

Christmas Unwrapped Part 2

What Is Christmas

Luke 2:8-16

Memory Verses: Galatians 4:4

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

One of our favorite things at Christmas is to open gifts. **Opens gift.** This tradition extends all the way back to when the wisemen gave gifts to Christ. Fun fact; did you know that the wisemen weren't there at the nativity, but arrived two years later when Christ was a small toddler. That's when they gave him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Could you just imagine two year old baby Jesus just ripping up some wrapping paper to get to... frankincense... what's this?

We are in a series called Unwrapping Christmas and our purpose is to get past the external wrapping of what Christmas looks like on the surface to what Christmas really is... to the real present beneath the pretty wrapping paper. Last week we explored when is Christmas. This week we are going to explore what is Christmas. There's a cartoon clip that I don't even have to show you cause you've all seen it at least a dozen times each. It's the clip in a Charlie Brown Christmas where Charlie Brown lifts his hands in the air and screams at the top of his lungs; "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is really all about?" And then his buddy Linus walks to the middle of the stage and recites this passage; **Luke 2:8-16**, and says, "that Charlie Brown is what Christmas is really all about!"

Let me ask you a simple question? Is this really what Christmas is really all about? And before you answer that question, because I know we've seen the **play**, and heard the songs, and read the passage, and have done all that for years and we know the right church answer... but practically, in reality, do we really believe that this is what Christmas is all about?

Because from a carnal, worldly perspective, this is only a fragment of what Christmas is, if a fragment at all. If this story has any part of Christmas in our world today, it may show itself as a small Nativity under the Christmas Tree or a yearly obligatory church service, but it rarely dominates what we consider the Christmas holiday. If Jesus is truly the reason for the season then we've done a horrible job as a culture of conveying it! If we were honest with ourselves we may say that what Christmas is really all about is actually, shopping, or gifts, or parties, or decorations, or vacation, or movies, or the North Pole, or being nice, or D... all of the above! But if we went man on the street and asked 100 people what is the meaning of Christmas is... how many do you think

would answer as Linus and say it's about Jesus? Not many! Why? Because even those of us who are Christians, who know what the "spiritual" answer is, don't really live like we believe Christmas is all about Jesus.

The point is... knowing What Christmas is all about and living accordingly are two different things. **If you know what Christmas is really all about, it should change your life.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to know about Christmas is... **Knowing That Christmas Is A Promise Kept Should Make Us Promise Keepers.** Let's look at **Galatians 4:4**. When the fullness of time had come God kept his promise and sent His Son. What is Christmas? Christmas is God fulfilling the greatest promise ever made.

Look back in **Genesis 3:15** where God promises us that the seed of woman will one day crush the head of the serpent. Or **Genesis 12:3** where God promises that all families of the earth will be blessed through Abraham's son. What about **Genesis 22:8** where God promises that he will provide the sacrificial lamb. Or **2 Samuel 7:16** where God promises that he will establish the true king of Israel and the heir of David on the throne forever. Lastly, look at **Jeremiah 31:31** where God promises that he will make a new Covenant with mankind and they will know him and he will forgive their sin and remember it no more. The people knew for thousands of years that all of these promises would one day be fulfilled in the messiah. They waited and waited wondering if God would ever follow through. Christmas is all about the day that God kept that promise!

Shouldn't we celebrate the fact that God kept the greatest promise ever made? And, shouldn't we celebrate God's kept promise by making Christmas a time where we keep our promises to God and to one another? Therefore we put away all falsehoods and pretense. We put away all lies and hypocrisy, and we recommit to previous commitments. Especially our commitments to God.

And, shouldn't we live our lives like this all the time because of Christmas? Shouldn't our whole lives be defined by the fact that we hold true to the promises we've made, because God held true to his promise. Of course. That's what it means to be a Christian who knows the true meaning of Christmas. Listen... **those of us who have committed our lives to Christ, Christmas is a reminder to live our whole lives for Him. If you know what Christmas is really all about, it should change your life.**

Secondly, we need to see that... **Knowing That Christmas Is About God Made Flesh Should Make Us Want To Trade Our Flesh For More of God.** Let's look again at **Galatians 4:4**. It says, "when the time came, God sent his son in the flesh." **John 1:14** says that the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Something we need to get clear here is that the incarnation isn't some add on or bonus info. Don't you just love Christmas; the parties, presents, lights, elves in tights, oh and that whole God became man thing... that's pretty cool too huh? No, the incarnation is what it's all about. The God of the universe, holy, holy, holy, robed in light, ruler of the world, ancient of days, comes down to earth in the form of a human child. How dare we take a holiday that celebrates God becoming one of us and reduce it to shopping trips, coca cola polar bears, Maria Carrey, and peppermint candy canes or dozens of other crazy things we designate as Christmasy. **God became flesh to be like us, sympathize with us, and relate to us, so that we could be reconciled to him.**

In response to him coming to us, we must come to him, accept him, and live for him. Christmas is about the fact that God made a way for us to be reconciled to him by becoming a human, so be reconciled! Repent of your sin, and be filled with God. **If you know what Christmas is really all about, it should change your life.**

Lastly, we must see that ... **Knowing That Jesus Was Born To Die Should Turn Our Attention On Dying To Our Sin & Being Born Again.** In asking what is Christmas, we should know what the word Christmas means. The term Christmas was first coined in 1038. Christ means well... Christ, and Mass means one of two things...either death or mission. In catholicism, mass is the remembrance of Christ through the Eucharist or what we know as Communion. Of course in communion we remember Christ's death. So, while Christmas is usually a celebration of Jesus' birth, the word Christmas reminds us that Christ was born to die, and that his mission was to die for the sins of all mankind.

Looking at **Galatians 4:4** one more time we see that in the fullness of time God sent his son to die for the sins of the world. **Isaiah 9:6** tells us that a son is given and the government shall be on his shoulders, in other words the cross shall be on his shoulders. He was born to die.

The celebration of Christmas should always draw us back to the sacrifice of Christ for our sins. The only correct response to Christmas is to repent of our sins and be born again in Christ. This is why Christmas is a time of selflessness. It's not about us, it's about Him, and it's about sharing Him with others. It's a time of repentance and renewal. **If you know what Christmas is really all about, it should change your life.**

Application

The wrapping paper of Christmas looks like a lot of things; shopping, parties, television specials, music, movies, giving gifts, family reunions, egg nog, mistletoe, carols, elf on the shelf, and on and on... but that's not the real gift! The present under the wrapping paper is way more

important and substantial! Christmas is about the fact that God kept his promise, sent his Son Jesus to earth as a man, to die for our sins and give us eternal life. If we focus on the wrapping paper we may become more selfish, more stressed, more worldly... but when we focus on the actual gift of Christmas, the gift of Jesus Christ given for the sins of all mankind, it transforms your life. It helps us keep our promises, it helps us trade our carnal life in for a life of true godliness, and it helps us recognize that we need salvation... we need to be born again. This morning... what is Christmas? **Christmas is God with us, God for us, God born to die for our sins!** Christmas is one of the greatest miracles the world has ever known and it should change who we are! **If you know what Christmas is really all about, it should change your life.**

Conclusion

Christmas is about a night when a virgin favored by God gave birth to the son of God knowing that in due time he would give his life for the sins of the world! This is why the nativity matters... this is what Christmas means. Yes, Charlie Brown... this is what Christmas is really all about!