

What's So Special About Christmas?

A Christmas Eve Message

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Are you ready for Christmas? All the kids say “YES!” All the parents say “NO!” There’s a story about a young boy who wanted a watch for Christmas. He kept bugging his father, telling him over and over that he wanted a watch for Christmas. Finally his father said, “If you mention it one more time, you’re not getting it!” That night around the dinner table the father said, “Let’s share our favorite Scripture verse with each other for our family devotional.” When it came to the boy’s turn to share, he said, “My favorite verse is Mark 13:17, and then he read, ‘I say to you what I’ve already said, Watch, for the time is near.’”

I bet there are some of you who still have cookies to bake, food to prepare and presents to wrap yet. Time is running out. Christmas Day is just hours away when all the stores will be closed and everything will be shut down for one whole day. Offices will close. Factories will close. There won’t be a newspaper printed and not mail will be delivered. The roads will be empty. All around the world Christmas will be celebrated.

What’s so special about Christmas? What difference does it make? Why does a baby born 2000 years ago bring the whole world to a halt? The reason is because Jesus was no ordinary baby. The Bible says God came down to earth. That’s bigger news than the day man landed on the moon. God landed on earth and entered our world. He split history in two. All of recorded history is either A. D. or B. C., before the birth of Christ or after the birth of Christ. Every time we refer to what day it is, we use the birth of Christ as our reference point. Today is December 24, 2010, that’s 2010 years since the birth of Christ.

What’s so amazing about Christmas is the way God entered the world. God chose to come as a helpless little baby. He came just like every person in this room – as a baby. But He was no ordinary baby.

An angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds and proclaimed, “*I bring you good news...a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.*” – Luke 2:10-11 Jesus came into this world to be our Savior. He came into the world to save us from our sins. He came to make the pure and perfect sacrifice for our sins. He went from the cradle to the cross so that He could demonstrate God’s love to us.

What difference does it make that Jesus came into the world? It makes all the difference when we understand what He did for us. What He did makes three things possible in your life. Because Jesus came into the world, you can have your **past life forgiven**, your **present life managed**, and your **future**

life guaranteed. His coming truly does impact your whole life – past, present and future. Let’s look at each one of these individually.

First, because God entered into our world in human flesh, YOUR PAST CAN BE FORGIVEN. The Bible says, *“All of us have sinned yet now God declares us ‘not guilty’ of offending him if we trust in Christ who freely takes away our sin.”* –Romans 3:23-24 That’s good news! We can be forgiven for whatever sinful thing we’ve done *if we trust in Christ and what He has done for us.* No one is without sin. We have all failed to be what God created us to be – image bearers of his holy character. Sometimes we think for highly of ourselves than we ought, like the little boy wrote a letter to Santa. He wrote, **“Dear Santa, there are three little boys who live at our house. There’s Jeffrey. He’s two. There’s David. He’s four. There’s Norman. He’s seven. Jeffrey is good some of the time. David is good most of the time. Norman is good all of the time. Please don’t forget this when you bring the presents. Love, Norman.”** The reality is - no one is good all the time. We all have shortcomings and regrets. We all struggle with guilt, and shame for things we have done or left undone.

All this robs us of our happiness. It can lead to depression. It can make us physically and emotionally sick. Unresolved guilt can do all kinds of things to us as it eats away at us. People do all kinds of things to try to relieve the symptoms of sin and guilt. But there’s only one solution and that’s forgiveness. The good news is God wants to forgive us. He wants to set us free from sin and guilt.

There are some things about God’s forgiveness that are well worth noting. **First, God’s forgiveness is immediate.** He doesn’t make you wait. When you ask Him to forgive you He never says, “I’m not ready to forgive you.” He has no desire to see you suffer under the weight of your sin and guilt. His forgiveness is immediate – the moment you sincerely ask him to forgive you for the things you have done that were wrong.

Second, God’s forgiveness is totally undeserved. You can’t earn it. You can’t buy it. You can’t manipulate God into giving it to you by pleading or begging or promising Him anything. It’s totally undeserved.

Third, God’s forgiveness is complete. When we confess our sins to God and hand them over to Him, they are put to death with Christ on the cross and remembered no more. He forgets the sins we confess. He completely wipes them out of His mind and we should too.

Think of it this way, when God forgives us, He takes our sins and He throws them into the deepest part of the ocean and then He puts up a ‘NO FISHING’ sign. He doesn’t want us to fish them out and relive them. One of the worse things we can do to another person is drag up something from the past that they’ve asked us to forgive. We know that’s wrong. It destroys a person’s self-esteem. It will

destroy you too if you keep dragging up sins from your past, stirring up new guilt. Satan wants you to do that because He wants to destroy your faith and your witness in this world. One of the names in the Bible for Satan is the Accuser. He wants you to remember your sins. But God says, **“My forgiveness is immediate. My forgiveness is totally undeserved and my forgiveness is complete.”** God promises us, ***“If anyone is in Christ, he becomes a new person altogether. The past is finished and gone. Everything becomes fresh and new.”*** – 2nd Cor. 5:17

Christmas doesn't just make a difference concerning your past life. It makes a difference concerning your present life, as well.

SECOND, because Christ entered into our world in human flesh, YOUR PRESENT PROBLEMS CAN BE MANAGED. With Christ's help you can manage the challenges and difficulties that come your way. With Christ's presence in your life, you can manage the stress and strain of everyday living. That's not always easy, is it? Life can be so hard. Sometimes we lose our way. Sometimes we don't think we can take one more thing.

I've got good news for you. Because Jesus came into the world, you have access to the power you need to manage your life. He can renew you and strengthen you for the challenges of each day. He can send the Holy Spirit to help you. Through the Holy Spirit, the very presence of Christ is with you, to give you strength to live your life and manage the challenges of everyday living.

Philippians 4:13 says, ***“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*** No one knows what tomorrow will bring, what challenges we will have to face. Because Jesus came into the world, we can face any challenge set before us with the confident assurance that He will be with us. When you give your life to the Lord, surrendering all that you are to him, he promises to take care of you and help you manage your life. The Bible says, ***“God gave us his own Son – can we not trust such a God to give us...everything else that we need?”*** --Romans 8:32

Jesus forgives your past and enables you to manage your present. But that's not all. **THIRD, because Christ came into our world in human flesh, YOUR FUTURE CAN BE GUARANTEED.** The Bible says that Jesus ***“shared in our humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death— that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”*** – Hebrews 2:14-15 The fear of death is a universal problem. It doesn't matter if you're rich or poor, well-educated or illiterate, good looking or not so good looking, tall or short, big or small, white or black, every single person must face death. It's an inevitable fact of life that we are all going to die. The mortality rate in America is the same anywhere else – 100%. Given that fact, it seems rather foolish to go through life unprepared for something that's so inevitable. It just doesn't

make sense to neglect preparing for something so certain. The Bible says, “*It is appointed unto man once to die.*” --Hebrews 9:27 That’s one appointment you will not be late for.

Nobody likes to talk about death. Some of you are nervous just hearing me talking about it. Why is that? What are we so afraid of? - Very simple: there’s a lot we don’t know about death. Thanks to modern medicine and organizations like Hospice, we know our dying can be fairly well managed, but what happens after death is a mystery. But it’s not a complete mystery. Jesus came at Christmas to enter our human condition as a flesh and blood human being, to show us that we don’t need to fear death. He demonstrated to us what we have to look forward to – the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. If you’ve given your life to Christ and through faith trust in what He has accomplished for you on the cross, then your future is guaranteed. The Bible says, “*The GIFT of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” –Romans 6:23

What’s so special about Christmas? God entered our world by taking on human flesh to offer you some very special gifts:

First, He offers you the gift of forgiveness, so that you can be free from shame and guilt.

Second, He offers you the gift of strength, so that you can manage our lives.

Third, he offers you the gift of eternal life, and guarantees your future.

There are several things to notice about these gifts. These gifts are **personal**. They aren’t transferable to another person. They’re given to you the moment you put your faith in Christ. You must have faith in order to receive these gifts. The great Reformer, Martin Luther said, “**No one can do your believing for you.**” Not your parents, not your spouse, not your pastor. You must do your own believing.

Another thing to notice about these gifts is they are **practical**. They’re exactly what you need to cover your past, sustain you in the present and guarantee your future.

Another thing to notice about these gifts is they are **priceless**. You can’t buy them anywhere. They are gifts to you when you believe. They are free to us, but they were not free to Christ. He purchased them for us upon the cross and freely offers them to all who believe.