

## “Christmas—a Moment Like No Other”

Christmas Service 2023

December 17, 2023

**INTRO** ...Welcome to Christmas 2023

...No matter what Christmas means to you—Safe to Say it Means SOMETHING!

...Nothing Tops—**Christmas Observance of 1914** —“The Great Christmas TRUCE

...**What is it about Christmas—that makes it a “Moment Like No Other”?**

### Christmas is...

#### (1) An Actual Event in Human History!

“Matthew does not begin his story of Jesus’ birth by saying, ‘Once upon a time.’ That is the way fairy tales and legends and myths and Star Wars begin. ...But that is not the kind of account Matthew is giving us. He says, ‘This is the genealogy of Jesus Christ.’ That means he is grounding what Jesus Christ is and does in history. Jesus is not a metaphor. He is real. This all happened.” **Tim Keller**, “Hidden Christmas”, p. 21

#### (2) a “MOMENT in TIME”—that touches every other moment in History!

...Christmas doesn’t just touch JOSEPH/MARY ...Shepherds & Wisemen

**Matt Looks back through GENEALOGY**

**Luke Looks Forward**

**Gal 4:4** *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman...*

**Eph 1:9-10** *“...making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ<sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time...*

**Gal 4:4-7** *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,<sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.<sup>6</sup> And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”<sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.*

**Eph 1:9-11** *“...making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ<sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.<sup>11</sup> In him we have obtained an inheritance...”*

“History matters. What happens makes a difference. When I, at some point in time, am confronted with the mystery that the eternal God became human in the fullness of time, “then the moment in time must have such decisive significance that for no moment will I be able to forget it, neither in time nor in eternity, because the eternal, previously nonexistent, came into existence in that moment.” **James K.A. Smith**, “How to Inhabit Time” p. 14

**O HOLY NIGHT** ...One of the “Christmas Anthems” is titled: “**O Holy Night**” ... Holy means “separate ...unique ... set apart”

“A moment such as this is unique,” Kierkegaard continues. “To be sure, it is short and temporal, as the moment is; it is passing, as the moment is, past, as the moment is in the next moment, and yet it is decisive, and yet it is filled with the eternal. A moment such as this must have a special name. Let us call it: the fullness of time.”<sup>9</sup> The paradigm of this intersection of time and eternity is the incarnation of God in Christ—the moment that is the fulcrum of human history. The intersection of time and eternity makes a difference for both.” **James K.A. Smith**, “How to Inhabit Time” p. 14

**(3) So... What is Happening in this “Moment Like No Other Moment” ...**

**O Holy Night Lyrics - 1843**

*O holy night! The stars are brightly shining,  
It is the night of our dear Saviour's birth.  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,*

(1) A Moment when a SAVIOR Arrives! ...to “get Christmas” you must “get” the word “SAVIOR”

***“It is the night of Our dear SAVIOR’s Birth!***

A “SAVIOR” implies that there’s Something Man Needs to be SAVED FROM! ...Christmas Touches EVERYONE—because it Touches a Problem we ALL SHARE!

(2) A Moment in History That Overcomes Our Shared Problem!

***“Long lay the world, in sin and error pining”***

“SIN” = a never before known— “VIRAL-Like Condition”

“pining” = suffering with a longing or yearning for someone or something:

***...Finally—the Fullness of Time ...a CURE dawns in our darkness!***

“One of the first indications of the Christmas season is the appearance of lights. Lights on trees, candles in windows, radiance everywhere. (p. 5) ...How is the world “dark”? In the Bible the word “darkness” refers to both evil and ignorance. It means first that the world is filled with evil and untold suffering. Look at what was happening at the time of the birth of Jesus—violence, injustice, abuse of power, homelessness, refugees fleeing oppression, families ripped apart, and bottomless grief. Sounds exactly like today.” **Tim Keller**, “Hidden Christmas”, p. 5-6

**O Holy Night - 1843**

*Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.  
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.*

***“Till HE appeared, and the soul felt its worth”***

SIN Depletes Our Souls—the way CANCER Depletes Our Bodies! ...It strips us of the Dignity of How God Made us—and replaces that with feelings of SHAME ...FAILURE ...WORTHLESSNESS!

(3) A New Day Dawns ...**Personally!!**

**O Holy Night** - 1843

*A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.  
...Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!*

**?? ...Can THAT really happen for people? ...Can this "Fullness of Time Moment" find the "Painful, Pining Moments" of our Lives?**

**...This is a Moment that Calls for a RESPONSE!** —a Significant, Meaningful, Deep Response!

"if Jesus Christ is really Mighty God and Everlasting Father, you can't just like him. In the Bible the people who actually saw and heard Jesus never reacted indifferently or even mildly. Once they realized what he was claiming about himself, either they were scared of him or furious with him or they knelt down before him and worshipped him. But nobody simply liked him. Nobody said, "He is so inspiring. He makes me want to live a better life." If the baby born at Christmas is the Mighty God, then you must serve him completely." **Tim Keller**, "Hidden Christmas", p. 8