

CHRISTMAS DAY SERMON, ZION 2020

A four-year-old boy was with his grandparents at the mall. He was watching as children lined up excitedly to see Santa Claus. He had been taught as a toddler that Christmas is when Christians celebrate the birth of God's Son Jesus, the Savior of the world. With the innocence of a child, he asked his grandparents: "Where is the line to see Jesus?" Where is the line to see Jesus? On this Christmas Day I am going to share with you three things that happen to us when we see Jesus.

NUMBER ONE: CHRISTMAS LEADS US TO KNOW WHAT GOD IS LIKE. The coming of Christ gave us a living picture of who God is. Christ's coming put a face on God so that we can know what God is like.

Colossians 1:15-16 says, "**Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...**"

God came to earth wrapped in a human body. God came to live among us so that we might know what He is truly like. He came to teach us. He came to die for us that we might be forgiven. He rose from the dead to help us know that we too will be raised. He ascended to the Father to intercede for us. He promised to return so that an eternal hope would burn in our hearts. He opened the doors of heaven to us and to all believers.

Imagine what the world would be like if God, as Jesus, had never come to earth. We would not have the music that came from men like Bach and Beethoven. We would not have Handel's "Messiah," or "Silent Night," or "Joy to the World."

Many colleges would not exist, because they were started as Christian institutions of higher learning. Most of our hospitals would not exist, because they were begun by people who had hearts full of compassion for those who were ill, due to their personal experience with Jesus Christ and being transformed by His love.

Our way of dating history would be completely different, since all of history is divided into the things which occurred before Christ came and the things which occurred after Christ came. We would have only a partial Bible, and we would have no hope.

There would be no churches. There would be no Christmas. To gifts symbolic of God's greatest gift. There would be no Christmas carols or hymns.

Without Jesus, Mary Magdalene would have died in her sin. Matthew, the tax collector, would still have been considered a traitor by his countrymen. Peter, James and John would have done nothing more with their lives than fish for a living.

The people who needed healing during that time would still have been broken in body and spirit. The lame would still have been lame. The blind would have remained in darkness. The deaf would have continued to live in silence.

We would never have heard the words: **"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."**

We would never have heard Jesus say, **"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."**

We wouldn't have heard the words, **"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."**

This is why we sing about Emmanuel at Christmas. God with us. He was with us over 2000 years ago, and He is with us now. We have a God who cared enough to come. No other religion in the world can make that claim. He showed us what God was like. His nature is love. He was a friend of sinners. He showed love and compassion to the outcasts of the world. He healed the sick and raised the dead.

He taught us not to use the values of this world to determine our worth. for He said, He told us that, **“The last will be first, and the first will be last.”**

Some of you have seen “The Antique Road Show” on television. Often people who have paid a few dollars for an item at a garage sale come asking for an evaluation of its worth. Then we see the look of shock and joyful surprise when they learn the item is worth much, much more than they paid.

When I see that happen, I think of how God takes people who are not seen as valuable by the world and places a very high value on them. Why? Because that is the kind of God He is. The outcasts of society seemed to be His specialty. The sinful and sick. The poor and weak. These were the people He pulled out of the trash and transformed into a treasure. And because Christ showed us what God was like, we want to be like Him.

NUMBER TWO: CHRISTMAS REVEALS THAT OUR SINS CAN BE FORGIVEN. Christmas reveals that our sins can be forgiven. Think for a moment of the worst thing you have ever done. Now think of what it would be like if Jesus had not come. We would have no relief from guilt. It would always be hanging over our heads.

But since Jesus came, we know the freedom that forgiveness brings. We can forgive ourselves and others because we have experienced the forgiveness that Jesus Christ came to give us. But if Jesus had never come, we would have only commandments to follow. We would never hear these great words of the New Testament: **“For 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. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.”**

We would be missing a Savior. There would be no talk of reconciliation with God. Only laws to be obeyed. "Grace" would not be a word in our vocabulary. We would talk about "justice," and people "getting what they deserve," rather than finding mercy and forgiveness with God.

If Jesus had not come, the woman caught in adultery would never have heard the words:

"Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin."

But it is about more than just forgiveness. It is also about transformation. Christ came not only to cleanse us, but to change our hearts and our lives.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:18, **"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord . . ."**

It is God's desire that we are being transformed into His character. His likeness, more and more with each passing day. His Holy Spirit's working in us to reproduce His image in us.

NUMBER THREE: CHRISTMAS GIVES US THE HOPE OF HEAVEN. All of this is for one grand purpose. Which leads to the third and final point. Christmas gives us the hope of heaven.

Heaven was made possible by Jesus. Think what the world would be like if there was no hope of heaven. What would you say at the funeral of a loved one if Jesus had not come?

The Bible says, **"If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men."**

There would be no hope of hearing the words: **"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"**

There would be no hope of a resurrection. There would be no eternal life. There would be nothing to anticipate. Nothing but the closing of the casket. Nothing but the coldness of the grave. But because Jesus came, all that has changed.

We live in joyful anticipation of what is yet to come. Christmas means that Christ has given us the gift of heaven. At this point it is still wrapped. But the package has our name on it. And we wait longingly for the day when we will enjoy the gift of heaven in all its unwrapped wonder. When we will hear the words, **"Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.** We will hear the words, **"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."**

About 100 years ago, someone published a remarkable Christmas card and story entitled "If Christ Had Not Come." The card told of a minister falling asleep in his study on Christmas morning. He fell asleep dreaming of a world into which Jesus had never come.

He saw himself walking through his house. But as he looked around, he saw no stockings hung by the chimney. He saw no Christmas tree or wreathes of holly. He saw no Nativity scene with the Christ child to bring joy and gladness that his Savior was born.

He walked outside and saw no church building with its cross-adorned spire pointing to the heavens. He heard no church bells ringing out the glad tidings, "Joy to the world, the Lord is come!"

When he came back into the house he sat down in his library, He then realized that every book about our Savior had disappeared.

Then the doorbell rang. A messenger asked him to visit a friend's dying mother. When he entered their home, he saw his friend sitting and weeping. He said to him, "I have something here that will comfort you."

He opened his Bible to look for a familiar passage from the Gospel of John But was shocked to see that his Bible ended with the book of Malachi. There were no Gospels. No promises of salvation, hope, or the resurrection. All he could do was bow his head and weep with his friend in bitter despair.

Two days later he stood beside her coffin. He conducted her funeral service. But there was no message of comfort. There were no words of a glorious Resurrection. There was no promise of a home awaiting her in heaven. There were only the words: "ashes to ashes and dust to dust", and one long, sad, eternal goodbye.

Finally, he realized, in his dream, that Christ had never come. He burst into tears. He wept bitterly. Then suddenly he awoke, and a shout of joy and praise burst from his lips as he heard a choir singing:

**O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!"**

Yes, Christmas tells us that because Jesus came. We can know what God is like. We can experience the forgiveness of our sins. We can know the transformation of our hearts and lives. We can have the hope and confidence of eternal life and a heavenly home. What better gifts could we ever imagine than that which God has given?