

## Christmas Is Here!

Text: Matthew 1:18-21

I had been booked for several months to preach for a fellow alumnus of the college we attended who was pastoring in Sacramento, California. When I got off the plane, his opening remark was, "I'm really sorry to see you." My immediate thought was, "Have I made a mistake coming here?" Then he quickly followed up, "You see, I have been looking forward to your coming for so long, now that you're here, it also means the meeting will soon be over."

There are some of you thinking the same thing, "Yay! Christmas is here – but that means, it will soon be gone." If your vision of Christmas is Santa Claus, Grinches, Charlie Brown, the Polar Express, chestnuts roasting on an open fire, sleigh rides (for those in cooler climates) or being home for Christmas, if only in your dreams, then yes, it will soon be over. For the Christian, Christmas is the celebration of our Lord and Savior's birth. There was the original Christmas when Christ was born. For many, that was history and now the celebration is seasonal. But for the Christian, the celebration never ends. Therefore,

### I. CHRIST'S BIRTH MEANS CHRISTMAS IS NEVER OVER.

The angel and the accompanying Heavenly Host told the shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2: 14). In other words, "Christmas is here!" We grasp three aspects from the angelic announcement:

#### A. Christ's birth brings God's glory to the earth!

"Glory" is spoken of in the highest. In other words, the Highest and most Holy God has come from His high and holy place to Earth's low and fallen place. The glory of God is a little difficult to explain. One of the most simple, yet profound definitions of the glory of God is: "the display of God." We see the display of God in creation. Psalm 19:1: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork." Psalm 97:6: "The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory." Luke 12:27: "Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

We see the display of God in the consecrated Christian's life. Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

We see the most magnificent display of God in the face of Christ Himself. When Jesus was just over a week old, Simeon spoke these words when he saw Christ: "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:30-32). II Corinthians 4:6: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

#### B. Christ's birth brings peace.

Ephesians 2:14a: "For He is our peace...."

John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

C. Christ's birth brings good will toward men.

The Pharisees had a will for men: submit to their interpretation of the law. Anything outside their worldview was unacceptable. Rome had a will for man: obey Rome, no questions asked. Religious will and governmental will outside of Christ will always lead to bondage.

God has a will; His will is good and it is good for you. John 6:40: "And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." God's will is good from here to the hereafter!

Christmas is here! All are invited!

## II. CHRIST'S BIRTH WAS INAUSPICIOUS.

Philippians 2:8: "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Zechariah 9:9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." These two verses speak of Christ's purpose in coming to earth. And we're going to talk about that later in the message, but right now I want to emphasize, two phrases from Philippians and Zachariah, i.e., "...He humbled Himself..." "...Thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." We don't know for sure, but we often imagine Mary taking the long trip from the north of Israel to the southern part, riding on a donkey. If that were the case, our Lord came into the earth on a donkey and rode out on a donkey.

Christ did not come to a castle, lest you think only those born of royalty could attain presence with our King. Christ did not come with a legion of war angels, lest we interpret audience with our King to be instigated by marshal law from a distant God, rather than an invitation to be part of His family. Christ did not come to a cathedral, lest we think rituals, smells, bells and fear of man would be a requirement to have access to our King. The King of Kings came humbly. A precious little baby, wrapped in not only swaddling clothes, but in love!

Christmas is here! All are invited!

## III. CHRIST'S BIRTH WAS THE ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF GOD'S GRACE.

II Corinthians 8:9: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." One of the most beautiful truths about Christ's coming to earth was not that the meek and lowly Jesus died in poverty for us. The most wonderful thing about His coming is that He was rich and for our sakes He became poor for us in order to save us. This is the unmerited favor of God defined!

Christmas is here! All are invited!

#### IV. CHRIST'S BIRTH WAS THE BEGINNING OF HIS JOURNEY THAT LED TO THE CROSS.

Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, mankind has been in trouble. Every person born since Adam and Eve has sinned by nature and sinned by choice (Romans 5:12; Romans 3:10, 23). Through our natural birth we are born alienated from God (Ephesians 4:18). It requires a second birth to bring us into fellowship with God and Heaven (John 3:3-16). And the securing of our second birth required Christ's vicarious, atoning death. What kept our King on the cross? Christ redeeming love kept Him there!

Christmas is here! All are invited!

#### V. CHRIST'S BIRTH WAS THE FIRST GIFT OF CHRISTMAS.

In the fictional story of the Polar Express, much was made of the first gift of Christmas. In understanding the true meaning of Christmas, the first gift of Christmas was Christ Himself. It has been estimated that the wise men illustrated this in their gifts. Matthew 2:11: "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

A. Gold represents Jesus' Deity (Exodus 25:10, 11).

B. Frankincense represents prayers to the only Worthy Lord and Savior (Exodus 30:1, 8; Revelation 8:4).

C. Myrrh represents our Lord's reason for coming: The Gospel (John 19:39).

Christmas is here! All are invited!

#### VI. CHRIST'S BIRTH MEANS GIFT EXCHANGE.

II Corinthians 9:15: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Our response should therefore be found in the words of Romans 12:1a, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God...."

"What can I give Him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb, If I were a wise man I would do my part,— Yet what I can I give Him, give my heart" (Christina Rossetti).

Christmas is here! All are invited!

#### VII. CHRIST'S BIRTH BRINGS JOY!

John 15:11: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Christmas is here! All are invited!

-Pastor Pope-