

The FULL Christmas Story

Sermon

I've lost count of the number of Carol Services and other Christmas services I have attended over the last 50 years. All of them have been enjoyable, and each one gave me that usual warm, contented seasonal feeling of what I might call 'Christmas cosy-ness'!

But it occurred to me recently, whilst reflecting on those past services, that something was missing from them.

Most of you know that I only ever want to speak the truth of the Bible to you. And if I am aware that something seems to be missing from what is being preached in our churches, then I feel, it is my duty before God to rectify the matter and to present the whole truth to anyone who might listen.

So, what is it, that I have realised is missing from modern-day Carol Services?

After all, our Christmas services normally inform us about the unique story of Mary, Joseph, the angels, the manger, the birth of Jesus, the shepherds and the wise men, don't they...

And we sing the wonderful carols that reinforce the story, and we are invited to gaze on the nativity scene of baby Jesus in the manger, neatly displayed in a corner of the church.

And, like I said, this all makes us feel very 'Christmassy'!

And, there is nothing wrong with that.

It is essential to tell of the birth of Jesus. But the story of His birth is only **part** of the full story of the gospel. At Christmas time, the majority of sermons I've heard, fail to unpack the full story of the **reason** that God sent His only Son into the world.

The traditional services may mention that Jesus is the Saviour of the World, but they usually fail to explain what this means, or WHY humanity needs a Saviour, as well as from what we need saving!

During the month of December, every church throughout the world has a captive audience totalling millions of people, a great many of whom are unbelievers. These people flood into churches to listen to choristers, and sit in the light of the glow of candles, all to experience this 'Christmassy' feeling.

Yet rarely do these millions of people go home having discovered the **reason** for Jesus' birth.

This is the one time of year where church leaders could be preaching the full Gospel, without compromise, to the millions of people who may never have crossed the church threshold before... and may never do so again. I believe it is a missed opportunity and I don't want to miss that opportunity today!

So today, I want everyone to leave here knowing **exactly** why God sent His Son Jesus into the world; and it will take me only 8 minutes to tell you.

So here we go!

When God created the first human beings (we read about this in Genesis chapter 2), He created them as **perfect** beings, with no knowledge of what sin and evil were. He created them to be in a perfect relationship with Him, where they were able to commune with Him and talk to him directly, just as we do with each other.

He gave them the full freedom of living in the Garden of Eden, but with one very specific command; NOT to eat the fruit of the tree of the **knowledge** of good and evil. It was the only thing God forbade them from doing. And the reason He did this was because He knew that if they disobeyed His command and ate the fruit, then they would gain knowledge of evil (which is the knowledge of how to sin).

If they ate this fruit, then sin would gain entry into their lives and into their very DNA, and so every human being born from them, and all who descended from them (which is the whole of the human race), would be born with this inherited disposition to sin.

As we know, Satan, who is the deceiver, and originator of all sin, entered the Garden of Eden as a serpent, and hissed his lies at Adam and Eve, by subtly twisting the words that God had commanded to them. They fell for Satan's temptation to eat of the forbidden fruit that was growing on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and as we know from Scripture, their rebellion against God's command resulted in them being banished from the Garden of

Eden forever, and even more disastrously... they were banished from the presence of God (we talked about this at our Service at the end of September).

But let's back-track slightly and remind ourselves that God had created man and woman for Himself, to be in a perfect relationship with Him **forever**. That was God's **original** plan and intention.

Sin was never meant to be a part of our lives, or of this world. But their rebellion against God's command brought sin **into** their lives, and as such, their perfect relationship was broken.

The Lord cannot dwell in the presence of sin, and God had to banish the now sinful Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, which was a place of perfect paradise.

Just so that they got the message that, because of their now eternally sinful state, they could not return to this place of perfection, God posted at the entrance to the garden two mighty angels with flaming swords, to bar the way in!

That shows us just how serious God is about everything that is sinful and evil. He doesn't want it ever in His presence!

However, we must still remember that God **had** created humanity to be in a perfect relationship with Him, with no sin or evil.

Now with **that** still being at the very heart of God's desire for us, yet with the reality that sin had now entered the very DNA of the human race, and the consequence of sinning against God being spending eternity in the realms of darkness and torment with Satan and his demons, something **dramatic** would need to take place for the human race to ever be reconciled into a perfect relationship with God again.

It would NOT be something that we mere sinful human beings could do for ourselves in order to make restitution for our rebellion.

God's love for the human race, which He created, is so vast and unfathomable that, in order to save us from our catastrophic inherited fate, after the fall of Adam and Eve, God truly **DID DO something dramatic**, to open up the Way for us to be saved from this **dire** situation!

The dramatic act that God undertook was to send Jesus Christ, His only Son down to earth to be our Saviour. To whoever would listen to Him, Jesus taught the Gospel message of salvation, with its requirement to confess and repent of our sins and follow Him.

And following Jesus, means obeying His Word and living our lives in accordance with His word, instead of rebelling against it.

His promise to those who believe the truth of His coming into the world to redeem mankind from Satan's kingdom of darkness, is that we will inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

In order to fulfil God's plan of redemption, Jesus had to come into this fallen world of humanity, and then be crucified on the cross, taking on himself all of our sins with the shedding of His blood, to wash away the punishment which we deserve for our rebellion against God. Jesus overcame death and the grave, and was resurrected from the dead, and today sits at the right hand of God Almighty, reigning with Him.

When we accept Jesus' sacrifice, (born out of God's deepest love for us and His longing for each one of us to be reconciled to Him) – when we accept this and believe that it **is** the truth, and confess and repent of our sins and put our faith in Jesus Christ to save us, then live our lives in obedience to His Word, we are then reconciled to God through our faith in Jesus Christ; our sins are forgiven, and we will inherit eternal life and live with Him forever when our soul leaves our mortal body. Our original created relationship with God will then be fully restored!

So to conclude: The full story of Christmas is this:

Firstly, Jesus came to earth as a babe in a manger, by the express will and purpose of God, to be the Saviour of every human being, because we are all inherently sinful.

Secondly, Jesus is NO LONGER in the manger! He became a man; He was crucified for our sins, to redeem our souls from hell, but we must **believe** in Him **and** repent of our sins and follow Him, in order to receive this free gift of salvation. The work of redemption was **finished** on the cross – and all we have to do is **believe it** and **accept** God's gift of salvation and eternal life, which happens **WHEN** we put our faith in Jesus Christ to save us, and then live our lives in obedience to His Word.

Thirdly, after His death, Jesus was then raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, to be in glory with His Father; we celebrate this fact at Easter.

Fourthly, Jesus then poured out the Holy Spirit upon all who followed Him, and this is available **today**, to all who will believe and follow Him. We celebrate this at Pentecost.

Finally, everything that was needed to be done for our redemption and salvation has been done by God through His Son Jesus Christ – and the full Christmas story includes ALL of these amazing facts.

In bygone times these facts would have been preached regularly, bringing conviction of sin and repentance upon the multitudes who heard the message – transforming their lives for God’s glory.

Today’s ministers, so often trained by liberal theologians, seem to prefer to preach cosy, comforting messages that no longer stir or challenge their listeners, particularly at Christmas time; so they omit to preach the parts of the gospel message concerning the inherent sinful state of the human race, and the need for us **all** to be convicted of this by the power of the Holy Spirit, and for godly sorrow to come upon us, so that we can repent of all of our sins and live a new life in-Christ, for the glory of God.

Some ministers seem to want to leave people with the view that Jesus is still a baby in a manger... and nothing more...

As you have got to know me over the last 3 years or so, you know I will always preach the whole truth to you from the Bible, and so, this Christmas, I pray that the full reason for Jesus’ birth will take root in your heart, and enable you to do all that is necessary to be reconciled to God, which is through belief and faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, and obedience to His Holy Word.

Amen...

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