

Sermon Spice Video Clip: The Mystery of Christmas

Christmas is such an interesting day full of expectations and emotions. It is a day for family gatherings, big meals and presents. These are all good things, but isn't there more to Christmas than just these things? For us as Christians the answer is yes. Christmas is a celebration of Salvation. The angel told the Bethlehem Shepherds, ***"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."*** (Luke 2:11) Christmas is the celebration of the Good News that God loves us and that He is with us to save us.

Jesus came to save us. The Shepherds heard that on the first Christmas Day. The angel told Joseph, ***"you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*** (Matthew 1:21) Jesus came to save us from sin. Sin is an attitude based on pride. Isn't it interesting that the middle letter in both the word sin and the word pride is the letter "I?" We are all guilty of sinning when we let pride run our lives, when we say "I want to be in control." When I do that, I'm my own biggest enemy and make a mess of my life. You've probably had the same experience.

We need to be saved from sin because we can't save ourselves. Sin creates a barrier between us and God, one that we can't bridge by ourselves. The prophet Isaiah tells us, ***"It's your sins that have cut you off from God."*** (Isaiah 59:2) Being cut off from God is a terrible feeling especially when we can't do anything about it by ourselves. We need help.

The Good News of Christmas is that Jesus came to save us from sin and from ourselves. The answer to our problem is not a place, a program, a pill or even a Christmas gift. The answer to our problem is Jesus Christ, the Savior.

Jesus came to give us a new life. We were created by God, created to be connected with God. Jesus came to reconnect us with God by forgiving our sins and giving us a new life. Christmas is not about presents, it is about God's presence in our lives. Jesus sets us free from sin and pride. He forgives us and breaks down the wall that separates us from God. Then he sets us free to walk with Him and to follow His example.

Jesus has the power to change lives. St. Augustine was a womanizing man who ran with the wild crowd before becoming one of the church's greatest leaders. John Newton was a drunken slave trader before he wrote "Amazing Grace." Chuck Colson was a convicted Watergate conspirator before he met Christ and began Prison Fellowship Ministries.

Jesus sets us free to live to the glory of God. Mary became the mother of the promised Savior, Joseph took Mary as His wife, the Shepherds told everyone they saw about Jesus, and the wise men offered their gifts all to the glory of God. The Apostle Paul tells us, *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”* (1 Corinthians 10:31) Our purpose in life is not to live for ourselves or for the things that we can accumulate. Life is much more important than that.

We were created by God and recreated in Christ to glorify God. We give glory to God when we worship Him, when we help others in His name, when we tell others about Him. Isn't that what we are doing today? We are here to worship the Lord. We help people at Christmas time without expecting them to help us in return. We do that when we put money in the Salvation Army kettle, when we give gifts to people we don't even know through a social service organization, when we see a need and meet it. And we tell others about Christ when we celebrate the gift of God's Son. When we love others, help others, and spread God's love our lives take on a lasting significance.

Jesus is God's gift to us and to all people. Jesus is God's Son who came into our world to rescue us from sin and death. He came to restore us to our place in God's family. But we only know that when we read and believe the rest of the story. If we only knew about the journey to Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus and the visit of the angels, we would have the plot for a “Hallmark Movie.” But this is much more than a “Hallmark” story.

God didn't only send His Son to Bethlehem, He sent Him to the whole world. Jesus didn't remain a baby or stay in Bethlehem. The manger could not hold him for very long. Jesus had to make the long journey to the cross to offer the perfect sacrifice for sin. But he didn't stay on the cross for very long because the cross could not hold him, either. His body was placed in a tomb, a tomb that is now empty because he rose from the dead. He defeated sin and death. The grave could not hold him. Jesus is alive today and wants to live in each of us, to give us a new life.

God came into the world to rescue us. We can't save ourselves. Only God can do that for us. And He did. Jesus gives us what we don't deserve: love, forgiveness and eternal life. It is God's free gift to all who believe in Him.

But even that is not the end of the story. You and I write the end of that story in our own lives. The ending of the Christmas story depends on what we do with Jesus. Some people ignore him. Others are opposed to him. What about you? Will you receive the gift of God's Son, the forgiveness of sins and the new life that He gives? That is the gift that Jesus wants to give to you today and every day. Jesus is the gift that makes Christmas. Jesus is the only one who can forgive us and give us a new life.

I hope that all of you have a great day today as you celebrate the gift of Jesus. Merry Christmas!