

Renewing Christmas

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Date: 25 December 2012

Preacher: Tobin Miller

[0 : 00] Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas. Well done for getting up this morning and getting here. We're so happy that you're here to worship with us.

Can I invite you to stand? Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father Lord, we thank you for this Christmas morning.

We thank you that you are Lord and that we can come and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ this morning together as a family. Father, we just want to bring you glory.

We want to bring you praise. And we just pray that Lord as we sing the songs this morning that they will be more than songs, that they will be a fragrant offering to you. We thank you and we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Hi, my name is Caitlin Miller. This is my dad, Pastor Tobin.

[0 : 58] This is my mom, Christina. These are my sisters, Rachel and Rebecca. This is my brother, Kip.

Last but not least, this is my grandmother, Nana. This is my dad. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. This is the final day of Advent, Christmas Day.

Each week of Advent, we've been preparing to celebrate Jesus' birth by lighting a candle and focusing on different themes of Christ's coming. In this process, we have lit the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love.

Today, we celebrate the birth of Jesus by lighting the Christ candle. While each of the different aspects of Jesus' birth that we have celebrated during this season, hope, peace, joy, and love are good, they and them of themselves are not ultimately what we celebrate.

Ultimately, we celebrate Christ, God who became a man, lived a perfect life, died to pay the penalty we owe for our sins, and rose again in victory over death. Because apart from this, we would not truly know any of these other good things.

[2 : 02] The gift of Christ is not just something that was available to people 2,000 years ago, but something which is freely offered to us today as well. Although Jesus has returned to heaven, he has given us a promise that he will one day come to the earth again to bring his followers to be with him forever.

And until that day, he will be with his people wherever they go. Please join us for the scripture reading found in John 14, 1-4.

The words are on your screen behind me. Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me.

In my Father's house there are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take yourself. That's where I am.

[3 : 00] You are also. And you are on the way to where I am. And in Matthew 28, 20, we find this. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

Please pray with us. Dear Father, thank you for Jesus, the perfect gift that you gave to us. We celebrate the fact that through Jesus, our ultimate need in life, a restored relationship with you has been met.

Thank you that even today, Jesus remains with us, guiding us in our lives, and that one day he will return to bring his followers to be with him forever.

God, we love you and praise you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Before you're seated, will you turn around and just wish somebody a Merry Christmas and welcome them to the house of the Lord?

I'm going to try something that we've never tried before. And so what I would like to do is I'm on, so we'll try it.

[4 : 08] I'd like to ask all the kiddos to come up here, please. And just sit down right here. Wow.

Test, test, test, test, test, test. Okay. How you guys doing? Hey, okay, so this is going to be very special because we're not having kids class today.

So I need you guys to be really good and help me on this, okay? Because I need a lot of help, okay? Okay, so this is what we're going to do.

I have some questions, and if you answer, hey, Timothy, watch out for the candles right there, okay? Okay. Okay, great. Okay, so I need some help.

So somebody told me today was a special day. What is today? Christmas Day. Christmas Day. Jesus' birth.

[5 : 05] Wow, you guys, you can come up and preach afterwards, right? You can come up and preach. Good job. What? Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, right? Whenever in church you say Jesus Christ, and you'll never get in trouble there, right?

Okay. Okay, so I love Christmas Day and Christmas holidays because there's a lot of symbols. You know what a symbol is? A lot of things that represent something about Christmas.

And so can you show me something around here that represents Christmas? Ben. Christmas tree.

Those signs. It's joy, peace, Christ, love, hope.

That's what Jesus came to bring. Okay, Eva. Christmas tree. Christmas tree. Excellent. Tim.

Candles. What do the candles represent? Do you know? Lights. Every Sunday.

Every Sunday. Lights, yeah. You're really good. Good, good, good, good, good, good. Andrew, what do you see? Do you see anything else? Presents.

[6 : 02] Okay, so, hey, you know, you know what my favorite thing about Christmas is? No, my favorite thing about Christmas is food. Have any of you had Christmas food yet? No?

Oh, wow. Look at me. Okay, let me do something here. Cookie. I have something I need you to help me with, okay? I have dinner party up. Wait. Can anybody tell me what this is?

Ten. Okay, so this has a lot of symbols in it. Can anybody tell me one of the symbols? Elena. If you turn it upside down, it looks like a J for Jesus.

Okay, who else? Elena. The red represents when Jesus died. Excellent. So the red represents Jesus when he died. He got beat up on the cross in his blood.

And his blood does what for us? Does anybody know that? Clean our sins. Dude, you come up and preach. Clean our sins. Wash our sins. Great. Okay, so we got the red and we got the J. What else?

[7 : 02] White represents what? White represents Jesus being holy and pure, right? And so the white represents he's perfect because white is perfect.

Any other things about this you can tell me? Yes. Okay, writer. Shepherd's stick. Excellent. Okay, you are on it, dude. That's all I know, too.

So the candy cane is a shepherd's stick. And what does a shepherd do? He's a walking dog. Guide his sheep. He guides his sheep, right.

And then he takes the shepherd's up. Yes. God is our shepherd. Right. Okay, so what I'm going to do is I, you don't like candy canes, though, do you? Just Miland and I are going to eat all these.

Is that okay? What? Okay, so you got to promise me something really special, guys. Okay? Holly, can you promise me? Esri, can you promise me?

[7 : 59] Okay. Hey, we're going to pray. And I want you to pray with me. And then afterwards, I have candy canes for everybody in here. But we can't do it all here because then we won't have any more church.

We'll just be eating all the time. So I'm going to give some candy canes to some friends, and they're going to help give them to you. And then we're going to go sit down. And then after church, you can eat your candy canes.

And if you're really good, I might have some extra candy canes you can come get from me. Okay?

Is that a deal? Javi? Is that a deal? Okay, Spider-Man. Okay. Okay, so let me pray for us, okay?

And you can pray with me, okay? Dear God, thank you for the gift of Jesus. Thank you for bringing us back to your family.

Thank you for bringing us back to your family. We pray for all our friends who don't know Jesus.

Help them this season to meet Jesus.

[9 : 07] We love you. Help us to obey our parents. Excellent. In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Excellent. You guys are so good. Give yourself a hand. Can you clap for me? Okay. Okay. Okay. Go back to your seats with your parents.

I'm on. And so we're going to have Susie and some adults are going to help me give out some candies. Okay. Can you help give out the candies for the kiddos?

Okay. Not the big ones. Okay. Everybody gets one. Yeah, buddy. Here you go. Here you go, Javi. Merry Christmas.

I didn't want to say that for a long time. Thank you. We have just a very short message for you today as we've been praying about this season.

[10 : 11] You love kids, right? How can you be the kid's lesson? Because the kid just got in there and just went, whoop, and he just, he knew he wanted the candy cane, so he got them. And I'm going to try something I've never done again, sit on a chair, and just welcome you guys to our Watermark Christmas service.

This day always means a lot as we think about why we come to celebrate. My name is Tobin Miller. I'm a teaching pastor here at Watermark.

If you're here with us for the first time, we have several pastors that oversee different things. And so I would like to share with you just a Christmas reading for today. The Christmas reading for today comes from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2, verses 1 through 19.

Now, in those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the census should be taken of all the inhabited earth. This is incredibly important.

I'm just going to make two-second comment on this. Because Luke was a doctor, he was probably one of the greatest historians in the old age, and if he wanted to write fiction, if he wanted to write something that was fantasy, even in Greek, he would have said something like, once upon a time, or a long time ago, or in a hole there lived a hobbit.

[11 : 33] But he doesn't. He says very clearly, in those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus. He plants Jesus' birth in a time. And as a historian, what he's saying to us here right now, he's saying, check it out.

Prove me wrong. Show me that I'm not writing fact. You can go observe all these things. They're all there. The witnesses are there. I've done it over and over and over.

And I want you to also. Now, in those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city.

Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the family of David in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was with child.

While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in cloths, laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

[12 : 51] In the same region, there were shepherds staying out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And the angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them. And the glory of the Lord showed around them.

And they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, do not be afraid. For behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all the people.

For today in the city of David, there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of heavenly hosts, praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased.

When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.

So they came in a hurry, and they found their way to Mary and Joseph and the baby as he lay in a manger. And when they had seen this, they made known to everyone the statement which had been told to him about this child.

[14 : 08] And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told him by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. The shepherds went back, glorifying

and praising God for all they had heard and seen, which has been told them.

You know, every time I read this passage, I get overwhelmed. And I have read it hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of times.

You see, the incredible thing about Christmas to me, the amazing thing about this season, is that all over the world, throughout history, in thousands of languages, men, women, and children everywhere, celebrate the birth of a baby boy.

Some people celebrate privately, in their heart, by themselves. Some people celebrate, like us today, very publicly. And some still have to celebrate very secretly, in fear of their lives.

But in this time of the year, we are joining, think about this. We are joining with hundreds of millions of people all around the world.

[15 : 20] And through a span of history that is 2,000 years long, in countless countries, in multitudes of languages, to do one thing, to celebrate the birth of a little Jewish baby boy.

That we believe grew up to be the Savior of the world. A Savior who promised to not...

A Savior who never promised... I've got to get this wording right, because I've been praying about this. A Savior who never promised to keep us from our sin. But a Savior who promised to save us from...

And forgive us our sin. A Savior who came to show us that God has given us a way. He has built a firm foundation on which we could stand. A foundation which we would never have to doubt.

And so we stand on this foundation today... And we look back 2,000 years. This foundation is Jesus Christ. So that now, as we stand on this foundation and we talk to God...

[16 : 31] We can address Him as Father. As Heavenly Father. In spite of our past.

In spite of our failures. In spite of our weaknesses. In spite of our sins. We can come before the Creator of the world today.

Because of that little baby. And we can call Him Father. This is a season that we're reminded that God has drawn near to us.

Every other faith, every other religion in the world... Says... This is how you get to God. And I give you 1, 2, 3, 4 things that you must do or perform.

But in Christmas, God is saying, I am God. And I've come to you. This is the season that we are reminded that God has drawn near to us.

[17 : 34] God has drawn near to us. Those of us who have drawn away from Him. Those of us who have been drawn away by our sins. Our selfishness.

Our self-reliance. Our self-sufficiency. God has come to you. I don't know if you've ever thought about that.

This isn't the season when we can no longer negotiate our sin to God. Because the time for negotiating our sin to God is done with. It was finished in a manger.

That will one day be turned into a cross. And at this cross, your sin and my sin is forgiven.

Your sin and my sin is forgiven. The story in the song we read says, For unto us has been born a son.

[18 : 43] For unto you. For unto Tobin. For unto Pat. Unto Susie.

Unto Tom. Unto Jim. Unto Mike. Unto you. Has born a Savior. Who is Christ the Lord.

We're told that He's a Savior that brings peace. It's the kind of peace that allows us to go to bed at night. And realize that even as we look out in the world around us.

And things are crazy and not peaceful. It's the kind of peace that we realize as we go to bed.

Tonight that maybe even things aren't right with the people right next to us.

But it's the peace that reminds us that everything is okay between us and God. When Christ says, I come to bring peace.

[19 : 45] What He's talking about is a relationship between the creator of the universe and you.

And as we look out in the world today. And you just have to read the newspapers.

You see that there's not a lot of peace. There is chaos in everything around us. But the peace that is of Christmas. Is the peace that Christ has brought.

Between you and God. This peace isn't because of anything you've done. This peace isn't because of anything you haven't done. But the peace that Christ brings us today on our behalf.

Is solely because of what God has done for you. Christianity and Christmas is not about do this, do that, and then you get right with God.

But Christianity and Christmas is about Christ coming. To make everything right for God to you. And your choice is to accept it.

[20 : 48] For unto us is born a Savior. He is Christ the Lord. I know that there are many different groups of people in here today.

There are some people who, this is the first time you've ever heard this message. There are some people like my good friend back in the States.

We have been talking about this message for years and years and years. And every time I talk to him about Christ. And every time I talk to him about Christmas.

His response is always the same. If I believe, I'll have to change my life. I don't want to investigate. He reminds me of another friend I have in the States. Who probably has cancer. But he doesn't want to go to the doctor to get it checked out. And we tell him all the time, you need to go to the doctor to get it checked out.

[21 : 52] But he says to me, if I go, the doctor is going to find cancer. And things are not going to be good. And both of these friends of mine, they both have something that will ultimately kill them.

But they don't want to find out the cure. And my prayer for you tonight, today, this Christmas, if you're one of those people who you're finding this for the first time, or you've been running away for a long time, you don't want to change your life, you don't want to do do's or don'ts, you're afraid of what God's going to tell you, my prayer and hope for you is that you would think about the message that a Savior has been born to you.

And investigate what Luke shares with us today. There's others of us who've been on this journey a long time in our faith. And sometimes we come to Christmas ceremonies like this and services, and we just kind of sit back and, okay, I've heard this.

This is my 180th time I've heard a Christmas sermon and message. And my prayer for you and for myself is that today as we come before Christmas, today as we come before Christ, that we realize that we have a Savior who was born in the world to make all things right.

And that is as deep as it gets in the Christian faith. Sometimes as Christians, we want to study, we want to study, we want to study, we want to know all these books, we want to know all these truths, and we think that if we do all these things, we'll get closer to God.

[23 : 40] But the truth of this passage, the truth of the message of the Bible is the gospel that Jesus came to make a way for you is as deep as it gets.

And our job as Christians is every day is to apply that to our life and ask ourselves, what does it mean when I walk into my workplace and things are not good and I need a Savior?

What does it mean that Christ came for me and my house is out of control? And how do I act because of that? What does it mean as I go on this journey and things don't turn out the way that I hope they would, that for unto me this day in the city of Bethlehem was born a Savior who's made all things right.

And our choice today is will we accept that? will we live in that truth? Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this season.

We thank you for this moment to reflect. We thank you for this celebration. Thank you for those of us here who consider ourselves good people. thank you for those of us here who consider ourselves not so good people.

[25 : 08] Thank you for those of us here who are not sure there's not much good in us at all. Lord, this passage and this message shares with us today that we all come with the same need.

we all need a Savior. We all desperately need forgiveness. We all desperately need massive amounts of mercy, grace, compassion.

So this Christmas season right here, right now, in Hong Kong, 2012, we all join hands around a manger that will one day become a cross that will one day represent forgiveness and salvation from our sin for all who accept this free gift that you give us today.

Father, we pray that the reality of this kind of grace, we pray that the reality of this kind of mercy would not just be something that we simply accept for ourselves and it ends there.

but we pray that it would be something that we would take out from here today, that we would live out our lives with this hope, with this renewed faith, with this renewed focus on your Son, Jesus Christ, and that we would share it with all those around us.

[26 : 39] Thank you for Jesus. Thank you for Christmas. Thank you for a place to stop and reflect and worship and to celebrate.

Father, we love you and we pray all these things in your Son, Jesus Christ, holy name. Amen. I got a request, so what would you like to say, everybody?

Can you say something? Say it now. Say it right now. Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas. Yeah. Did you open up any presents yet today? What did you get?

Yeah, she's looking for her two front teeth. That's what she's looking for. Hey, if this is your first time here, we meet here every Sunday at 1030. We have a children's ministry, an amazing staff that oversees that and university ministries and everything else going on.

For us, typically, the next step is we ask people to get involved in a community group where we gather as smaller groups of people just to get to know each other and we talk a lot about going on a journey together as we walk with God.

[27 : 48] Right after this, we have one of my favorite photographers Ian is going to be here and he's going to take some pictures. He's an amazing photographer and we thought this would be a great time if you want to get a family picture.

That's why I'm wearing the suit. Everybody's giving me grief but that's, I'm wearing the suit for the family picture, okay? So he'll be up here. Ian will take your pictures and on July 7th, he's going to post them online January 7th.

That'd be a long, yeah. Some of us, he really has to make look good so it's going to take him a while. So January 7th, so we'll have the link for that so please don't leave here without the opportunity to get a family picture.

There's food and drinks in the back so we'd love for you just to hang out. If you're new here, I'd like to get a chance to get to know you and let me pray for us. Father, we just thank you for this day.

We thank you as we sing of joy, hope, love and peace. We know that you have come to put those back in our life and I think if we're honest, most of us, and even as we look at the news and around the world, most of the people we run into are not experiencing those things.

[28 : 59] But in this Christmas season, we celebrate your gift of your son, Jesus, who died, who came and died to bring us those things, to bring us back to you.

So we love you and we thank you for this day. We pray all these things in your son, Jesus' name.