

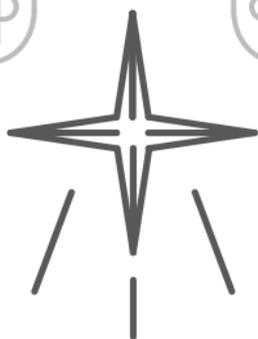
THE MESSAGE™



THE  
**MESSAGE**  
OF  
**CHRISTMAS**



THE MESSAGE™



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OF  
**CHRISTMAS**

EUGENE H. PETERSON



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## INTRODUCTION

The story of Jesus' birth has an immense progeny. Our planet fairly teems with stories and songs, paintings and drama that got their start from this story. The reproductive energies show no sign of tapering off. Writers and singers and artists, to say nothing of countless children and parents and grandparents all over the world, continue to find fresh and novel ways of keeping this story going.

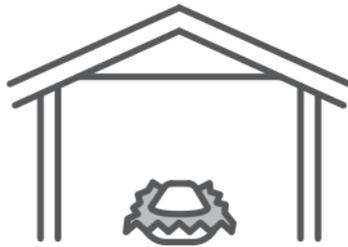
But even more impressive are the lives that continue to get a fresh start—a new birth—in the story of this birth. Day after day, men and women who feel more dead than alive, in the hearing or singing or seeing of this story, rediscover the utter and unspeakable and beautiful preciousness of life. The story of Jesus' birth gets reproduced in these human lives still, over and over and over again.

The birth of Jesus is a birth with a message. It takes the entire Bible to bring the complete message, but this birth is the core of it: In Jesus, God is here to give us life, real life.





THE  
**MESSAGE**  
OF  
**CHRISTMAS**





## A SAVIOR FORETOLD

### *A Righteous Branch*

JEREMIAH 23:5-6

“Time’s coming”—GOD’S Decree—  
“when I’ll establish a truly righteous  
David-Branch,  
A ruler who knows how to rule justly.  
He’ll make sure of justice and keep people  
united.  
In his time Judah will be secure again  
and Israel will live in safety.  
This is the name they’ll give him:  
‘GOD-Who-Puts-Everything-Right.’”

### *A Child Will Be Born to Us*

ISAIAH 9:2-7

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light.  
For those who lived in a land of deep  
shadows—



\* light! sunbursts of light!  
You repopulated the nation,  
you expanded its joy.  
Oh, they're so glad in your presence!  
Festival joy!  
The joy of a great celebration,  
sharing rich gifts and warm  
greetings.  
The abuse of oppressors and cruelty  
of tyrants—  
all their whips and cudgels and curses—  
Is gone, done away with, a deliverance  
as surprising and sudden as Gideon's old  
victory over Midian.  
The boots of all those invading troops,  
along with their shirts soaked with innocent  
blood,  
Will be piled in a heap and burned,  
a fire that will burn for days!  
For a child has been born—for us!  
the gift of a son—for us!  
He'll take over  
the running of the world. \*  
His names will be: Amazing Counselor,  
Strong God,



Eternal Father,  
Prince of Wholeness.  
His ruling authority will grow,  
and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he  
brings.  
He'll rule from the historic David throne  
over that promised kingdom.  
He'll put that kingdom on a firm footing  
and keep it going  
With fair dealing and right living,  
beginning now and lasting always.  
The zeal of GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies  
will do all this.

### *A Righteous Judge*

ISAIAH 11:1-5

A green Shoot will sprout from Jesse's stump,  
from his roots a budding Branch.  
The life-giving Spirit of GOD will hover  
over him,  
the Spirit that brings wisdom and  
understanding,  
The Spirit that gives direction and builds  
strength,





the Spirit that instills knowledge and  
Fear-of-GOD.

Fear-of-GOD

will be all his joy and delight.

He won't judge by appearances,  
won't decide on the basis of hearsay.

He'll judge the needy by what is right,  
render decisions on earth's poor with justice.

His words will bring everyone to awed attention.

A mere breath from his lips will topple the  
wicked.

Each morning he'll pull on sturdy work clothes  
and boots,  
and build righteousness and faithfulness in  
the land.

### *A Suffering Servant*

ISAIAH 53:1-12

Who believes what we've heard and seen?

Who would have thought GOD's saving  
power would look like this?

The servant grew up before God—a scrawny  
seedling,  
a scrubby plant in a parched field.





There was nothing attractive about him,  
nothing to cause us to take a second look.  
He was looked down on and passed over,  
a man who suffered, who knew pain  
firsthand.

One look at him and people turned away.  
We looked down on him, thought he  
was scum.

But the fact is, it was *our* pains he carried—  
*our* disfigurements, all the things wrong  
with *us*.

We thought he brought it on himself,  
that God was punishing him for his own  
failures.

But it was our sins that did that to him,  
that ripped and tore and crushed him—  
*our sins!*

He took the punishment, and that made us  
whole.

Through his bruises we get healed.  
We're all like sheep who've wandered off and  
gotten lost.

We've all done our own thing, gone our  
own way.





And GOD has piled all our sins, everything  
we've done wrong,  
on him, on him.

He was beaten, he was tortured,  
but he didn't say a word.

Like a lamb taken to be slaughtered  
and like a sheep being sheared,  
he took it all in silence.

Justice miscarried, and he was led off—  
and did anyone really know what was  
happening?

He died without a thought for his own welfare,  
beaten bloody for the sins of my people.

They buried him with the wicked,  
threw him in a grave with a rich man,  
Even though he'd never hurt a soul  
or said one word that wasn't true.

Still, it's what GOD had in mind all along,  
to crush him with pain.

The plan was that he give himself as an offer-  
ing for sin  
so that he'd see life come from it—life, life,  
and more life.





And GOD's plan will deeply prosper  
through him.

Out of that terrible travail of soul,  
he'll see that it's worth it and be glad he  
did it.  
Through what he experienced, my righteous  
one, my servant,  
will make many "righteous ones,"  
as he himself carries the burden of their sins.  
Therefore I'll reward him extravagantly—  
the best of everything, the highest honors—  
Because he looked death in the face and didn't  
flinch,  
because he embraced the company of the  
lowest.  
He took on his own shoulders the sin of the  
many,  
he took up the cause of all the  
black sheep.

*Behold My Chosen One*

ISAIAH 42:1-4

"Take a good look at my servant.  
I'm backing him to the hilt.



\* He's the one I chose,  
and I couldn't be more pleased with him.  
I've bathed him with my Spirit, my *life*.  
He'll set everything right among the nations.  
He won't call attention to what he does  
with loud speeches or gaudy parades.  
He won't brush aside the bruised and the hurt  
and he won't disregard the small and  
insignificant,  
but he'll steadily and firmly set things right.  
He won't tire out and quit. He won't be  
stopped  
until he's finished his work—to set things  
right on earth.  
Far-flung ocean islands  
wait expectantly for his teaching.”

### *Your King Is Coming*

ZECHARIAH 9:9-10

“Shout and cheer, Daughter Zion!  
Raise the roof, Daughter Jerusalem!  
Your king is coming!  
a good king who makes all things right,  
a humble king riding a donkey,  
a mere colt of a donkey.”

\*



I've had it with war—no more chariots in  
Ephraim,  
no more war horses in Jerusalem,  
no more swords and spears, bows and  
arrows.

He will offer peace to the nations,  
a peaceful rule worldwide,  
from the four winds to the seven seas.”

### *A Virgin with Child*

ISAIAH 7:10-14

GOD spoke again to Ahaz. This time he said, “Ask for a sign from your GOD. Ask anything. Be extravagant. Ask for the moon!”

But Ahaz said, “I'd never do that. I'd never make demands like that on GOD!”

So Isaiah told him, “Then listen to this, government of David! It's bad enough that you make people tired with your pious, timid hypocrisies, but now you're making God tired. So the Master is going to give you a sign anyway. Watch for this: A girl who is presently a virgin will get pregnant. She'll bear a son and name him Immanuel (God-With-Us).”





## *The Announcement to Mary*

LUKE 1:26-38

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to the Galilean village of Nazareth to a virgin engaged to be married to a man descended from David. His name was Joseph, and the virgin's name, Mary. Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her:

Good morning!  
You're beautiful with God's beauty,  
Beautiful inside and out!  
God be with you.

She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured her, "Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus.

He will be great,  
be called 'Son of the Highest.'  
The Lord God will give him  
the throne of his father David;





He will rule Jacob's house forever—  
no end, ever, to his kingdom.”

Mary said to the angel, “But how? I've never  
slept with a man.”

The angel answered,

The Holy Spirit will come upon you,  
the power of the Highest hover over you;  
Therefore, the child you bring to birth  
will be called Holy, Son of God.

“And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth  
conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called  
her barren, and here she is six months pregnant!  
Nothing, you see, is impossible with God.”

And Mary said,

Yes, I see it all now:

I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve.  
Let it be with me  
just as you say.

Then the angel left her.





## *Elizabeth and Mary*

LUKE 1:39-56

Mary didn't waste a minute. She got up and traveled to a town in Judah in the hill country, straight to Zachariah's house, and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb leaped. She was filled with the Holy Spirit, and sang out exuberantly,

You're so blessed among women,  
and the babe in your womb, also blessed!  
And why am I so blessed that  
the mother of my Lord visits me?  
The moment the sound of your  
greeting entered my ears,  
The babe in my womb  
skipped like a lamb for sheer joy.  
Blessed woman, who believed what God said,  
believed every word would come true!

And Mary said,

I'm bursting with God-news;  
I'm dancing the song of my Savior God.





God took one good look at me, and look what  
happened—

I'm the most fortunate woman on earth!

What God has done for me will never be  
forgotten,

the God whose very name is holy, set apart  
from all others.

His mercy flows in wave after wave  
on those who are in awe before him.

He bared his arm and showed his strength,  
scattered the bluffing braggarts.

He knocked tyrants off their high horses,  
pulled victims out of the mud.

The starving poor sat down to a banquet;  
the callous rich were left out in the cold.

He embraced his chosen child, Israel;  
he remembered and piled on the mercies,  
piled them high.

It's exactly what he promised,  
beginning with Abraham and right up to  
now.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months  
and then went back to her own home.

