

Treasure Hunt  
The Map of the Treasure  
Isaiah 7:14

*I couldn't have been more than five or six at the time; but I was knee deep in an adventure. Growing up on Federal Avenue in LaPorte, IN, I was never hard pressed to find something to occupy my hands and imagination.*

*There were all sorts of kids who lived on that block. There was Rod Horner who had the dog that took a bite out of my head, (Which probably explains a lot)*

*There was Chris Johnson who actually allowed me to play basketball with him. [God bless him!] And then there was Anne Knisely who let us dig for treasure in her side yard.*

*Anne and I went to school together from the first through the 12th grades. We were neighborhood friends, if you know what I mean.*

*She lived across the street and three houses up. And one summer, when we were about 5 or 6, we decided we were going to hunt for treasure. We just knew that there was treasure buried in her yard.*

*Looking back, I think it might have been an idea our mother's gave us in order to get us out of their hair, but in any case, we started hunting for treasure.*

*I think Anne drew up a map and we followed that map to the side of her garage. It took the both of us to lift one of the large flagstones her parents had put there to form a walk way to the back yard.*

*But once we moved it, it was time to dig for treasure where X had marked the spot. After several days of digging, the only treasure we had to show for our efforts was a bent and dirty spoon.*

*To be honest, I'm not sure whether it was one that we uncovered or one that we brought out from the kitchen to use for digging, but we proudly showed our treasure to our parents, absolutely sure that it was of inestimable value.*

*So now you know. Just call me Indiana Stacy Jones!*

The reason that I tell you that story is not so that you will realize that I was weird even as a kid - like that would have been a surprise to you. I tell you that story to remind you that everybody loves a good treasure hunt, and not just children digging around in the back yard. I know for a fact that there will be a great deal of treasure hunting this season as children of all ages hunt around in the house for hidden Christmas treasures. Everybody loves a good treasure hunt. Maybe that's why in our culture we have even taken treasure hunting to the level of reality TV. Anybody remember the show Treasure Hunters where teams competed to find a treasure trove of gold worth \$3 million? Well, I've been thinking about treasure hunting these days. It seems to me that we all want to believe that out there somewhere is a treasure beyond all imagination, a treasure that we could discover. And the more I've thought about that, the more I've wondered: **What if there really was such a treasure, an ultimate treasure?** Are we willing to accept the challenge of searching for it? The more I thought about it and the more I prayed about it, the more convinced I became that there is just such a treasure. And we are going on a hunt for it here at Ryot Nazarene for the next few weeks. As we move into this holiday time of the year, we are going to go hunting for the real treasure of the season. Now, to make things a little more interesting, I've actually hidden a real treasure somewhere in our church. No, it's not a chest of gold, but it is a real treasure. For example, you will find in that treasure a gift certificate good for one free snow shoveling of your home. As well as a \$25 gift certificate for gasoline among many other things. Anybody interested in a little treasure hunting?

The first thing any self-respecting treasure hunter must have is a good treasure map! So, each week for the next four Sundays, you will have the opportunity to acquire one piece of our treasure map. Now, know this, there are enough copies of that piece of the map that each of you can have one. However, you are going to find out where we have hidden that piece of the map each week. So let me give you the clue to where you can find that first piece of our treasure map. **[picture of Altar]** You will need all four pieces of the map in order to follow it to the place where our Ryot treasure has been hidden. **Are you up for a little treasure hunt?**

Now, like I said, the more I thought it, and the more I studied it, and the more I prayed, the more convinced I was that there actually is a real treasure of the season. And just like our church treasure, there is a map to that treasure of the season. It was a map shown to a young man in the small town of Nazareth named Joseph. That map had existed for over 700 years by the time Joseph saw it. It was a map that lay hidden deep in a book of the OT. It was a map that contained the clues to the treasure.

Let's look at that map that Joseph found and that the clues it contains. Turn to **Matthew 1:18-23**...Did you see the map there? It's contained in vv. 22-23. That's actually just a copy of the original map. The original map was buried deep in a book of the OT, the book of Isaiah. Let's examine that map closely and see what clues it can give us as to the real treasure of the season.

1) The first clue you will find on this map of the treasure of the season. **Look for something that can take care of you like nothing else can.**

The three geniuses who found the treasure on that show Treasure Hunt reality show found \$3 million dollars worth of gold. Now, that was something that could take care of them financially the rest of the rest of their lives; if they are careful. However, if you discover the treasure of Christmas, you will discover something that can take care of you entirely the rest of your eternity. Notice this clue as it appears on our treasure map. *"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. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet."* (Mt 1:20-22) The day Joseph stumbled onto this treasure map, was a day when his world was crashing in on him. His fiancé was pregnant. It wasn't his, but she was pregnant, and his world was crumbling in. *I remember a small town church that held its annual children's Christmas pageant one year. And the lady who was the narrator decided to use a new bible translation so that the kids could understand it.*

*So just as little Mary and Joseph were walking up the center aisle of the church, the narrator read: "Joseph went to register with Mary, who was engaged in marriage to him. And she was pregnant."*

*As the last word echoed through the P. A. System, little Joseph froze in his tracks. He gave Mary an incredulous look, then looked out at the congregation and said, "Pregnant? What do you mean, pregnant?"*

Well, that's cute to us; but let me tell you something: It wasn't cute at all to Joseph. He knew it wasn't his child, and Mary kept saying that it was some miraculous conception. All he knew was that it wasn't his and that his whole world was crumbling, and what he wanted to do was to cut and run. And yet God said to him, "Joseph, don't be afraid. I'm taking care of things." It says there, **"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet."** "Everything is working out according to the plan. It's the same plan I revealed to the prophet so long ago." Well, what prophet was that? It is the prophet Isaiah. What we are calling the treasure map here had been delivered to Isaiah some 700 years before Joseph ever came along. Did you know that this prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 is but one of 333 prophecies in the OT as to the arrival of the treasure of Christmas in Jesus. There are 333 prophecies in the OT that deal with the birth, life, teachings, death and resurrection of the Messiah. The first one goes all the way back to the beginning of the Bible, the book of Genesis. God was saying, "Joseph I'm taking care of things here, and I can take care of you - if you will let me." All that has been happening was being done to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet. This wasn't something that God thought up on the spur of the moment. He had all of this planned, and he was working out his plan. It was God's way of showing us that: He is always working, even when we don't see it...He is always working, even when we don't want it...**God is always working to take care of you.** Our trouble is that we are so busy trying to take care of ourselves that we never notice what God is doing to take care of us.

Do you want to know what I have discovered? I've discovered that it is only when we admit to our inability that we discover God's ability. It is only when we quit trying to take care of everything ourselves that we discover how God is already at work to take care of us. *I heard a story once about the customs of the Black Foot Indians.*

*It seems that in order for a young man to become a brave he had to pass certain tests of bravery. One of those tests was to spend the night in the woods with nothing more than his bow.*

*Now, that may not sound like any big deal to you, but to a young boy who knows what bears and cougars can do to a person, that is not a very encouraging thought.*

*When the boy turned 12, he would be taken to the edge of the woods as night was descending, and told to walk deep into the woods, find a tree and squat down beside it.*

*He was not allowed to return to the camp until the morning light. Sure enough, the young boy would take his bow and begin his frightening trek into the dark woods. Soon, he would find a tree and squat down.*

*Every sound of the forest, every movement of the trees, every leave that rustled screamed at the boy as a sign of imminent danger. There were bears and other animals in the woods that would kill that boy without a second thought. And he knew it. And the only thing greater than his fear was the sound of his heart beating in his chest.*

*Finally, as the dawn of the morning light would come, the boy would stand and turn to return to his people. And that was when he would discover that his father had been standing behind the tree all night long; bow poised and ready; defending the young lad against any danger.*

Do you want to have a Christmas this year like none you have ever had? Then check out the treasure map, follow the clues, and you will find something that can take care of you like nothing else can.

2) The second clue for us this morning is; **look for something that can encourage you like nothing else can.**

Now think about Joseph for a moment. He was a young man definitely in need of some encouragement. As far as he knew, his finance had cheated on him. As far as he knew no matter what he did, he was in deep trouble. If he stuck with Mary, his family would probably suspect him at best and disown him at worst. He was a young man definitely in need of some encouragement. And so God gave him a map with a clue on it. Look at that clue in vs. 22, *"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."* (Mt 1:22-23) This treasure of Christmas isn't just some pot of gold or chest of jewels. This treasure is the God of eternity who has promised that when you discover this treasure, you will find something that can encourage you like nothing else can, because you will discover that God is with you like no one else could be.

In the face of life's questions - and trust me, Joseph had questions - God was saying to Joseph: "I'll be with you." In the face of life's troubles - and again, Joseph had troubles - God was saying, "I will be with you." And Joseph took courage in that treasure. No matter what...no matter where...no matter who...**God will be with you to encourage you.** It's the treasure of Christmas. Have you discovered it yet? Follow the clues on the map. The map to the real treasure of the season. Follow those clues and you are going to find something that can encourage you like nothing else can. So look for it. Look for something that can take care of you like nothing else can; look for something that can encourage you like nothing else can.

3) And then, **look for something that can touch you like nothing else can.**

The map says, *"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son."* (Mt 1:22-23) This treasure of the season was not merely a baby born in manger. This was a baby born to a virgin whose father was none other than God. *I was reading some of my research this week as I studied for this lesson. What I found interesting was the way the virgin birth has been treated over the years. Up until the turn of the 20th century, very few people ever questioned the virgin birth. But in the early decades of the 20th century, the virgin birth became the focal point for those who sought to deny the validity of Christianity. That denial crescendo to the point that in 1961, Redbook Magazine published a article that reported that 56% of all theology students in 8 different seminaries did not believe in the virgin birth. [I would like to have known which seminaries those were!]*

*But people were saying - even people studying for the ministry - that it was scientifically impossible for a virgin to give birth. Therefore, they said, this claim that Jesus was born to a virgin must have all been made up. Consequently, all of the claims of Jesus must have been made up.*

*Set aside for a moment their presupposition that there is no such thing as the supernatural and the faulty conclusions drawn from that presupposition.*

*Set that aside for a moment, and notice that there were people who claimed that Jesus was not who the bible claimed he was because there was no possible way he could have been born of a virgin birth.*

*But then, in the 1980s and 1990s medical science started experimenting with artificial insemination, and suddenly, it's hard to find anyone any more with more than 2 brain cells who does not accept the validity of a virgin birth.*

The vast majority of all people accept the validity of Jesus Christ's virgin birth. It's but one more of the claims about Jesus that have been proven to be true. He really is who the bible claims he is.

When you find this treasure of the season, you are going to find someone who can touch you like nothing else can, because this is God in the flesh we are talking about here.

- ☞ Jesus Christ.
- ☞ Fully God and Fully Man.
- ☞ God in the flesh.

God who has come to not only to take care of you and encourage you, but to touch you like you have never been touched before. No matter who you are! Do you remember the story in the gospel of Mark where a man with leprosy came to Jesus, and said, "*Jesus, if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean.*" Do you remember what Jesus did? He reached out and touched the man, and healed him. (Mk 1:40-42) You realize, don't you, that Jesus didn't have to touch him in order to heal him? He didn't touch the centurion's servant, and yet he healed him. But here was this guy with leprosy, open oozing sores, and Jesus reaches out and touches him to heal him. Why? So that he would know, and so that you would know that it doesn't matter who you are.

- ☞ It doesn't matter where you have been.
- ☞ It doesn't matter how much you have failed.
- ☞ It doesn't matter if you are oozing with the mess of your sins.
- ☞ He will still touch you and hold you and heal you.

All because he loves us! Jesus came in the flesh so that he could touch us. Touch us with his love like we have never been touched before. We live in a world that tells us and shows us that love doesn't really last. Love doesn't really come through. It is only temporary. That's what life teaches us. *Do you remember when you were in Jr. hi school and you had your first love, and there was no doubt in your mind that this was destined for eternity. You would never look at another woman in your lifetime. Are you joking? This is it. She is the one. And it lasted what - a week?* And you were devastated because you were sure that this was true love. But it wasn't true love. Others of you learned that love didn't last when your parents divorced and you were raised without a mom or a dad. Others of you learned when your spouse walked away. And no matter how they explained it, no matter what they said was the reason; you learned one thing: Love is temporary. It is not lasting. It will not last forever. But God says to us in this treasure of Christmas, that's not true. From the very beginning of time, the prophets foretold that this child would come. God said, I have been committed to this from the very beginning. I sent my son for you. I came in the flesh so that I could touch you with my love that lasts forever.

Look for that treasure and you're going to find a love that is so vast that you can't even fathom it, let alone exhaust it. That's why when you follow the map and discover the treasure of the season, you are going to be touched by a love like you have never been touched before. God planned this whole thing so that you would know that he loves you; that he has chosen you.

Now, let me be honest with you. There are a lot of people that I would never have chosen to touch like that. I mean, the fact that Jesus chose to touch me with this love is beyond my ability to comprehend. But when I look around in the church, I look at some people and think, "I would never have chosen him, that's for sure." "And what was God thinking about on the day he choose her? How in the world could he have made that choice?" And yet: **A virgin shall conceive and give birth to a son, so that you will know that God loves you enough to touch you like you have never been touched before - no matter who you are!** His love is that vast. *If you went to the beach and took a bucket and filled with it with water, and asked me, "What's in here?" And I could say, "The Ocean." And I'd be wrong. It might be a little bit of the ocean, but it's not the ocean.*

*You could take every bucket in this county, and in this state, and in the country - take every bucket you want down to the beach and fill them all up - and you still wouldn't even have touched a fraction of the ocean.*

That's how it is with God's love, and I think God is saying to us with this treasure map, this is a plan I've had for a long time. I've been using a lot of people in the process to bring out this glorious treasure of Jesus, so that my love could touch you. Follow the map and you're going to discover a love that is so vast that you can't even fathom it, let alone exhaust it. And folks, that is a treasure worth finding. Jesus came to take care of us; Jesus came to encourage us; Jesus came to touch us. The only question is whether you are willing to follow the map in order to discover that treasure today.

Treasure Hunt  
The Map of the Treasure  
Isaiah 7:14

The Real Treasure of the Season1

[picture of a map]

[picture of where first piece of map is hidden]

The Real Treasure of the Season1

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, 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. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us." (Mt 1:18-23)

The Clues on the Treasure Map:

1) Look for something that can take care of you like nothing else can!

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Are You Willing To Follow The Map?

Treasure Hunt  
The Map of the Treasure  
Isaiah 7:14

The real treasure of the season!

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