

Introduction:

- Jokes
 - What do snowmen eat for breakfast? Frosted Flakes or Ice Crispies.
 - Why was the snowman looking through the carrots? He was picking his nose!
 - Why do mummies like Christmas so much? They're into all the wrapping.
 - What do you call Santa's little helpers? Subordinate clauses.
- I heard a story about a woman who was doing her last-minute Christmas shopping at a crowded mall. She was tired of fighting the crowds. She was tired of standing in lines. She was tired of fighting her way down long aisles looking for a gift that had sold out days before. Her arms were full of bulky packages when the Elevator door opened. It was full. The occupants of the Elevator grudgingly tightened ranks to allow a small space for her and her load. As the doors closed she blurted out, "Whoever is responsible for this whole Christmas thing ought to be arrested, strung up, and shot!" A few others nodded their heads or grunted in agreement. Then, from somewhere in the back of the elevator came a single voice that said, "Don't worry. They already crucified him." It is hard to appreciate Christmas without the cross in sight.
- I will be reading from John 1 this evening and I will be sharing the Christmas story. John does not give us an account of the story like Matthew and Luke do. But he does give us the how and why of Christmas.
 - You see: God loved this world so much that He sent His Son into it. That is what Christmas is all about: the birth of Jesus, God becoming man, Immanuel-God with us. But why? John 1:1

I. The Unveiling Begins

- A. John brings understanding to us of the Christmas story. He does it by uncovering the truths that are veiled in the story by itself. The first statement of John unveils three truths about Jesus. *"In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God."* (John 1:1, NLT) The Word refers to Jesus in John 1.
1. The Word already was, before the beginning. Eternally existent. God had a plan before He started. *"God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake."* (1 Peter 1:20, NLT)
 2. The Word was with God
 3. The Word was God. It is critical that we understand that the Word was Jesus and He was God. That makes him a perfect sacrifice for lost humanity. So many religion deny that he was God.
 4. (HE), The Word existed in the beginning with God vs. 2 "Let us make..."
 5. God created everything through Him. vs. 3
 6. The Word gave life to everything that was created. vs. 4 And His life brought light to everyone.

7. The Word became human and made His home among us. vs 14. This is Christmas, right here! The Word becoming flesh.
 8. All of seven statements are about Jesus, the baby, born in Bethlehem. John writes to unveil /reveal the baby that was born in Bethlehem. He wants each of us to understand who this child is and why His birth is so important.
- B. All of this was so that we would receive grace...a part of God's plan. *"For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."* (John 1:16, ESV)
1. So The Word becomes flesh (Jesus) and is covered and filled with glory. All for the purpose of bringing us grace (Gods ability, Gods favor). Jesus came to do, what no other man could do...bring grace!
 2. That is John's understanding of Christmas:
 - a) God the Son comes. He is God, he is with God, he reveals God.
 - b) And now that unveiling is dominated by grace, in grace, full of grace and truth.
 - c) And "from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace" Jn 1:16.
 - d) So, Christmas is the eternal Word, the eternal Son, clothing himself with flesh, in order that grace might come to sinners, truth might come to sinners, Light might come to those living in darkness. When the light comes, there are three responses we can make.

II. The Three Responses

- A. First response is: Jesus is not recognized. *"He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him."* (John 1:10, NLT) The world did not understand him. The very people He created did not understand who He was. Yes, he can be seen and heard but *'isn't this the carpenters son?'* Always explaining away His divinity.
1. What you do not recognize you do not get! IE. You have to recognize a deal in order to get one.
 2. Have you ever met up with someone you have not seen in long time and you do not recognize them? Without recognition you cant enjoy the relationship!
 3. If the world does not recognize him it cant enjoy the relationship. That is why John tells his story the way he does.
- B. Second response is: Jesus is rejected. *"He came to his own people, and even they rejected him."* (John 1:11, NLT)
1. They would not bring him close to them. They kept him at a distance.
 2. This what rejection is. It is keeping people at a distance. It is not wanting to have relationship with them.
 3. When you reject someone you miss out on what they bring to the relationship. When you are rejecting Jesus you are missing out on His grace and way more than you think!
- C. Third response is: Jesus is accepted. *"But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God."* (John 1:12, NLT)
1. Those who believe in Him bring Him in close. They do not keep Him at a distance. Ie. Even demons believe James 2:19 but they will not bring Him close.
 2. They accept Him. It is the opposite of rejecting. They bring Him in close so they can have a relationship with Him.

3. When you accept someone, you accept who they are and what they bring to the relationship. Jesus brings to the relationship the right to become children of God! And in verse 18, He reveals God to us. He shows us who the Father really is.

III. The Purpose of Christmas

- A. Contrary to popular cultural demand, Christmas is not about presents, trees, lights and cookies. All of that is fun but it distracts from the real purpose. The purpose of Christmas is God making a way for us to have relationship with Him. It is why He sent His son into the world.
 1. *“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.” (John 3:16-17, NLT)*
- B. To understand Christmas you have to understand crucifixion. Christmas and Good Friday must become one. Christmas is for salvation! That is why he came: not to condemn but to save. Christmas is God’s preparation for Good Friday.
- C. He came to die that we might live. Only by combining Christmas and Good Friday can you really sing, *“Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king, Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.”* God and sinners were not reconciled at the birth of Christ. We were reconciled at His death! Christmas makes no sense without the cross. Without the cross it just becomes packages and lights, and trees and cookies. And when it is over you are empty.

Conclusion:

- Is 9:2 speaks about those living in darkness. You are in darkness if you do not know Jesus personally. You are separated from Him. It is not enough to know about Him you must ‘receive’ Him. Accept Him.
- Let me clarify:
 - *“All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6, NLT)*
 - IE. The heaven is up there/God laid on him the sin of us all.
 - All we have to do is believe and receive him.