

Christmas 2015 Devotional

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Thesis: Christmas is given to us as a regular remembrance of the gift of Christ, and ultimately His death to save us from the judgement of our sin. God has given us the responsibility to teach this to the generations after us.

Every year on the day after Thanksgiving, on Black Friday, not only is it the biggest shopping day of the year, but the TV networks also begin showing all of the season classics, like “Miracle on 34th Street”, “It’s A Wonderful Life”, “Frosty The Snowman”, and of course Uncle Danny’s favorite, “Rudolph”. In one of the Charlie Brown Christmas shows, Charlie Brown’s little sister, Sally, writes that the meaning of Christmas is “getting all you can get while the getting is good”, and I think my children would agree to that. It’s funny because that’s exactly where little minds tend to go once they see what happens at Christmas. For an older perspective, in the movie “Christmas Vacation”, Clark Griswold describes Christmas as “meaning something different to everyone” when he mistakenly identifies the Christmas Star, which is really the light from the nearby sewage treatment plant. Even though most people in our culture would agree with that statement without a second thought, we know that Clark was wrong once again, and that Christmas does have a single, timeless and unique meaning. Unfortunately, most of these seasonal classics, although they are entertaining, they get it wrong and are completely empty of the true meaning of Christmas. I’m glad we have God’s Word to kind of wash our minds during this time.

The scripture I’d like to read this morning comes from Exodus 13, just after the final plague or judgement on the land of Egypt with the killing of the firstborns that finally drove Pharaoh to release the Israelite captives, but before they actually made the journey. These commands come to God’s people as they prepared to leave:

3 Moses said to the people, “Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery; for by a powerful hand the Lord brought you out from this place.

14 And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is this?’ then you shall say to him, ‘With a powerful hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery.

This morning, we gather together as a family to celebrate Christmas, and I would like to remember Christmas Day, the true meaning and purpose of Christmas, that it is a day given to us as a regular remembrance of the gift of Christ, and ultimately a remembrance of His death to save us from the judgement of our sin. And while Hollywood may not value these truths, they are so important to God that He has given us all the responsibility to teach these things to the generations after us. Therefore, the three points I’d like to consider this morning are:

1. The purpose of Christmas
2. The purpose of Christ
3. The purpose of Christians

1. The purpose of Christmas: A regular remembrance of the gift of Christ

First, I'd like us to consider the purpose of Christmas, which is a regular remembrance of the gift of Christ. This time of year, little children's' minds may get consumed by the thought of new toys, and adults may get swept up in the business of the season, and we might say to ourselves, "yeah, I know the story of Christ and why we celebrate Christmas, now let's get on with the celebrating part!" But let's take a moment to consider the wonder and amazement of the birth of Christ. The first amazing aspect is what Christ gave up to come onto this earth. The Bible tells us that He was in the beginning with God and that everything was made through Him. It talks of Christ being throned in glory, seated at the right hand of God in heaven with the angels around Him singing His praises forever. He holds all power and all of heaven is focused on praising and glorifying Him. We see that in how the angels heralded His coming on earth. Yet He gave all of that up to share in our human nature. The second amazing aspect of the birth of Christ is the human nature and earthly surroundings that He took up. Not only did He give up His place of sovereign rule and almighty power, but he also took the form of a helpless, completely dependent infant. Not only did He leave the praises and worship of heaven, but He came into a harsh world, filled with the very people that owe their being to Him, and yet would ultimately torture and kill Him. It is absolutely amazing that Christ, being very-God, would take such an infinite stoop as He did when He was born. The purpose of Christmas is that we might have a regular remembrance of the amazing gift that Christ was.

2. The purpose of Christ: To save us from the judgement of our sin

Next, I'd like us to consider the purpose of Christ. Why do we call Christ a gift? Why did He leave His place of glory to come into this harsh world as a vulnerable baby? He did so for 3 reasons: (1) to identify with us in our human nature, (2) to live a perfectly obedient and righteous life, and (3) ultimately to save us from the consequences of our sins. By casting off His heavenly privilege and taking up our nature, Christ was able to identify with every aspect of our lives. He experienced the love and joy of family and friends, but also rejection, physical pain, suffering and death by the hands of men. There is nothing that we experience that Christ cannot identify with. Because Christ can identify with every part of our lives, He was also faced with every temptation, and yet He remained sinless. In fact, Christ is the only one who has been perfectly submissive and obedient to the Father, and therefore, Christ is the only one who doesn't deserve punishment for sin, unlike us. As wonderful as it was to have God among men, no one has ever been saved by a birth alone. The Israelites had to regularly give animal sacrifices to cover their sins, but that was only temporary. Instead, we needed a savior, a perfect sacrifice to save us from the penalty of our sins, and that was the purpose of Christ. In the verses I read earlier, the Israelites were commanded to regularly remember the Lord's rescue, and Christmas is a perfect time for us to remember ours. While we celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas, we also need to remember why Christ came, which was to rescue us from our sins.

3. The purpose of Christians: To teach Christ to the generations after us

Finally, I would like us to consider the purpose of Christians, those called by the name of Christ, which is to teach Christ to those around us, and especially the generations that come after us. It has been said that Christianity is but one generation away from extinction, whether it be for a nation, a church or a family. You might say that we are seeing evidence of that in our own country, but I am convinced that the reason for the closeness of love and unity in our own family is because of our love and commitment to Christ and the Gospel message. As Christ ascended into heaven after His bodily resurrection, He charged his followers to spread the Gospel, making disciples of all nations. However, as we seek to fulfill that responsibility, we would be negligent

if we failed to consistently teach Christ to those closest to us. Christ's great commission assumes a primary responsibility to teach Christ to our family and especially our children, just as the Israelites were commanded to do in Exodus 13. Our grandparents were faithful to this calling, as were our parents, and now it is our responsibility. Our family is growing and changing. Mom, Uncle David, Aunt Wanda, Uncle Danny & Aunt Michele: You are now the patriarchs and matriarchs, the leaders of our family. Brian, Ginger, John, Tonya, Troy, Daniel: We are now in the roles of our parents from our childhood memories, and responsible for instructing the following generations of the Truths of God, as our parents did. Children and grandchildren: Pay attention to the Biblical teachings of your parents, it is because they love and cherish you, not only a fulfillment of their duty, and it is a rare gift in this age where God is rejected more and more.