

# Sermon Text for December 4, 2022

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## *Genesis 3:6-7 and Romans 3:23-26* *“Why Christmas”*

We continue along in our sermon series the Ws of Christmas. Last week we saw the What Christmas and we answered that questions by simply saying: Emmanuel. God is with us. This statement ought to be so powerful that you know that every hour, minute and second of your life you are accompanied by the presence of Almighty God. It was in the incarnation, it was in the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ that we have a God who loves us and desires a relationship with us and so was born in a wooden manger and died on a wooden cross and is revealed to us in communion every time that we gather around the table. This is not a past memory that we hold dear but rather a present reality that affects us and shapes us. That is the what Christmas, Emmanuel.

But why? Why Christmas? Why did all of this have to happen and why did it have to happen in this way? Both of our Scriptures today point to the Why of Christmas, why did the incarnation have to occur and why did God have to become one of us in Jesus? It very simply comes down to the fact that there is no distinction among any of us. We all have one thing in common that binds us together to Christ. We have all sinned. You thought it was going to be a good thing, didn't you? No, if the What Christmas can be boiled down to one word: Emmanuel, the Why Christmas can also be boiled down to one word: sin.

From Adam and Eve and their original act of sin to today we have consistently decided to choose something other than God which has created a break in our relationship with God. Jesus came and healed that relationship. God came in a manger and that relationship was restored. Let's read the Scripture that speaks to that.

### **READ**

I had a revelation this week that was incredibly significant. I will for the rest of my life remember a conversation that I had with one of you that is a part of this community. I have been meeting with someone for the past 3 years or so and it has been a journey of faith for this individual. I have been somewhat frustrated with myself because as a pastor you would think that you would be able to help an individual have a closer walk with Jesus, and I simply did not feel that my words, or my counsel, or my time with this individual was really helping by

providing a path to a closer walk with Jesus. Until this week where I don't know how it happened, but a revelation occurred to me that for me was a game changer.

We were talking about this concept of Why Christmas and it occurred to me the best way to phrase it, and I knew this was true I just never phrased it quite this way before, Why Christmas is not so that we would become better people. Why Christmas is so that we would learn to love and follow Jesus. It was never God's intent to come and be born in a manger so that we would become better people. Anyone could do that. Any person could come and teach each one of us to be better people. I have many good friends who would never profess to be Christians and yet they are the most moral and ethical people that I know. You don't need Jesus to be a good person. God did not come in the flesh to teach us how to be good people.

You need Jesus to have a relationship with God. I'm guessing that there are many of us sitting in these pews and behind this pulpit that at times we get that a bit confused. I'm betting that some of us may be sitting here thinking my goal of being here on Sunday is to become a better person and to expose my family to how they can become better people. But you don't need Jesus to be a good person. You need Jesus to have a relationship with God. That is different, very different. If we are coming here on Sunday mornings to learn how to be good Christians or how to be good people, that is not our purpose here.

We gather so that we can be in relationship with God. And whatever happens as a result of that relationship with God we will take. Whatever comes as a result of that, praise be to God. But that is not our purpose for meeting, to be good or to learn how to be good, we are learning how to follow Jesus and how to be in relationship with Jesus.

Let's turn to Genesis and we will see the first sin which was the first to break that relationship with God. Adam and Eve spent time with God even walking in the garden with him. This fall of Adam and Eve deprived them of God's glory in their midst and all around them. It deprived them of that closeness, that relationship that maybe even they took for granted.

From then on in the Old Testament every single person who was to follow God had to do so based upon a relationship that was centered on obedience. When we read in Genesis that when Eve looked at the tree and it was good for food, a delight to the eyes, it could make one wise, we can pair that up with myriad of other sins such as avarice and greed and lust. Disobedience has many faces and they all lead to sin.

This origin that we read about in Genesis demonstrates that we always choose ourselves and what benefits we might reap from our decision making as opposed to decisions that might contribute to the kingdom of God. These two things are often at odds with each other, what we

want and what we can choose, and what is for the benefit of the kingdom of God. Now without a doubt a relationship with Jesus will impact our decision making more than anything else we are exposed to. This relationship with Jesus will impact our lives more than a Sunday morning sermon ever could.

So while in the Old Testament our obedience to God dictated our relationship with God, how good we were meant how close we were to God, Paul tells us in Romans that now, with Jesus in a manger, God with us, our relationship with God is no longer based on our obedience or how good we are. It is a gift which our faith, our small faith, is able to open and embrace.

Turn to Romans with me. It is important that we begin with vs.22c where we read Paul make this statement, there is now no distinction. The difference is now, there used to be a distinction based upon your race. If you were an Israelite you had a leg up and you were favored by God. That is no longer the case. For there is no distinction, all of us is and are the same. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. This sin has broken our relationship with God. Our sin has broken the relationship with God, not Adams. This is also important because we have to understand that we are responsible for our sin, no one else. No one makes us sin, we do it on our own.

But look at vs.24, what we find is that Jesus, God incarnate, born in a manger, is a gift to us. What a great image for Advent as we head toward Christmas. Jesus is a gift to us. This gift allows, look at vs. 25 God to pass over our sin. When you hear that you should be remembering the Passover in Exodus where the people of God are saved and the Egyptian first born sons not so much. But that Passover was not based upon how good or obedient the individual was. Think of that. You could have had the worst Israelite on the face of the planet spread blood on his lintels and he and his family would still be saved. Just trust in God and put some blood on your doorposts. Jesus says just trust in me and follow me. I will save you, your sin will be washed clean, your disobedience I will take upon myself. I will love you.

When Jesus came, Paul tells us, God passed over the sins that had previously been committed. All of them, he didn't pick and choose the juicy ones for later reference. Jesus came in a manger and his blood, like the blood of the lamb over the doorposts for the Israelites, Jesus' blood was a sacrifice of atonement so that we can all receive this wonderful gift of being justified which allows for a relationship through grace and faith. You didn't have to be good enough or righteous enough in order to be able to put blood over your doorposts. So, here, you don't have to be good enough for this gift from Christ of wanting to walk with you.

Faith in Jesus allows us to embrace this gift of grace that is for us. Once and for all faith is able to clinch a relationship. Our little faith thinks Jesus is only able to provide an example that we ought to follow and so as a result we can learn how to be good. The gift of grace allows our faith to embrace a personal walking with and accepting of Christ that changes everything. Our goal is not to become good. Our goal is to love god, that's all we have to do.

In John we read about an encounter between Jesus and people who felt like they had been good all of their lives and thought that was good enough. They say we have Abraham as our father and we follow the laws of Abraham. Surely we are children of God. Jesus answers them, you are still slaves to sin. There is no act, no amount of goodness that can justify us. We cannot arrive at pleasing God. It is only through this gift of Christmas that we are able to truly follow Jesus. Amen.