

## Lighthouse Bible Church

December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012

Luke 2: 1 – 12      *Scripture reading Matthew 1: 18 - 25*

**‘It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas’ #2**

Well, it is good to see that December 21<sup>st</sup> has come and gone and there were no cataclysmic events and that the world did not end. So we can move on and look at a truly great event that we celebrate on December 25<sup>th</sup>, and that is the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As we saw last week, December 25<sup>th</sup> was probably not the day of Christ’s birth but due to the Christianizing of some pagan celebrations, it became the day to celebrate His birth.

And as we also saw last time, His birth is not something that we are even called to celebrate, like we are his death and resurrection and return. But, this day, December 25<sup>th</sup>, has been the day set aside to celebrate His birth and like we said before, is the only time of year that an unbelieving world even recognizes Jesus or acknowledges that He exists.

The problem is; that the unbelieving world does not want to remove ‘the baby Jesus’ from the manger. As long as He is there and as long as He is just the theme of some holiday stories and as long as He is the words to some songs and nothing more, then the world can accept Him.

An added to all of that is the distraction and detraction from celebrating His birth with all the trappings of the holiday season; such as **gifts** and **cards** and **trees** and **lights** and **meals** and the **commercialism** that take away from the true meaning of Christmas, the true spirit of Christmas, what Christmas truly looks and sounds like.

Just as a side note, there is one song in particular that also takes away from the true meaning of Christmas and even creates **questions** and **doubts** about the God and Christ of Christmas.

You know the song: ‘You better watch out you better not cry you better not shout I’m telling you why’. That song describes someone coming to town, but listen to how he is described.

‘He sees you when you’re sleeping, He knows when your awake’. You know what that song is instilling in the minds of young children? That this man is “Everywhere Present” or **Omnipresent**.

It says ‘He knows if you’ve been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake’. That song says this man “knows everything about everyone” or that he is “all-knowing” or **Omniscient**.

This same man has the power to cover the entire globe in one night and transform himself to get down a chimney, even when it is burning, to bring gifts.

And the gist of the song is that he has the power to judge or punish or reward you based on; if you are watching and not crying or pouting, or naughty or nice, when he comes. This song says this man is “all powerful” or **Omnipotent**.

So some listen to this song or they sing this song or their children sing this song over and over again instilling in their minds that this man, this gift giver, has all of these qualities and that he knows their child personally.

The problem is, there is coming a time when that child finds out, somehow, that all they have been told and all that they have heard about this man, is not true. But he or she gets over it and goes on with life.

The bigger problem is; that some Christian parents have been telling their young children about God and Christ and how much they want their children to have a relationship with Him.

So as Christian parents, they have their children listen to songs over and over again, they go to Sunday school and church where they hear over and over again about a God who is an ever present ‘Omnipresent’ God as **Psalm 139: 1 – 18** and many other places say.

They hear about a God who knows the end from the beginning as **Isaiah 46: 10** and many other places say, a God who is ‘Omniscient’. They hear about a God who is so powerful that He merely spoke the world into existence and who, through the person of Christ, raise people from the dead and Himself was raised from the dead, as scripture says over and over again, He is an ‘Omnipotent’ God, an all powerful God.

Parents have told their children that one is imaginary and one is real. The man in the red suit that they get to see all over the place and get gifts from, is the imaginary one, and the one whom they can’t see is the real one. Well, you can see how confusing that can be for some children.

Last time we saw that through some of the Christmas songs, that are really Christian themed songs, in part, we got a glimpse of the fullness of who God and Christ are and what Christmas is really all about, what Christmas really looks like.

We saw that it was about a world in sin and error pining because of one’s man’s disobedience to God as **Romans 5: 12** says. We saw that Christmas was about being redeemed from our sin by the blood of Jesus Christ as **1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1: 18** said.

We saw that Christmas was Christ saving us from Satan's power because we had gone astray and how Christ destroyed the works of Satan as **Hebrews 2: 14** and **1<sup>st</sup> John 3: 8** said.

We saw that because of Christmas, we, as sinners, were reconciled to God as **2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5: 19** said.

So, in knowing all of that, what should be our response to how we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, called Christmas? We look at the world around us and we see them celebrating Christmas through their **self-indulgence, unrestrained greed, drunkenness, and extravagance** and then they sing 'it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas'. Not the Christmas of the Bible.

People who know the Christ of Christmas know the true spirit of Christmas and know what it looks like and what it sounds like as it relates to the birth of Jesus Christ. So let's put Christmas back into its true perspective by looking at some people who truly know how to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

**Elizabeth**, in **Luke 1: 41** when she heard that Jesus was going to be born, it says **she was filled with the Holy Spirit** and begins to **praise God** from verses **41 – 45**. Her response, her demonstration of the spirit of Christmas was one of PRAISE. There is not much praise today.

In **Luke 1: 67** we see **Zecharias**, the husband of Elizabeth who undoubtedly told Zechariah of what Mary told her about the birth of Jesus and that along with his own vision from the angel Gabriel about his own son John's birth cause him in verse 67 to **prophecy**, to repeat and tell forth, the word of God. And that is what he does in **verses 68 – 75**. His response, his demonstration of the true meaning of Christmas, the true spirit of Christmas was one of **TELLING THE WORD OF GOD**. Another story is being told today, not the true Christmas story.

In **Luke 2: 8 – 14** we see an angel of the Lord announcing the birth of Jesus and look how the rest of the **angels** respond in Verses 13 – 14 **and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host PRAISING God and saying ‘glory to God in the highest..** their response, their demonstration of the spirit of Christmas was one of **praising and glorifying God**. There is not much of that going on today.

Look at the **Shepherds** in **Luke 2: 20**. When they heard about the birth of Jesus they **returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen and were told**. That is really the key to the spirit of Christmas, celebrating Christmas, what Christmas looks and sounds like, it is praising and glorifying God, but not just one day, but every day.

Then there's **Simeon** in **Luke 2: 25 – 35** and when he hears of the birth of Jesus and gets to see Him and touch the now 2 month old, you know what his response was? **Verse 28** says that he **blessed God**. Do you realize at this time of year, and all year, we can actually bless God. How did Simeon bless God? Look at **Verses 29 – 32**, he acknowledges the **truth** of God's **word** and that God **keeps His promises**- **Vs 29** He acknowledges the **salvation** offered through Christ – **Vs 30**, He acknowledges the extent of salvation **to all people, Jew and Gentile alike** – **Vs 31 – 32**. That is what the true spirit of Christmas looks like and sounds like from the lips of one of God's children.

You see over and over again the response of the people at the birth of Jesus Christ is far different than the response of people today. You could sum up the true spirit of Christmas, what Christmas looks and sounds like this way:

It is a God and Christ centered focus that expresses itself in acts of worship. As enjoyable as **gifts** and **giving** are and as enjoyable as **decorations** and **trees** and **lights** are and as enjoyable as **family** and **friends** and **meals** are, that was never the focus of those we have just seen.

Theirs was a Godward focus of adoration and praise that resulted in the worship of God and Christ and not the material things. Do you remember what the wise men said in **Matthew 2: 2** **we have seen His star in the east and have come to (what) worship Him.** The celebration of His birth to them was a desire to worship Him. That is not the desire of many today.

One writer said “Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, is a time for worship; and if there’s not time for worship then Christmas is utterly **misused, misrepresented and misapplied**” *MacArthur GTY* . The true spirit of Christmas is a true heart of worshipping the God who sent His son to die for our sins.

And isn’t that the heart of worship that Mary expressed when she knew that she would be the mother of the Son of God. She celebrated the true meaning and spirit of Christmas in **Luke 2: 46 – 47** when she said **my soul magnifies the Lord.** That word **magnifies** *megalooono* means to enlarge, to increase, to extol or to make great. Mary is extoling and increasing and making great, the Lord as an act of worship.

Not only that, look what she says in Verse 47 **and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.** Mary has a joyous spirit, not in any decorations or gifts or trees or anything else, but in the plan of God to bring forth a Son through her that would not only be the Savior of the world but notice **God MY Savior** Mary, the mother of Jesus, recognizes what many don’t at Christmas time and that is that she, like every other man, woman and child, needs a Savior from her sin.

Contrary to what other religions may teach, Mary was not sinless, she, by her own admission, needed a Savior just like all of us did or do. She rejoiced that Christmas was God’s provision of a Savior and she was able to celebrate the true spirit of Christmas through her acknowledgment of her own sin and her need for a Savior.

O if only people would see Christmas that way today. In **Luke 2: 11** it says **for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.**

That passage that was read earlier in **Matthew 1: 21** said **she will bring forth a Son and you shall call His name Jesus**, which means Savior, **for He will save His people from their sins.**

Jesus was born so that He could die to save us from our sins. The Bible says ‘the wages of sin is death’ and Jesus ‘died for the sins of the world’. ‘We have all sinned’ ‘there is none righteous, no not one’. So Jesus came to pay the wages of your sin and mine by dying on the cross for us. *Gospel here.*

That is why Jesus was born; to save us from the depravity of a sin sick heart. He was not born to provide us with an excuse for celebrating December 25th and giving one another presents. He did not enter into the world to give us traditions, He was not born of a woman, born under the law, to give us wise sayings, or even to do miracles. Jesus was born to “save His people from their sins” and to save creation from the awful effects of the Fall.

He was born to do away with sin and death and bring His children to heaven someday where **Revelation 21: 4** says **God will wipe away every tear from their eyes and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, there shall be no more pain for the former things have passed away.**

That is the God we want to worship, not only this time of year but every day of the year as we looked forward to the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and SAVIOR Jesus Christ.

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1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1: 18, Hebrews 2: 14, 1<sup>st</sup> John 3: 8  
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How to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ this Christmas

Luke 1: 41 the way Elizabeth did  
Luke 1: 67 - 75 the way Zecharias did  
Luke 2: 8 – 14 the way the Angels did  
Luke 2: 20 the way the Shepherds did  
Luke 2: 25 – 35 the way Simeon did

The sum of celebrating Christmas is \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 2: 2, Luke 2: 46 – 47

There is born this day ... A Savior

Luke 2: 11, Matthew 1: 21  
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