

Devotion for December 24, 2016 – Christmas Eve

Luke 2:11(NIV84)

“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”

Theme: Christmas is about

- 1) *Our need for a Savior being fulfilled.*
- 2) *The LORD himself making his dwelling among us.*

What is the true meaning of Christmas?

I know that this might seem like a silly question, but the reason I ask it is because many don't know the answer. Some think they can find Christmas' true meaning in spending time with family and friends. Others seek to find its meaning in acts of charity. Still others say that the true meaning of “the holidays” can be found in whatever your heart chooses to find meaning in.

Regardless of what people think, there is only one place where the true meaning of Christmas can be found: in the Bible, and it is summarized in the words the angel spoke to the shepherds: *“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord”*

Let us consider this marvelous, angelic message and discover what Christmas is truly all about, namely: 1) *Our need for a Savior being fulfilled.* 2) *The Lord himself making his dwelling among us.*

Part One: Christmas is about our need for a Savior being fulfilled.

From an earthly point of view, the night on which Jesus was born was probably like any other. Underneath the sky near Bethlehem, shepherds were faithfully doing what they always did: keeping watch over their flocks. But on this night, something amazing happened – something that made heaven burst with joy.

What was it? An angel of the LORD appeared to tell both the shepherds and us: *Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.*

The birth of the Savior – this is what Christmas is all about. But why is that so important? Because mankind is sinful and needs a savior.

It all goes back to the Garden of Eden and our first parents: Adam and Eve. God created them in his likeness: perfect, holy and without any sin. However, instead of being content with all the blessings the LORD had given them, Adam and Eve wanted more: they wanted to be their own

gods. This is why, at the devil's prompting, they disobeyed the LORD - eating fruit from the tree from which God forbade them to eat. They rebelled. They sinned against him.

Because of this suffering, pain, death and the threat of hell came into the world. Human nature had been corrupted. From now on all people born after Adam and Eve would no longer be good and holy. Sinful flesh would give birth to sinful flesh - all future generations would inherit the total depravity of sin.

Human nature is corrupt. I know that most people don't want to believe this - especially around the holidays - but it's true. Want proof? Just look at all the wars, crime, hurt and hunger there is in the world. If the human heart was truly good, none of those evils would exist.

But the outside world isn't the only one who needs a Savior. We all do because we have all inherited the same corrupt nature the world inherited. We are all evil. I know these words hurt. We don't want to think of ourselves as all that bad. We like to think we are better than the really bad people of the world, who rape women, abuse children and kill indiscriminately. "They are the ones deserving of hell - not us," we like to think. But here's the thing: God does not compare us to other people. He compares us to his Holy law, which states: *whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*ⁱ It also says: *There is no difference, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*ⁱⁱ According to the Bible, we all deserve hell, because none of us have lived up to the perfect standard God set in his Holy Law. We all need a savior from sin!

I know that so far my sermon does not seem all too Christmassy, but please understand why: it is only when we truly understand our need for a Savior that the true beauty, joy and wonder of Christmas begins to shine. Listen again to the angels' announcement to the shepherds: *a Savior has been born to you.* In other words, there is a God in heaven who loves you so much, that He did something beyond all comprehension to save you. *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.*ⁱⁱⁱ

Part Two: Christmas is about the LORD himself making his dwelling among us.

Christmas is all about the Savior being born. And who is this Savior? The angel tells us in his announcement to the shepherds: *He is Christ the Lord.*"

The child to whom Mary gave birth is true God and true man. He is the LORD himself, who is described in the Old Testament as *the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.*^{iv} Just think: little baby Jesus is the almighty Creator of all - as the book of Isaiah prophesied: *The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel,*^v which means God with us.

Because Jesus was born from a virgin, he didn't inherit the sinful, human corruption that had been passed down from generation to generation. He is true God and man, and as such he would save us from our sins.

But how would he accomplish that? First of all by living the perfect, sinless life of love and obedience to God's law that we all failed to live. By doing this he would win the righteousness we need to stand before God. Then, having taken all our sins upon himself, he would die for them on the cross – suffering the very punishment we deserve for them. This act would satisfy God's justice. And then, proving that God's justice had been satisfied, Jesus would rise from the dead. His resurrection would demonstrate that mankind has been reconciled with God. Because of this work, whoever looks to him in repentance and faith is forgiven of all sin – regardless of how bad and numerous those sins have been. The person who repents and believes in Jesus is at peace with God and will inherit eternal life.

What's the true meaning of Christmas? It is found in the angel's message: "*Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.*" Amen

ⁱ James 2:10 NIV84

^{iv} Exodus 34:6-7 NIV84

ⁱⁱ Romans 3:22,23 NIV84

^v Isaiah 7:14 NIV84

ⁱⁱⁱ John 3:16 NIV84