

Christmas 2018

Christmas Means Christ Came to Serve

Last Sunday we began our current Christmas series. And we are exploring the question, "What does Christmas mean?" Or more precisely, "Why was Jesus Christ born? What is the meaning and purpose of his life?"

My reason for exploring this with you is that I want all of us to have real heartfelt joy this season. This time of year can be stressful. And the demands, troubles and concerns of life can rob us of joy. But when the angel announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds he said,

Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. ¹¹ For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
(Luke 2:10, 11)

Therefore, for your joy and mine we are learning why Jesus was born. Last Sunday we learned that Jesus said, "For this purpose I was born...that I might bear witness to the truth."¹ Jesus Christ showed us in his actions and taught us by his words the truth about life and about God. Now, from Mark we learn another joyful reason why Christ was born. So, let's read the Word of God.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.
(Mark 10:45)

Here is what Christmas means, here is why Jesus was born. Our Lord came to serve and not to be served and to give his life a ransom for many. This is a profound truth about God's goodness, mercy and love to us through Jesus Christ. We celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, because God gave His Son not for us to serve him, but for Christ to serve us.

In this verse our Lord is giving us a powerful promise of grace for all of life. As much as I know, no other religious leader in all of history has promised what Jesus has promised, or done for us what Jesus has done—not Moses, not

¹ John 18:37

Buddha, not Mohammad, or any other person. Christ's statement in verse 45 is not a command for us to serve him. It is a promise that he will serve us so we may live for God and serve others.

Let me make this perfectly clear. The good news of Christmas, the good news of Christianity is that Jesus Christ came to serve you! Christ was born to give his life to ransom you from the power and penalty of sin. When you place your faith in Jesus Christ to save you, you do not become his helper, he becomes your helper. You do not merely become his servant, he becomes your servant.

Now, at first this may sound a little stranger—maybe even heretical, but hear me out. The context of this verse is about being great. The apostles were arguing about which of them would be the greatest in the kingdom of God. So the Lord set them straight on what greatness is all about.

But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. ⁴⁴ And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Mark 10:42-45)

At first glance this sounds like good advice to follow. Don't be a big shot over other people. Love them and serve them. Why? For this reason, the Son of man did not come to be served but to serve. But if you go beyond the surface and think deeper, you'll say, "Wow! Jesus is not saying "Serve like I serve." He is saying, "I am here to serve you!" Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of God? Jesus Christ is the greatest.

Jesus is not just another spiritual guru with rules about how to live. He knows that God has made him Lord. But he refuses to be served by you and me in our own strength. Instead, he insists that he must serve us.

Listen, this is why becoming a follower of Jesus Christ is a most humbling experience. We must admit that we need help. I am not good enough on my own. I am not righteous enough on my own. I cannot be the man or woman

that I really want to be, that God wants me to be without you, Lord Jesus. I need you to serve me. I need more love and more power than is within me alone. I have nothing to offer you, Lord, except my faith and trust. Help me.

As I said this is very humbling. It was for Jesus Christ too. Scripture tells us that in his earthly ministry Jesus was "meek and lowly in heart."² In John 8:28 Jesus said that he did nothing on his own. In Acts 2:22 and 10:38 we are told that all that Jesus did was through the power of God that was at work in him. And so we must humble ourselves and allow God in Christ to serve us.

This humbling. But it is also liberating, because with Christ at work in us we are free of our own inabilities and our fears and we are free from the tyranny of our own ego. Do you remember what Christ said in John 15? He said,

I am the vine, you are the branches.
He who abides in Me, and I in him,
bears much fruit; for without Me you
can do nothing.
(John 15:5)

Without Christ we can go to church and do religious work. But in our hearts, our character we will never change. But with the Spirit of Christ in us we can bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and more.³ What a glorious truth! The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve. This is what makes the message of Christmas, or more precisely the message of Christianity good news. Let's look at some Scriptures with fresh eyes and ears to see that Jesus Christ is here to serve us.

I have been crucified with Christ;
it is no longer I who live, but Christ
lives in me; and the *life* which I now
live in the flesh I live by faith in the
Son of God, who loved me and
gave Himself for me.
(Galatians 2:20)

When Jesus Christ becomes your Lord and Savior by faith, the old you is put to death. And so old desires that are worldly, old fears and sinful ways can be put aside. And the life of Christ can and will empower you to be your best to live for God and to love and serve others.

² Matthew 11:29

³ Galatians 5:22

I can do all things through Christ
who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13)

The context of this verse is about ministering and serving others no matter if you have a lot of resources or very little. It is about being content with your life. Christ living in us gives us the strength, the patience, the courage, the ability to do all that we need to do, at all times, if we believe.

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
(Hebrews 4:14-16)

Our Lord understand life. He faced what we face and so very much more. And by the power of God he overcame it all. And we can say to him, "Lord Jesus serve me, and help me overcome my fears, my greed, my depression. Teach me to trust and to love. Help me be more like you." Jesus Christ is here to serve us. Hebrews 2:18 declares, "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."

Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. ²⁴ But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.
(Hebrews 7:23-25)

The exalted Lord Jesus Christ is our great High Priest before the throne of God. And he prays for you and me every day. He prays for us to be holy people, joyful people, people who are encouraged, faithful, loving and forgiving. Like a

tight rope game, the world pulls at us, but our High Priest pulls back. So many people struggle in their Christian lives because they are trying to live for God by their own strength. But the faithful, joyful, loving Christian life is lived by the power of Christ in us.

We are servants of Christ in that we are to submit to his authority. But we are not his servants in the sense that he needs our help; we need his help. His work in our world is not sustained by our power. Jesus Christ was born not to be served but to serve. And he was born and lived and died and rose again to give his life “a ransom for many.”⁴

The word “ransom” in Mark 10:45 refers to the price paid to free a slave or a prisoner. In John 8:34 Christ said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is slave to sin.” All of us were enslaved to sin. Some people are gross sinners: murderers, thieves and the like. But all of us are horrible sinners, because we have not loved God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.⁵

But this is not the worst of it. We are told in Romans 6:23 that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. Therefore if we are not ransomed by Christ from the power and penalty of sin we will face God's judgment and perish forever. There are only two destinies for every human being, everlasting life in God's kingdom or everlasting death because of sin.

But there is no reason to perish. Christ gave his life as a ransom for many.⁶ Jesus Christ bore all of our sins in his own body on the cross.⁷ The Lord suffered once, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God.⁸ If you have not received Christ as your Lord and Savior do so now. If you have wandered from the fold, come home.

Why was Jesus born? “For this cause I was born” said Jesus, “that I might bear witness to the truth.”⁹ “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”¹⁰ Jesus did not come in search of slave laborers. He was born and lived and died and rose again to serve us and to grant us everlasting life. Trust Jesus Christ to serve you now and always.

⁴ Mark 10:45

⁵ Mark 12:30

⁶ Mark 10:45

⁷ 1 Peter 2:24

⁸ 1 Peter 3:18

⁹ John 18:37

¹⁰ Mark 10:45

