

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATES THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

- What we celebrate, we aspire to, which creates culture.
 - Weekend services remembered and celebrated creates a culture.
 - We who believe in Jesus, as we celebrate correctly according to Scripture, influence a culture.
 - Christmas and Thanks Giving, as they were designed, reinforce a set of beliefs and values that create a way of life.
 - As Christmas is becoming more secular, it creates and reinforces a culture. What culture?
 - Materialism, Mine, More, Magic, the Christmas spirit, or something far better?
 - So often we want a set of values that leads to life, but we choose the wrong road with no off ramp to the destination we want.
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THE TRUE CHRISTMAS STORY:

- God has been working from the Garden of Eden on.
- The story is we left God, but He has been pursuing us.
- The only way that was possible was if He came for us.

Isaiah 9:1–7 (NIV) ¹Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—²**The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.** ³You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. ⁴For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. ⁵Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. ⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT A GOD WHO PURSUES US.

- A light has dawned in the darkness. We are in the darkness because we walked out of the light.
 - He has come to us—and He is the light.
 - The light has a purpose:
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HE CAME TO BLESS US WITH LIGHT.

John 1:1–5 (NLT) ¹In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He existed in the beginning with God. ³God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. ⁴The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

John 1:9–12 (NLT) ⁹The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He came into the very world he created, but the world didn’t recognize him. ¹¹He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. ¹²But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

1. Jesus came to give us life—the life we had lost.
2. He came to give us light—the truth.
3. He came to give us relationship as children of God.
4. He came to give us a choice. We were all lost, but now we can choose not to be.

John 3:16–21 (NIV) ¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. ¹⁹This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

THE POINT OF CHRISTMAS FOR ALL OF US WHO ARE BELIEVERS: THE GOD OF THE UNIVERSE LOVES US.

- What a great thing to remember for believers!
 - What a great time to make a decision for Him for those who are being drawn!
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QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

Passages to consider: Luke 1:26-36 and John 3:16-21

1. What from the sermon was insightful to you? A) How will it affect how you approach this Christmas season?
2. When you think of Christmas, what comes to mind? Try to quickly name 7-10 things. A) When you think of love, what comes to mind?
3. Read Luke 1:26-36 (see also Isaiah 7:13,14). What do you see happening in these passages? A) What does this tell you about who God is and His Father’s heart toward us, His people?
4. Take a look at John 3:16-21 (see also Jeremiah 31:3). What does this tell you about God and about people? A) How does this passage relate to Christmas for you?
5. Who has modeled to you the way the heart of the Father, God, loves? A) How have you experienced how love pursues and shines light?
6. As the Christmas season is here, how will what you understand about the Father’s heart impact how you interact with Jesus? Celebrate Christmas in your home? With your church family? And with those with whom you work, live, and play? Think of one or two small but significant ways to engage. *Idea: When you notice Christmas lights, think about how God loves you and the world and chose to send Jesus, the light of the world. Thank Him and tell someone.*

Passages to prepare for next week: Luke 2; Psalms 139; Ephesians 2:1-10

Christmas Focus Idea: If you read one chapter of Luke every day starting December 1st, you will read through the story of Jesus by Christmas!

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