

WHAT CHILD IS THIS?

THE CHILD OF PROMISE

Sunday, December 1, 2024

Matthew 1:18-25

Dr. James Dobson relates a story of an elderly woman named Stella Thornhope who was struggling with her first Christmas alone. Her husband had died just a few months prior. Now, several days before Christmas, she was almost snowed in by a brutal weather system. She felt terribly alone—so much so she decided she was not going to decorate for Christmas.

Late that afternoon the doorbell rang, and there was a delivery boy with a box. He said, “Mrs. Thornhope?” She nodded. He said, “Would you sign here?” She invited him to step inside and closed the door to get away from the cold. She signed the paper and said, “What’s in the box?” The young man laughed and opened up the flap, and inside was a little puppy, a golden Labrador Retriever. The delivery boy picked up the squirming pup and explained, “This is for you, Ma’am. He’s six weeks old, completely housebroken.” The young puppy began to wiggle in happiness at being released from captivity. “Who sent this?” Mrs. Thornhope asked. The young man set the animal down and handed her an envelope and said, “It’s all explained here in this envelope, Ma’am. The dog was bought last July while its mother was still pregnant. It was meant to be a Christmas gift to you.” The young man then handed her a book, *How to Care for Your Labrador Retriever*. In desperation she again asked, “Who sent me this puppy?” As the young man turned to leave, he said, “Your husband, Ma’am. Merry Christmas.”

She opened up the letter from her husband. He had written it three weeks before he died and left it with the kennel owners to be delivered with the puppy as his last Christmas gift to her. The letter was full of love and encouragement and admonishments to be strong. He vowed that he was waiting for the day when she would join him. He had sent her this young animal to keep her company until then. She wiped away the tears, put the letter down, and then remembering the puppy at her feet, she picked up that golden furry ball and held it to her neck. Then she looked out the window at the lights that outlined the neighbor’s house, and she heard from the radio in the kitchen the strains of “Joy to the World, the Lord has Come.” Suddenly Stella felt the most amazing sensation of peace washing over her. Her heart felt a joy and a wonder greater than the grief and loneliness. “Little fella,” she said to the dog, “It’s just you and me. But you know what? There’s a box down in the basement I’ll bet you’d like. It’s got a little Christmas tree in it and some decorations and some lights that are going to impress you. And there’s a manger scene down there. Let’s go get it.”

God has a way of sending a signal of light to remind us life is stronger than death. Light is more powerful than darkness. God is more powerful than Satan. Good will overcome evil. “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light,” the prophet said. “On those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned” (Matthew 4:16).

Unwrap the package of Christmas, you discover this amazing truth:
GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES!

As we begin the month of December, we start a new series of messages entitled “What Child is This?” We are reminded of invaluable truths we learn from the birth of Jesus Christ. Today, we are reminded **He is the child of promise!**

Isaiah 7:14, 9:6, 11:1, 53:1; Micah 5:2

Matthew 1:22 (NASB95)

Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet.

WHAT DO WE LEARN? You can lean on God’s promises.

We learn that God’s promises are built on the pillars of...

▶ His justice and holiness ... *HE WILL NOT DECEIVE*

▶ His grace and goodness ... *HE WILL NOT FORGET*

▶ His truth ... *HE WILL NOT CHANGE*

▶ His power ... *HE IS ABLE*

▶ His sovereignty ... *HE ACTS*

HOW DO WE LIVE? You can’t break God’s promises by leaning on them.

▶ Lean on Him, Confidently

▶ Lean on Him, Expectantly

▶ Lean on Him, Patiently

▶ Lean on Him, Peacefully