

# Christmas Eve Message 2011

Title: “Why Christmas?”

John 1:14 & selected passages ~ December 24, 2011

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**OBJECTIVE:** *To help us accept and rejoice in God’s gift of Jesus – to save sinners.*

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Opening prayer

Crazy Christmas Celebrations and traditions...Why do they do it?

*Pictures of crazy Christmas traditions around the world*

Why do you celebrate Christmas?

Why do you spend hours in late November or early December to decorate your home (inside and out)?

Why do you spend money on gifts for family and friends – and some that don’t fit either of those categories?

Why do you eat so much food in December?

Why do you love the music of Christmas?

If we were able to share our answers to these questions out-loud here tonight, we would discover that there are many different answers to these questions – and for some, they may not know the answer! Sometimes we don’t know why we do something – it’s just something we’ve always done – and we haven’t given much thought to ‘why’.

Rest assured...God did. God knew exactly why the events of Christmas were necessary.

God gave Christmas a lot of thought – and not in a hurried or panicked way. Ephesians 1 tells us that His Christmas plan was detailed out before the creation of the world.

Turn in your Bible to John 1:14

The gospel's of Matthew and Luke both give us a narrative account of Jesus' birth – Mark's gospel opens with the ministry of John the Baptizer and Jesus' baptism – but John's gospel is unique to the other three. John opens his account of Jesus' life and ministry with a theological preview of the book. He gives us a 'big picture' view of Jesus – before he begins his narrative account half-way through chapter 1.

This evening – I want you to understand that Christmas was not an accident. When sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, this did not take God by surprise – He wasn't caught 'off-guard' by their sin. He had already planned for it. He already had a way that He would redeem humanity back to Himself.

I want you to know that Christmas was a part of God's plan of redemption from the beginning. The Apostle John helps us to see the 'means' by which God would do this – and the 'motive' why He would do this.

The **Means** (The 'How') of Christmas = God taking on flesh and living among us

In the opening section of the gospel of John, instead of using the name "Jesus" – he uses a term that describes Jesus – "Word".

The opening verse tells us some incredible things about Jesus – about “the Word”. He tells us that Jesus was God.

1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Then, in vs. 14, the Apostle tells us something that is impossible to fully comprehend.

**“The Word became flesh** - and made His dwelling among us...”

*“Christmas is not about the Savior’s infancy; it is about His deity.”* (God’s Gift of Christmas, by John MacArthur, p. 9)

The wonder of Christmas is not the star of Bethlehem...

It’s not the shepherd’s being heralded about Jesus’ birth by the angels...

It’s not even the Virgin Birth...

The wonder of Christmas is that God wrapped Himself in human flesh – He took the form of a baby and all the limitations and dependency that are part of the package.

The Virgin Birth is one of the non-negotiables of the faith – but I would propose to you that the deity of Jesus is even more crucial to the wonder of Christmas!

Our modern scientific minds struggle to understand the Virgin Birth – but we can’t even begin to comprehend the miracle and wonder of God becoming an infant and maintaining His status as God!

We know from Scripture that the incarnation was necessary because we couldn’t save ourselves from our sin. A sacrifice of such value – and absolute purity and holiness was the only

life preserver that could save us – and no human being could ever qualify...so the only solution for our salvation was for God to give His life for ours. To do that – to save us - He needed to become flesh – so that our flesh could be redeemed and rescued.

“The Word became flesh...**and made His dwelling among us.**”

It would have been so much easier if Jesus would have shown up for a weekend to save us. He could have arrived on Thursday – had the Last Supper with His disciples – gotten arrested that night, crucified the next day (Friday) and risen from the dead on Sunday. Four days – Sin’s paid for – Forgiveness offered – Satan defeated – Done!

But that wasn’t the plan.

Maybe that plan would have provided the sacrifice for sin, but Jesus’ incarnation had a larger purpose than the sacrifice for sin. God determined that He needed to be one of us so we could see Him – know Him – understand Him more.

- He needed us to know that He sympathizes with our weaknesses – because He had the same temptations.
- He needed us to not only hear the truth – but to see the truth in action over the course of a lifetime.
- He needed us to not only hear about His love – but to see His love in action.
- He needed us to not only hear about serving one another – but to see Him serving us!

So...he “pitched His tent among us”. He became one of us and lived with us.

The **Means** (The ‘How’) of Christmas = that God took on flesh and lived among us.

The **Motive** (The ‘why’) of Christmas: So we can see God and receive His grace and truth.

The second half of vs. 14 answers the ‘*why*’ question – why did God do this? Why did He become flesh and dwell among us?

**“We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only...”**

When John says that Jesus “made His dwelling among us”, the Jewish person in the first century would have a very clear picture in their mind of what that was. The Greek term for dwelling was the idea of a tent – or specifically – the portable tabernacle of the O.T. that pre-dated the Temple of Solomon. Every religious Jew knew that the presence and glory of God resided in the Tabernacle.

Exodus 40:34 “Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.”

When John – in speaking about Jesus – says that He “made His dwelling among us”, and then says that “We have seen His glory” – this is the exact picture his readers would have in their mind – and the point was clear – Jesus was God and shared the same glory as the nation experienced at the Tabernacle of old.

Now John didn’t see the O.T. Tabernacle. The glory he is speaking of here is the glory he and the other disciples witnessed in the life and ministry of Jesus. Specifically he would be thinking of Jesus’ glory that was made visible to them on the Mount of Transfiguration. However, Jesus’ glory

was not limited to that occasion. His glory was seen through the many miracles He performed, but also through the daily conversations they had with Him – and in His normal personhood which was absolutely without sin – absolutely holy – and absolutely full of love and compassion.

Christmas was necessary so we could see God’s glory more clearly – on our level.

**“...who came from the Father...”**

This little phrase in the verse tells us that even though Jesus was fully God, He submitted Himself to the Father.

This is a great example for us to emulate in our own lives – that we should serve one another and submit to one another.

**“...full of grace and truth.”**

Personally, this is one of my favorite descriptions of Jesus. It’s what I have tried to use as my plumb-line – my standard for ministry – to be perfectly balanced and filled-up with the grace and truth of God. I try to make sure that this church never gives grace without the guidance of God’s truth – and that the truth of God is never without the grace of God.

In my mind and heart – grace and truth are the great tensions of the Gospel. Tensions that pull us closer to God the more we practice them and keep them in balance.

First, let’s talk about God’s grace.

John 1:16 “From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.”

**Illus.** – *waves on the seashore – never ending – the grace of God never runs out!*

Ephesians 1:7-8 “...we have...forgiveness...in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that He lavished on us...”

You may think that your sins outnumber your good deeds, and therefore you have no hope – Paul answered that concern in chapter 2 or Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:8-9 “For it is by grace you have been saved through faith...not by works...”

No amount of good works can save you – it’s by God’s grace – and your faith in Jesus.

But, you might be worried that you’re sins are too horrendous and too numerous for God to forgive you, Paul answered that concern also:

Romans 5:20 “But where sin increased, grace increased all the more...”

You can’t exhaust the fountain of God’s grace! His grace is never-ending. God’s supply of grace is unlimited! When you put your faith / belief in Christ – then you have an ever increasing amount of grace available to you!

Now Jesus was full of grace...but He was also full of ***truth***. Where does the ***truth*** come into play here?

Well, the truth of God helps us to value and treasure the grace of God – and it prevents us from abusing His grace.

The truth of God is His commands – His directions for how we should live.

The truth of God reveals His holy and righteous character – and it’s the truth of God that guides us and informs our choices and attitudes in life.

It’s God’s truth that leads Paul to write in the next chapter –  
Romans 6:1, 2; 12

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body...”

God’s motive with Christmas was to help us see Him better – and to make His grace and truth available to us who believe.

## **Application**

Why did God give us Christmas?

So he could give you the gift of His Son.

Have you received it?

Have you put your faith in Jesus?

Have you received His grace – and His truth?

Vs. 12 – Receive the light of Christ this Christmas!

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...”

Close in prayer