

THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS

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Jesus Is The Heart of Christmas

Matthew 1:18-25 // John 3:16

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. .

~ John 3:16 ~

The Christmas season can only be fully embraced when we realize that its heart is found in the incarnation of God. God so loved His creation that He went to great lengths to rescue it by sending His son in the flesh to suffer and die. The story of God's love begins in a cradle but ends on a cross.

Think: God sent Jesus to earth, knowing it would cost Him His life. He made the sacrifice for us.

Feel: God sees me as worthy of the sacrifice of His son.

Do: Receive the gift of salvation by trusting in the love of God demonstrated in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

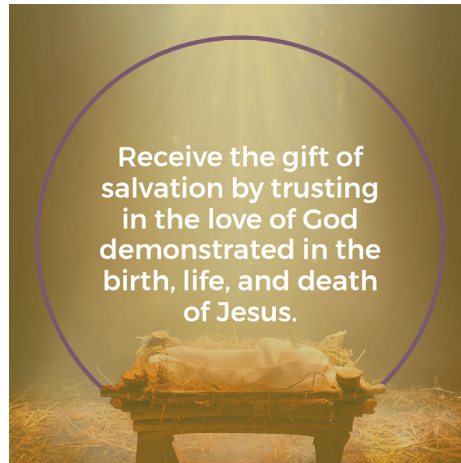
Merry Christmas, Church Family. The time has finally come; it is Christmas Eve. Today, we join a long line of Christ-followers who have, for centuries, remembered the arrival of God through the birth of His son, Jesus. Some of us need to be reminded of the wonder of this night and the hope, peace, joy, and love that it ushers into our busy, hectic, distracted, and chaotic lives. Jesus is the heart of Christmas. It is all about Him, and it is all for Him. To fully embrace Christmas, we turn our attention toward Him.

For some, Christmas Eve brings memories of family gatherings at home. Home was a place to belong. It was a place where you knew that no matter what was going on in your life or what you brought in with you, you were loved. There was no pressure to be anything. You could just exist. You were home for Christmas.

But some did not have that kind of Christmas experience. Maybe for you, being home for Christmas was not

accompanied by warm feelings and happy memories. Maybe the idea of being home for Christmas actually brought with it a lot of pain and anxiety. Home did not feel like a place where you belonged but where you felt like you did not fit.

Both experiences are valid. And both experiences teach us something about the tremendous joy of celebrating Jesus's birth and God's overwhelming love



POINT #1 – THE HEART OF GOD IS REVEALED THROUGH THE ARRIVAL OF JESUS

We all long to feel like we belong—like we are loved just as we are—like everything is as it should be. However, our longing meets the reality of the world we live in. All around us is brokenness, and many of us feel like we are alone. There is a reason why we often feel like we don't quite fit. There is a reason why it seems like there is a void within. It is because this world is not our home. We were made for something more.

God's heart is for us to awaken to this fact.

The Christmas story appears at the beginning of the Gospel accounts in the New Testament. Each one has a slightly different focus and bent, but the book of Matthew is very intent on revealing Jesus as the long-awaited fulfillment of God's heart and desire for His creation.

Read Matthew 1: 18-25. It took an angel speaking to Joseph in a dream to convince him that Mary's pregnancy was not a reason to call off their wedding. Rather, Mary's pregnancy was divine and would change the world forever. The author tells us two very important pieces of information in this passage that reveal the

heart of God for us and the heart of Christmas for the world.

1. **The arrival of Jesus was to save people from their sins.**

The world makes Christmas about so many other things, but its true meaning falls squarely on God's dealing with our greatest limiting factor. Sin is any way that we miss the intention God had for the world when He created it. Greed, gossip, unfaithfulness, hatred, racism, etc. all fall short of the glory of God. All of us have been subject to sin's evil influence and have felt the effects of sin's rule and reign. God's heart of compassion moved Him to send Jesus as the way of rescue for the world.

2. **The arrival of Jesus was so God could be with us.** Jesus was given the name Immanuel, which means God with us. This was a revolutionary thought at the time of Christ's birth. Every culture surrounding Bethlehem saw their gods as angry deities who punished and corrected their subjects from afar. But this God so loved His broken creation that He wanted to come near. He became one of us, with flesh and blood, to mourn when we mourn, hurt when we hurt, and weep when we weep. God identifies with us so that we are allowed to identify with Him.

Discussion Question:

- ✝ What is your favorite part of Christmas with your family/friends?

God sent us a Savior. A savior eliminates any barrier between us and God. A savior welcomes us into a safe place alongside a God who loves us.

This love of God is spoken of in a passage that is somewhat unconventional for a Christmas narrative. The book of John gives us a new perspective on what took place in Bethlehem on that Christmas night.

Read John 3:16. Because of God's great love for us, He sent Jesus; but often we forget, Jesus agreed to come. God sent Him, but Jesus came. When Jesus came, He so clearly lived with an unwavering commitment to His purpose. In other places, He says himself that He came to "seek and save the lost."

POINT #2 – JESUS LEFT HIS HOME TO SHOW US THE WAY HOME

Jesus gave up the splendors of heaven to walk in the brokenness of earth. Jesus laid aside His divinity to put on humanity. He did it all for one reason and that was to make a way for us to return home to God.

Far too many of us live without direction, carelessly making decisions that put us in danger and keep us far from God. Christmas is God's way of pointing us back to where we belong. Christmas is God's way of leading us by His grace to our eternal family. We don't have to live lost and broken lives because God's great love has made a way.

John says the key to finding our way back home is belief in Jesus. When we believe in Him, we save ourselves from perishing or being lost forever, and we are given a new life

that will last into eternity in our true home, heaven. The Greek word for believe is *pisteuo*, which means "to be persuaded by someone or have confidence in someone." A belief in Jesus is more than an intellectual exercise. Belief in Christ is to be so persuaded and confident that our lives are transformed, and our words, actions, and thoughts become dictated by our faith, hope, and trust in Him. This is a work of the Spirit of God and not something we can do alone. This is why Jesus came to rescue us. He does the work when we submit to Him.

Discussion Questions:

- ✝ How would you explain to someone the reason Jesus was born at Christmas?
- ✝ What are signs that someone may be lost in life and in need of Christ?

POINT #3 – BELIEF IN CHRIST ALLOWS US TO LIVE TODAY AS WELL AS FOR ETERNITY

At the heart of Christmas is Jesus's invitation to join Him and experience the full life that is available through Him. The mission began thousands of years ago in a small Bethlehem town but continues on to this very day. Of all the gifts you could possibly receive and give over the coming days, this gift is by far the most valuable because it can save your soul.

Will you join Jesus in His work of rescuing all of creation? Will you trust Him with your life and unapologetically believe in Him? God so loved the world that He sent Jesus in the form of a vulnerable baby to begin a powerful movement that is still active today. What began in an unassuming cradle tragically led to a Roman cross, but it ended victoriously with an empty tomb.

Discussion Questions:

- ✝ How does someone's belief in Jesus impact the way they live?
- ✝ How has your belief in Jesus changed your life ?

Prayer: Gracious Father, As we enter the Christmas season, may our hearts be captivated by the profound truth of Your love. In the quiet of the cradle, we see the beginning of a story written in sacrifice and grace—a story that would lead to the cross. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to dwell among us, knowing the ultimate cost of His life. Help us to understand the depth of Your love, a love that sees us as worthy of such a sacrifice. May we feel the weight of this gift, not in guilt, but in overwhelming gratitude. Open our hearts to fully receive the gift of salvation, trusting in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Your Son. Transform us, Lord, so that we may live as reflections of this love—sharing the hope and joy of the incarnation with those around us. Let our lives testify to the wonder of Your grace. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



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