

Broomfield



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Those Who Missed Christmas

I have always been amused by the story of the two elderly ladies who were window shopping before Christmas. As they approached a lavish window display of a Santa Claus, his sleigh with eight reindeer—and of course Rudolph—they noticed a manger scene with Joseph and Mary, the baby Jesus. After viewing the display for a moment, one lady said to the other: “Why did they have to go and mess up Christmas with that manger scene!”

I’m not sure there is a better example of a “modern” missing Christmas than that – after all, what is Christmas? Is it not the celebration of the birth of Christ? Is it not the heralding of the good news that Christ, the Savior, has come? And yet those in our culture as it is, do not find it very difficult to miss Christ in the hustle and bustle of the season.

One man wrote:

“What a mess Christmas is! We have compounded the holiday with so many traditions and so much hype and hysteria that we miss the utter simplicity of Christ’s birth. It is ironic that of all holidays, this one has become the most complex.”¹

We are not the first to miss Christmas. Many in Christ’s day completely missed the significance of His coming. And so this evening, I want to draw you away from the “hype and hysteria” of the season, and discuss with you one such group of individuals who missed the simplicity of Christ: Those who were familiar with Christ.

The Familiar Miss Christ

In Genesis 3, we read of the fall of mankind and our subsequent slavery to sin. And thus from Genesis 3 on, the Bible describes all of mankind as hopelessly lost. All of us are enslaved to sin and Satan. All of us are the recipients of God’s wrath and judgment. And yet because of His love, God promised to send a deliverer— a Messiah — who would save God’s people from their sin.

¹ Dr. John MacArthur, *God With Us*, page 65

As such year after year, generation after generation and age after age, the people of God zealously anticipated the coming of this deliverer! Now of the numerous Bible passages that foreshadowed and proclaimed the good news of this coming One, Isaiah 61:1-2 was one of the more well-known texts.

Isaiah 61:1-2, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.”

Truly, the Messiah — the coming deliverer — would bring good news to the afflicted. He would bind up the brokenhearted and proclaim liberty to captives. The Messiah would emancipate the prisoner of sin. He would proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. Now in light of this, notice our text.

Luke 4:21, “And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

Families and friends put yourself in the shoes of those attending the worship service described in this passage in Luke. What Good News! Incredible! The man standing at the podium in that Synagogue – Jesus is His name – has just declared that He is Messiah! He is the one who would deliver God’s people from wrath. He was the One that would save Israel from their sins. He is the One that would protect, nourish, guide and lead them to heaven. It is little wonder that we read that the crowd at first was quite impressed.

Luke 4:22, “And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?”

The crowd at this point was awe struck. They said these things: Isn’t this Joseph’s son? And isn’t this the child that grew up before us? And isn’t this the boy that used to play in our backyard? And in the words of the Apostle Mark:

Mark 6:3, “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.”

And yet as the latter part of verse 22 indicates, the favorable words of the crowd quickly changed from praise to offensive words. In response to these “questions of doubt,” Christ continues with accounts from the life of Elijah and Elisha.

Luke 4:23-27, “And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when

the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, *a city* of Sidon, unto a woman *that was* a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.”

These are hard words. In light of the present, growing opposition against Christ on the part of His countrymen Jesus quoted from two accounts in the Old Testament where on account of the unbelief and hostility of God’s people God sent His prophets to the gentiles.

Luke 4:25-26, “But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, *a city* of Sidon, unto a woman *that was* a widow.”

Luke 4:27, “And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.”

In essence, Jesus is saying, that your rejection of me will mean blessings upon the Gentiles! And thus we read the reaction of a group of people who believed that God was the God of only Jews.

Luke 4:28-29, “And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.”

The Contrast

On the one hand, you have the people of Nazareth just described in verses 28-29 who in response to Christ’s declaration that He was Messiah tried to kill Him. And yet on the other hand, notice the context of this passage in verses 14-15.

Luke 4:14-15, “And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.”

Up to this point, Jesus has received nothing but praise from those listening to Him. At the early stages of Christ’s ministry, the Jewish people outside of Nazareth welcomed Him! That is the CONTRAST that Luke is painting here. As we read this Gospel, Luke. 4:16-30 stands out as a shocking description of ones who entirely missed Christ! And this rejection would be their last opportunity, for Christ never again returned to this city!

This leads to what I have called the “Crime”. If it was not bad enough that Jesus the Messiah – the coming deliverer of God’s people – was rejected by the very ones to whom He was sent notice the crime:

Luke 4:16, “And he came to Nazareth, **where he had been brought up:** and, as his

custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.”

Nazareth was a crude, uncultured town, quite a distance from Jerusalem. The people of that region had a reputation for violence. In fact, the Apostle Nathanael expressed the prevailing opinion of that little town when he asked this question in John:

John 1:46, “And Nathanael said unto him, **Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?** Philip saith unto him, Come and see.”

And yet, Nazareth was the home of Mary and Joseph, and the boyhood home of Christ. As such Nazareth was the only city in all of Israel that watched Jesus grow up. Indeed, the inhabitants of this city had observed the perfect life of Christ’s. They had watched Jesus increase in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man.² They had beheld His purity. Yet, they completely overlooked Him!

The people of this city knew Christ better than anyone in that day; yet they completely missed Him! In fact, far from simply just missing Him, they sought to kill Him. It is little wonder that Mark 6:6 says that even Jesus “wondered at their unbelief.”

Familiarity

Why? Why did Christ’s very own people — His kinsmen, His neighbors, and friends – miss Him? Why did Christ’s very own brothers mock Him?³ In a word, familiarity! They knew Him too well. They knew Him so well they did not want to believe He was anyone special. And thus when Christ proclaimed that He was the Messiah – the Deliverer of both the Jew and Gentile – the people rejected Him saying: “Is this not Joseph’s son?”⁴

Do not overlook a very important lesson from this text: to be familiar with Christ is to potentially miss Him! It has often been said that familiarity breeds contempt. But it should also be said that familiarity causes us to overlook the obvious. This is such an important truth for we live in a land all too familiar with Christ. I doubt that there are few today who haven’t heard or couldn’t sing the songs *Joy to the World* or *O Little Town of Bethlehem*.

And so, let me ask you: What is the meaning of Christmas? Why have we gathered here this evening? If you say, the birth of Christ and stop there, you probably will miss Christmas this year.

Listen! Christmas is the celebration NOT of the birth of a baby because there were many babies born in and around Jerusalem the night of Christ’s birth and their names have been lost to all of us. Christmas is the celebration of the birth of a Savior! It is the celebration of a Messiah! It is the celebration of the KING!

² Luke 2:52

³ John. 7:1-5

⁴ Luke 4:22

Christ came to be King.

John 18:37, “Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, **Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world**, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”

And yet, as a King He did not come to establish an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom. His is a Kingdom comprised of individuals delivered from sin!

Mark 2:17, “When Jesus heard *it*, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: **I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.**”

1 Timothy 1:15, “This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners**; of whom I am chief.”

And how would this King deliver His people from their sin?

Hebrew 2:14-15, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; **that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.**”

And why did Christ do all of this? Just before He was arrested and crucified, Christ said these words:

John 12:27-28, “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. **Father, glorify thy name.** Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again.”

The Meaning of Christmas

And so, what is the meaning of Christmas? It is the celebration of the coming of a King who would establish a kingdom of sinners delivered from the reign and rule of Satan unto the glory and honor of God! Christmas is the celebration of the regency of Christ! It is the celebration of the redemption that He purchased for us by His blood! It is the celebration of the glory and honor of God! And thus to celebrate in light of the all-too familiar Baby in a manger is to miss Christmas!

In light of this, won't you bow your hearts before Him this night? Submit yourself to His sovereignty? Vow to follow Him no matter where He leads? And yet to do this, we must first be delivered from our sin.

As I mentioned earlier at the beginning of creation, mankind fell from their blameless state into sin. As such, all of mankind – all of us — stand before God guilty of sin, and thus are liable to

His wrath and punishment. And yet as God and King, Christ came into this world and lived a perfect life. He never sinned. He then died on the cross in the place of His people and rose again, breaking the hold that Satan had on death.

In light of this, God calls upon all to turn from their sin to Christ. He calls us to rely upon the work of Christ on the cross as the only basis for God to forgive them. He calls upon us to follow Christ as our Lord and King.

Thus, I appeal to you all turn from your sin this day; confess it to God. Ask God to forgive you on the basis of Christ's work on the cross. And then leave here a follower of Christ.

Oh, I exhort us all this evening: Don't miss Christmas this year! The most tragic sin of all is the unbelief of a person who has heard all the sermons and has sat through all the Bible lessons and knows all the Christmas stories. And yet, rejects Christ!

May this season be for all here a true celebration of Christmas as we submit our lives and souls to the King of the Jews!

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About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on December 24, 2004. Greg is the preacher at Broomfield Presbyterian Church.