



# Christmas Blessings

Dear King of Kings Family,

***On behalf of your church staff, I want to wish you a blessed Christmas!  
We hope this Advent season has prepared you well to celebrate  
the birth of our LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ.***

It's hard to believe that this year marks my and Erin's fifth Christmas in Kansas City. Where has the time gone? What is it they say? "The days crawl, but the years fly by." This is most certainly true. We have truly cherished these few short years together with our King of Kings family, and we look forward to many more.

Christmas is my favorite time of year. As a pastor, I am always listening to how people talk about Christmas. I do this not to be critical, but simply because I'm curious. What is Christmas about? What is important this time of year? Usually, I hear things like, "Christmas is the season of giving," or "Christmas is about spending time with family." As Christians, we know that Christmas is the birth of Jesus Christ—everything else is secondary.

But in recent years, I've come to the conclusion that "the season of giving" and "spending time with family" have a place in the discussion—at least when they are rightly understood. I'd like to explain by sharing two personal stories.

In 2016, Erin and I were in New Jersey for my vicarage. On Thanksgiving night, we went and saw a movie. When we came out of the theatre, the mall was busy with early Black Friday shoppers. Christmas decorations were already in place. Erin begged me to shop for a while, so I told her to go crazy while I sat on a bench and people-watched and ate gummy bears. Across from me was the top of a Christmas tree that stood two stories (two mall stories!) tall. Eventually a Muslim woman and her daughter passed by. The little girl ran over to the railing and scanned the tree, starting with the silver star at the top and looking all the way down to the first floor, marveling at its incredible size and its beautiful decorations. The mother walked over, surveyed the tree, took her daughter by the wrist, and, leading her away, said, "No, that is not for us." I was heartbroken.

*Why? Because it is. The good news of Christmas is that Jesus is born for us.*

Isaiah foretold this good news when he shared God's promise: "For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given..." (Isaiah 9:6). And the angels outside Bethlehem proclaimed to the shepherds: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord," (Luke 2:11). And to the one who says Christmas is not for them, God through his angel says this: "...behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people," (Luke 2:10).

So Christmas is the season of giving: *God so loved the world that he gave his only Son to be our Lord and our Savior from sin and death (John 3:16)*. And Christmas is about spending time with the family of God: *For to us a Son is given, and through that Son we are redeemed and granted adoption as children of God (Galatians 4:5)*.

That brings me to the second moment. In 2018, my first Christmas here, I attended Martin Luther Academy's Christmas program. I was spending time with the family of God. One of the final songs was "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"—a simple yet beautiful hymn I had heard and sung many times. But this time hearing it was different. The older students sang dutifully; the younger students (as they tend to do) yell-sang enthusiastically. It was lovely and cute and funny until the very last line: "Christ the Child was born for you! Christ the Child was born for you!"

As a pastor, I am rarely on the receiving end of this kind of good news sharing. So when a chorus of children told me "Christ the Child was born for you," I heard those good tidings of great joy with new ears and happy tears. I realized how important it is for all of us to continue hearing and sharing that Christmas message with one another.

I am blessed to serve as a pastor, because I get to share the good news that Jesus is for you. And I am blessed to serve a congregation like King of Kings, because when I spend time with my church family here, I hear the good news that Jesus is for me. It is a gift I continue to receive.

*Dear friends, we hope that whatever your plans are for Christmastime, you are able to share the good news of Jesus in some way. Tell someone for the first time or remind someone for the hundredth time. Christmas is the season of giving, so give them that precious gift. And Christmas is about spending time with the family of God. So we hope that you do spend time with your church family, hearing and sharing together this great good news: "Christ the Child is born for you! Christ the Child is born for you!"*

## *Christmas Blessings*

King of Kings Pastors and staff

