your marriage is not where you hoped it would be. Maybe you didn't plan on battling depression or battling anxiety. Maybe you didn't plan on Christmas without so many of your family members and loved ones there.

Things happen that we never plan on and we can be very disappointed. And to be more specific, we are disappointed in God. What do we do when we feel like God lets us down? Anybody reading Luke leading up to Christmas? It’s kind of a tradition for some – read a chapter in Luke everyday right up to Christmas – 24 chapters. Luke chapter two, maybe the most powerful version of the Christmas story, the birth of Christ. To give you the context of Luke chapter two. Remember last week, we talked about the intertestamental period. It had been 400 years since the Jews had heard from God. The shepherds were in the field taking care of their flocks and an angel of the Lord appears to them and says, "Do not be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news." If you came to Walk through Bethlehem last week – you heard some of this.

Is there anyone that might need some good news today? He said, "I bring you good news that will bring great joy for all people. The Savior, yes, the Messiah, the Lord has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!" What I love about this, thinking this thru, is if we had needed advice, God would have sent a counselor. If we needed a different law, God might've sent a politician. If we needed education, God would have sent a teacher. But we needed forgiveness, and we needed hope, and we needed healing. So God sent a Savior. Today, a Savior has been born to you. "And you will recognize Him by this sign. You'll find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." You will see this sign. You'll recognize Him by this sign.

What is a sign? A sign is an object that points to a meaning. It sends a message. The sign that God sent was not what we would expect. God didn't send a King in a palace dressed in purple linen with a glowing halo floating above his head. But God sent a baby born in a stable, smelly, dirty hollowed out cave, wrapped in burial rags. I read somewhere – this is a sign that heavenly royalty was born to die. "Suddenly," verse 13. "The angel was joined by a vast host of others. The armies of heaven praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest.'" Glory and honor and majesty and power to the Lamb who was born to be slain. "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth." Somebody say peace on earth. "And peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." Peace on earth. And what do we see as we read this story? We see anything but peace on earth.

What do you do when you find yourself wondering where God is when you're doing everything that you think is right, and yet you feel disappointed by God? I think this happens to all of us at times. Let’s talk about when You're Disappointed by God.

Father, we ask today, that by the power of your Spirit and the truth of your Word that so many people are hurting, that we would find comfort in the good news and the power of your presence. We pray in Jesus' name. And everybody said, amen and amen.

Today, I want to show you a heart-wrenching story that you're probably familiar with, about a young couple that knew what betrayal felt like, deceit, and relational devastation. And I don't want you to hear this story like you've heard it a hundred times before. I want you to try to imagine that these are very real people that had dreams, and hopes, and aspirations just like you do in your life. Let’s watch as this young couple, Mary and Joseph how they're unfairly criticized, hated, shamed, and humiliated. They have this traumatic birth followed by a nightmare where they're running as fugitives, trying to protect their lives from Herod. And all of this trouble and all of this disappointment because they were trying to do exactly what God wanted them to do.

Let's modernize it just for fun. Is that okay? Can we have a little fun? I'll tell you the story kind of like it if it happened today. It didn't happen this way, but you can imagine. Imagine Joe has the perfect proposal planned to Mary. He gets the ring. He takes Mary out at sunset. He's going to propose on the Bethlehem bridge. He's got the photographer who will capture the perfect photo as he's kneeling down, Mary can post to her Instagram page, she gets a record number of likes and comments. They're incredibly excited with all these big plans. They're going to get married in May. They're going to go on a honeymoon to an all-inclusive resort in Rome. They've got plans to pay off the loans from Joe's trade school. And they're really excited about the future. They're going to live in an apartment for two years. Then they're going to build their own starter home. Joe's going to do it himself because he's a really good carpenter, and they're going to build it in a nice suburban neighborhood in Nazareth. And they're going to expand Joe's carpentry business. And one day, they're going to hire help for him. And the moment they hire help, guess what they're going to do? They're going to start having babies. They had plans just like we have plans in life.

And God interrupted those plans with the most complicated, untimely, inconvenient, seemingly unfair assignment. An angel appears to this teenage girl, Mary who's 14 or 15 years of age, and the angel appears and says, "You're going to give birth to a son. His name is Jesus. And He's going to save people from their sins." And she looks on knowing, "Hey, I'm a virgin - like Joe and I have stayed apart. How's this even possible?" And the angel says, "This child will be conceived by the Holy Spirit." And Mary makes the most beautiful, powerful, trusting submission to her God. And she says, "May it be done unto me according to your Word." She's on a spiritual high. An angel just appeared to her. Can you imagine she runs to tell Joe, he's going to be so excited an angel appeared to me. "Joe, you're not going to believe. I had the most powerful moment with God and I'm pregnant by the Holy Spirit." Are you visualizing it? , you're like barely even laughing. He would be devastated, Guys? Picture yourself! Maybe very ticked off, hurt. But first of all, she says, "I'm pregnant by the Holy Spirit." So not only are you thinking you are a liar, a cheat, but you're cray cray. But imagine this, your girlfriend comes in and says, "I'm pregnant and it's the Holy Spirit who did it." How are you going to feel about that? That's just weird….. beyond measure.

She's on this high, expecting him to be all excited. And he's completely devastated. Verse 18 says, "This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph, her husband was faithful to the law and yet didn't want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly." Now, if you're paying attention, you might say this doesn't make sense. I thought they were engaged, why would he divorce her? Well, the Hebrew marriage had two different stages. There was the kiddushin and the huppah. The kiddushin was the engagement and the huppah was the marriage ceremony.

The kiddushin was the engagement. And it's very different from an engagement today. This was a binding agreement and technically you were already married at the kiddushin, and then at the huppah, the ceremony would simply come later. It was so serious to engagement that if the man died during the engagement, the woman was considered a widow. So technically they're married, but yet the ceremony and the gift that married people do after the ceremony comes later on. And so if you can just imagine this. They're technically married, but they're still picking colors for their wedding ceremony. And Mary is pregnant in a culture where you now are an outcast forever. And Joseph knows, "Hey, we haven't been intimate." He's crushed. He's humiliated. He is disappointed beyond what most of us can imagine.
This is like life-wracking, life-altering disappointment. If you can just picture their dilemma. Modernize it in our world today. Keep going with our original story - The invitations have gone out. You've got to call off the whole thing. Worse than the public humiliation, there's the personal betrayal. He trusted Mary. He loved her. He was ready to spend the rest of his life with her. And she cheated on him in his mind. Now what? Now what? Life's over as he knew it.

Then think about Mary. Just a little young teenage girl who didn't do anything wrong at all, right? In fact, she did everything just right. She did exactly what God had asked her to do. And now her fiance or technically they are married, he's considering divorcing her and she's going to be shamed and not even allowed to participate in society like a normal woman for the rest of her life. Imagine what she's thinking, "God, where are you? I said yes to you. This wasn't what I wanted. I did exactly what you asked me to do. This isn't fair. Now Joseph doesn't trust me. He doesn't like me, he wants to divorce me."

What do you do when you feel disappointed in God? How do you respond? Some of you have had a similar experience this year or in different seasons of life. Maybe this year, it's just as simple as you had big plans, you planned to travel and something you're looking forward to and you couldn't wait to do it. You planned to travel and now you can barely even go to a restaurant. Or you planned to go to school or back to school and now there's not even school meeting in physical locations and you're online. Or you planned by this time in life to have someone. You didn't plan on being single. Or you are married and you planned on having a better marriage, but this year it's kind of beaten your marriage down. Or maybe you planned on having a baby by now, but you haven't had that baby. Or you did conceive and the baby didn't make it. Whatever it is. I'm guessing that in so many of your lives, just like mine, you're facing something or have faced something that isn't what you had planned. God, I don't understand. Where are you in the middle of my disappointments?

What I want to do today from Scripture is show us two simple truths that might help minister to you when you don't understand. Two truths that I pray the Holy Spirit will put in your heart and will be good news and bring you great joy (and peace) during this Christmas season.

The first big thought is this, that you don't have to understand the plan to trust that God has a purpose. You don't have to understand the plan to trust that God has a purpose. Proverbs 19:21 is a powerful verse that says, "Many are the plans in a person's heart." I have plans, you have plans. Mary had plans, Joseph had plans. "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it's the Lord's purpose that prevails." I don't know about you, but I thank God that He has a purpose. I thank God that people's opinions can't stop God's purpose. I thank God that my disappointments can't stop God's purpose. That, "Many are the plans in our hearts, but it's God's purpose that prevails." We see this. In verse 20, Mary and Joseph's plans are wrecked. They're disappointed. Now what? Scripture says this, "But after Joseph had considered this," he's thinking about divorcing her. "An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.' And the angel says, 'Joseph, she'll give birth to a son, and you're to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save people from their sins.'" Wait a minute, God, you're doing something in the middle of my disappointment. You're still working in the middle of my pain. There's still a purpose in the middle of all the things that I don't understand, you're doing something. Our first thought, you don't have to understand the plan to trust God has a purpose. The second your disappointment with God might actually be a divine appointment from God. There are times in your life, I promise, when you might find yourself disappointed and let down and wondering where God is. And your disappointment with God might actually be a divine appointment from God. You're still doing something God, even in the middle of my greatest disappointments.

And I would not be preaching to you today, talking about the birth of Christ. And we wouldn't be sharing this moment if things had gone according to plan. You may have some things right now that haven't gone the way you had hoped. This isn't what you had planned. This is the opposite of what you had planned. And I hope you'll find comfort. If you're disappointment with God it might actually be a divine appointment with God.

Mary and Joseph were trying to figure things out. What are we going to do? Just when they started to get things together, Caesar Augustus issued this stupid decree. "You've got to go back to your hometown to do this as census." Which was incredibly inconvenient beyond measure. You'll often see like on a little card or in a kid's book, a little picture of Mary and Joseph riding on a donkey and it all looks kind of like, "Hey, that'd be a nice ride." Let me try to give you insight to what this was like. This was about a 90-mile trip on a donkey, grueling, that would take over two weeks of time. Remember what Joseph did. He had work, made things. He was a carpenter to get paid. That means two weeks without any income before they're getting married, this is tremendous stress. And then he had pressure of protecting his pregnant wife-to-be, traveling through a Judean desert where it would be freezing and snowing almost every single night. And they had to go through one of the most terrifying patches where they were in constant danger. It was the Valley of the Jordan River, where it was a heavily forested area. And there were robbers and pirates waiting for people like Joe, who had to try to defend his wife, to rob them. And they'd have to fight off very common bears, and lions, and wild boars, which to me might be the scariest of them all. And so Joseph's got his very, very pregnant wife in snowy conditions in the evening, facing potential threat everywhere around traveling on this massive journey on a donkey. I'll be straight with you. Mike and I took trips while I was pregnant with Jake in an air-conditioned car with semi comfortable seats. And a three-hour journey took like five hours 'cause she kept having to go to the bathroom. It almost cost us our marriage. It was just a simple trip to Dallas. And Joseph feels this massive pressure. This long journey on a donkey's back, she's having contractions and he's panicking, freaking out, running red lights on the donkey and such or whatever. And they didn't have hotels.com. So there was no place to stay. There's no place to stay. He gets in there and finds a barn. And when I say a barn, don't think barn like you think today like, HGTV shiplap barn, okay. This is a nasty, hole in the wall with animals. And she has a traumatic birth with no help in a cave. And then these gross, dirty shepherds come and want to hold her baby. Imagine this. Before they can even get home and finish decorating the nursery, they find out that Herod wants to kill their child. Just imagine that in your world today, your world today. You don’t have any income because you're not working. You just had your first baby. Everyone's whispering behind your back saying, you know, you're shamed. And now you're literally on the run all because you're doing what God asked you to do. Peace on earth sounds like hell on earth to me. This isn't what I had planned. If you take Mary and you fast forward all the way to the cross, the mother of Jesus, 33 years or so later, the girl who said yes God, without knowing the details, "I love you so much, I trust you so much. My answer is yes. May it be done unto me, according to your Word." And she looks on and sees her son. Who's never sinned, never wronged anyone, never disobeyed God, stripped naked, beaten senselessly. He doesn't even look like a human being. His face is so disfigured. And she looks up at her son, her flesh, her blood. And while the creation is mocking God in the flesh, Jesus, the Creator, He looks up and says, "God, please forgive them. They don't even know what they're doing." And then He lifts up His head toward heaven and He says, "Father, I did what you sent me to do. It's finished. Into your hands I commit my Spirit. And the mother of Jesus who said yes to God, watches her son die.

You don't have to understand the plan. When you know God, when you love Him, when you have faith in Him, when you understand His character, when you realize just how much He loves you and has plans for you, to bless you, to give you good gifts. And even though you have so many plans, His purpose, His will, it always prevails. You don't have to understand a plan when you trust God has a purpose. And that's where my family lives right now. Because there are some things that are really hard for us to get our minds around, some very personal things that we wish were different, just like you. And we're believing by faith that some of our greatest disappointments might actually have a purpose behind them. That they might actually be an appointment with something God wants to do.

This in so many ways, is the story of Christmas. No one could have planned that God would become a man conceived by the Holy Spirit, born and wrapped in cloths that were used to bury the dead, as a sign that He was born to die. But God would raise Him again. Mary and Joseph had a plan. Mary and Joseph had a plan. I have a plan. You have a plan. Mary and Joseph had a plan, but God had a purpose. And the good news is, you were that purpose. You were His purpose, you were. And whatever place you're watching this message, online and wherever. You were the purpose of God. Because verse 21 says that "Mary will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus." Why? "Because He will save His people from their sins." What did we need? We needed forgiveness. We needed a healing, we needed hope. And that's why God sent a Savior. His name is Jesus. He was born of a virgin. He didn't inherit the sin nature from an earthly father. He's called the Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice, the one who never, ever sinned. So he could give His life in our place that we could experience the peace of God. Even when life doesn't go as you want, there is a peace from heaven. It's not just a concept, it is His name. Jesus is our peace. And because of the providential purpose of God through so many disappointments, God's purpose came to pass. And in the middle of your pain right now. And I know so many people are experiencing hurt and heartbreak and loss, we're right there with you. We can trust that even though we don't fully understand, God's purposes are good. His ways are perfect. He is always good. So sometimes you just have to thank Him if things don't go as planned. Because Mary and Joseph had a plan, but God had a purpose and you were that purpose. That's just how much He loved you. So in the middle of the pain, I pray you find good news and great joy. But a Savior has been born. His name is Jesus, and He is the one we worship. And He is the one we honor.

So Father today we ask that you would do a work in so many hearts. As you're praying and reflecting today at Joy Church or watching online, those of you who are experiencing some real disappointments right now and need some comfort from the presence of God, would you just lift up your hands. Just lift them up. You can even type it in the chat, please pray for me. Please pray for me.

Father, we grieve with those who grieve and there's so much grief right now. But we also rejoice with those who rejoice. And right now by faith, God, we rejoice in the good news of who you are. Your love, your mercy. We pray God that as we cast our cares on you, whatever it is, wherever you're hurting. just give that to God. It may be a name. It may be a fear. It may be a burden. It may be a health issue. Just give it to God. And we thank you, God, that you have a peace that passes all understanding, your peace, your peace, that will guard our hearts, and our minds, and our souls in Christ Jesus. God help us to put our trust in you even when we don't understand. Knowing you're always good. And you're always loving God. Give us your peace today.

As you keep praying, if we just sat down and had a real honest conversation, and we talked about spiritual things, I might ask you, where do you stand with God? There are some of you say, "I'm not really sure." Or, "I'm trying to do my best, but it's been really hard." Let me tell you as clearly as I can, about how much God loves you. He loves you, so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus. He didn't shout how much He loved you from heaven. He showed His love on earth. Jesus, born of a virgin. Perfect in every way. The one who loved those that religion often rejected. He loved the outcasts, the hurting, the broken and the sinful. And because He was perfect, He was the innocent sacrifice. The Lamb of God who shed His blood died and rose again so that anyone who calls on Him would be changed, transformed, made new, all of your sins completely forgiven. Maybe God loves you so much that's the very reason you're here today. Because you're His purpose. You're His one. Jesus said, "If a shepherd has 100 sheep and one escapes, he'll leave the 99 and go after the one." Maybe you're the one. Maybe you're the one. You're the one. You're the one. If you say, yes, I need peace with God. I want His forgiveness to step away from your sin. Turn toward Jesus, call on His name. He'll hear your prayer, He'll forgive your sins. You will be completely transformed. He loves you that's why you're here.
"Yes, I need His grace. Yes, I want His forgiveness today. I surrender my life to Him." That's your prayer. Lift your hands now "Yes, that's my prayer." If you're watching online, just type it in the chat. "I'm giving my life to Jesus today." And as we celebrate the good news and great joy of lives being transformed all over the world, would you just pray with those around you. Pray aloud. Heavenly Father, forgive all of my sins, save me. Jesus, make me new. Fill me with your Spirit so I could know you, your goodness, your love, and walk in your purposes. Thank you for new life.
I give you all of mine. In Jesus name I pray.