

When you lose CHRISTmas?

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[0 : 00] This is the fourth Sunday of Advent. Each week of Advent, we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth by lighting a candle and focusing on different themes of Christ's coming.

So far, we have lit the candles of hope, peace, and joy. This week, we light the candle of love. During the time of the Old Testament, God had revealed himself to his people through the law. The law told the people what God expected of them in their day-to-day conduct. It was a loving gift from a good God intended to show his people how to love him and how to love one another. By the time Jesus was born, however, the law had been usurped by the religious leader of the day, who used the law to oppress those who couldn't keep its rules as perfectly as they could. When Jesus came into the world, he came reminding everyone that the goal of the law was not conformity to a set of rules, but rather love, both for God and for our neighbors.

[1 : 03] The law's goal of helping us love God is somewhat ironic, since in reality, the law shows us all of our imperfections and reminds us just how short we fall of truly being able to love God as we should.

When he came into the world, Jesus came to remedy this problem as well. By dying on the cross for us and bearing the punishment for our sins, Jesus showed us God's love and gave us a way that we can now properly love God and others.

Please join me for the reading of God's Word, found in Matthew 22, 35-40. The passage is also located on the screens. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.

Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law? And he said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. And these two commandments depend on all the law and the prophets.

[2 : 11] Please pray with me. Dear Father, thank you for your love for us. Thank you for showing us your love through Jesus' perfect life, death on the cross for our sins and resurrection.

Please be with us as we go throughout our weeks, allowing us to fix our eyes on you, to love you with all our hearts, souls, and minds, and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Before you're seated, please take a moment to meet and greet members of your Watermark community standing next to you. Okay. And after you've met at least one person, you can, or two people, or three people, sit down.

Thank you. Yeah. How you guys doing? Okay. Hey, I noticed that there are a lot of, I want to be politically correct, so, my mother is here, joining us, and so I noticed, so I noticed that there's a lot of people who had more senior members in their family joining them today, and so, if you could say it that way, I don't know if you can.

So if you have a grandmother, a mother, a dad, or somebody like that, would you, envision us today, would you raise your hand? I know you're not supposed to do that, but just raise your hand. Come on, SV. Okay, well, we'd like to welcome you guys today, so you're about to see, if you haven't heard about what the church is like, you're about to see it in real life time right now, and it's, I use the word raw, but some people say you can't use raw, you have to use the word organic, and so we use organic or just chaos, and so what I'd like to do is, I'd like to invite all the Watermark kids up here, and they're going to do a special performance for us.

[4 : 02] Conducted by Natalie, conductor. Okay, here we go. That is right. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. The bells of Jesus are sweet for the rain.

The candles are waiting for the rain. The bells of Jesus are bright.

He makes a això love to hear the sun and by the sphere, the thuy? The psalm of the surf.

[5 : 16] Hear me, O Lord, hear thy sky. I see to save those times forever and love me I pray.
 Let us know the dear children who can die tender care. And take us to heaven to live with me there.
 Take us to heaven to live with me there. Hear our songs!
 Here we go! In the sun the started night The land of Israelisoft interact And grace began, screaming
 calm and still.
 And in the path of shame, in the nature, For the world was born in all the world.
 [6 : 39] I've been praying for days, our Lord was born in all the world.
 And in the path of shame, in the path of shame, in the path of shame, For the world was born in all
 the world.
 Here we go. Then the shepherds came away, where God gave His name, And said, we live, and
 kneeling upon His side.
 And I'm part of the heart of the land, for the peace of land, And for the world was born in all the
 world.
 Angels and men, the land and the land, for the world was born in all the world.
 [7 : 53] Only if you'll say, my name, and love you, and the land and the land, for the world was born
 in all the world.
 And that's what I want to say. And that's what I want to say. Great job, you guys. Thank you guys.
 Thank you guys. I want to thank you guys. I want to thank you guys for reading and loudly, okay?
 You guys know this one. Le sex is a light.
 You fâ sushi. You are not a God, it depends on all that we have.
 You are a God, it needs a plan, anything we can give by a plan, that's just the way it is.
 [8 : 53] You are a God, it needs a plan, that you can't have.
 You are not a God, it depends on any one of them. You are not a God, it needs a plan, anything we
 can give by a plan, that's just the way it is.
 I need you guys to be really loud here. Let's see. You are God alone, God's happy day. You are not
 alone, you are not alone.
 And right now, in the middle of the mountain, you are not alone, you are God alone.
 You are not alone, you are not alone. Right now, in the middle of the mountain, you are not alone,
 you are not alone. You are not alone, you are not alone, you are not alone.
 [9 : 59] You are not alone, you are not alone. You are not alone, you are not alone, you are not
 alone. Oh, God, you have our arms and our children's name. You are all God, you can live and live
 and never end.
 And you are all God, you can live and let him be a gift. You are God, you have just the way it is.
 We are God of love, from what I've been there. You are all God, you are God alone.
 And right now, loose hands and bed, you are all God alone. You are God alone.
 Unstoppable, unshakable, unstoppable. Unchangeable, unshakable.
 [11 : 05] Unstoppable, that's what you are. You are God alone.
 Unweetened when you're free of love and never end. You are all God, you have just the way it is.
 And right now, in the go-times and best You are on the tour You are God alone Amazing!
 That was great, guys. Thanks for doing that. Hey, I'm going to pray for us, okay? Can you guys pray
 with me? I'm going to pray for us And then you guys are going to be dismissed to your class, okay?
 So let's pray, okay? Dear God, thank you for this day. Thank you for my friends here. Thank you for
 your son, Jesus. We just pray that we would continue to fall more in love with him as we see him in
 your word, in your world, in the family around us.
 We love you. We pray for these children as they go off to their Sunday school classes. Pray for the
 teachers. Just pray for mercy and for grace on the teachers. We pray that the kids would just fall in
 love with Christ and know him at an early age and do mighty things for his kingdom.
 [12 : 44] And so we love you and we thank you for these precious gifts. Amen. Amen. Okay,
 Watermark kids, you guys are dismissed. Time to go to Sunday school class. Good morning,
 Watermark.
 My name is Chris and I help oversee the community groups here in Watermark. I'm glad you've
 made it through the end of the world and you're still here. I don't know about you, but I've got a
 memory like a goldfish at times.

I forget lots of things. I'm halfway through a sentence and I forget what I was going to say. I go into the kitchen to get something and as I get in there, I think, why did I come in here?

Or maybe I go out shopping, maybe go Christmas shopping and I'm there, I'm looking at all the different things that are on offer and I think there was someone I needed to buy a gift for.

And I get back home and then suddenly I realized that it was someone I really love, like maybe my fiance or someone who you don't want to forget a gift for.

[13:55] And if you're like me, you need reminders. Reminders of why you're here, what you're doing, what things are really all about. I need a note on my desk.

I need an alarm on my phone. I need a text message from my fiance just to keep me doing what I'm meant to be doing. And I think all of us in some ways are forgetters.

We naturally, in the busyness of life, even at this Christmas season, we get so wrapped up in all the things we have to do, in our schedules, in our work, in our preparations, that sometimes we lose sight of what we're here for, of who we really are, of what really defines us.

And Jesus instituted a meal as a reminder to us of who we are, of what defines us, and of what we're here for.

It was a meal that had been celebrated for hundreds of years by the Jews. It was a meal that celebrated when God had rescued his people out of slavery in the land of Egypt, and he brought them into freedom.

[15:09] He brought them into freedom to know God, to live for God. And to bring them into this freedom, what God did is, he said, I'm going to bring judgment on the people in the land of Egypt.

But you, my people, I want you to kill a lamb and place its blood on the doorposts of your houses. And when my judgment comes, it will pass over you, and you can escape to freedom.

Jesus, on the night before he died, also ate that meal. That meal is called the Passover.

He ate that meal, but when he ate it, he said, that lamb a long time ago, that lamb was pointing towards me, because I am going to die to bring you out of slavery and into freedom.

Out of slavery for all the things which consume us in our lives. Out of slavery to maybe what people think about us. Out of slavery to our schedules.

[16:17] Out of slavery to unforgiveness, to anger, to bitterness. He said, I've come to bring you freedom. Freedom to live for God. Freedom to know God.

Freedom to be who you are meant to be. And so as we come to communion, this is a reminder to all of us, because I don't know what's happened in your week, but actually, we all at times forget who we are.

We forget that it's Jesus who defines us. We forget that we're here for him. And as we come to eat of it, I want you to think about this week.

What is it that maybe you've lost sight of who you're here for? You've lost sight of Jesus. You've lost sight of freedom. And this meal reminds you that you're not a slave anymore.

We were once slaves to all kinds of things, but God says you're not a slave anymore. You can live free. And here's a reminder that Jesus' death brings freedom to all who will follow and trust in him.

[17:22] So as we come to take of it, this is a family meal, which means if you have not yet trusted in Jesus as the one who can set you free from those things which enslave us, then we just ask you, we're so glad you're here, we just ask you to watch, observe, and ask questions.

If you're here with someone who's brought you, don't let them go away without you asking, what is Jesus' death really all about? If you've got children and they're still in, we ask you that you please bring them up, but if you know where they are spiritually, and if you still have the children in here, let them take communion if you think they have trusted in Jesus.

But if not, use it as a teaching time just to help them know what it is to really put their trust in Jesus.

So if the community students could come up, and I'd like you to just have a moment to think about, even this past week, where are the areas where maybe you've been slaved to different things?

You've taken your focus off of God. And take this moment just to reflect on that, and to reflect on what Jesus has done. And then when you're ready, come up and take the elements.

On that night of that meal, Jesus took some bread, and he gave it to his disciples. And he said, this is my body, which is given for you.

[18:53] Take this as a reminder that I am who defines you, that my death is what saves you. The body of Christ. Amen. And on that same night, he also took a cup, and he gave it to his disciples, and said, this is my blood, the blood of a new covenant, which I give for you for the forgiveness of

your sins.

For all those times where you have gone away and forgotten, here is forgiveness for you. Drink this. Let me just pray for us.

Father, I thank you so much that at Christmas time, we remember that you came to die for us. You came to release us from slavery, to bring us into freedom.

And I pray, Lord, that as Tobin comes to speak to us, that you would also speak to us, that you would also show us more about yourself, that you would help us to make you the center of our lives, and to realize that everything is all about you.

So we pray these things in your name. Amen. Amen. Today's scripture reading come from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2.

[20 : 27] Please follow along in your bulletin. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of Passover. And when he became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the feast.

And as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But his parents were unaware of it, but supposed him to be in the caravan and went a day's journey.

And they began looking for him among their relatives and acquaintances. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for him. Then, after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When they saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, Son, why have you treated us this way?

Behold, your father and I have been anxiously looking for you. And he said to them, Why is it that you are looking for me? Did you not know that I had to be in my father's house? But they did not understand the statement which he had made to them.

[21 : 33] And he went down with them and came to Nazareth. And he continued in subjection to them. And his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, in favor with God and men.

This is God's word. That was great. Thanks, guys. Thanks, Natalie, for controlling the kids.

And one mom on the way up, the kids said, I don't know if I know that song. She said, just sing Watermelon, Watermelon, Watermelon. Move your lips and you'll be okay. So, yeah.

So now you get a little idea of what the kids are learning in Sunday school also as we teach them and bring them in this up on what it means to know Christ. If you're here for the first time, I'd like to welcome you to Watermark Community Church.

Our focus is to point people to Christ. That they would fall in love with him. They would walk a lifetime with him. That would be the most important thing in their life.

[22 : 35] Christmas is upon us. So I think we have two more days of shopping. It was incredible. I love this time of the season. I love being out there.

I love, though I have certain rules, like don't go down to Causeway Bay on the weekends or things like that. But I love just the music and the sound.

We had the church-wide lunch last Sunday. And I went up to a three-year-old. And I said, I love asking kids, you know, what about Christmas and things like that. And I said, three-year-old. I said, so what do you want for Christmas?

And the three-year-old looked at me and said, I want an iPad. Three years old. I want an iPad. I was like, whoa, okay.

I just got like little blocks or things like that. So I think times have really changed nowadays. So we think about Christmas and being a parent. And it's kind of got our, yeah, we got our work cut out for us.

[23 : 36] It's interesting to me also when the Christmas music starts in late April or early May. It's hard to get into the season then, too, because you're used to it starting in November or December, the very first part of December.

But here it just starts anytime. So you walk into the mall and it's always Christmas. So it's kind of interesting to be a part of that. But to see the trees and to hear the music and to reflect back on why do we come together today?

Why are we here to worship? It's reminded of this story of three men who died during Christmas.

And they went up to heaven. And they met St. Peter there. And Peter looked at them and said, well, since it's Christmas time, I'm not going to ask you the normal questions.

I'm going to ask you special questions. I'd like for you just to produce something that symbolizes Christmas for you. Bring out something that you have on your person that shows the meaning or what Christmas is about to you.

[24 : 46] The first guy I thought really panicking. He was trying to think about what he was going to do. What did he have on him that represented Christmas? What could he produce so that he could get into heaven? Now, this isn't real. You don't produce things to get into heaven.

This is his story. Just follow me, okay? And so he pulls out this big lighter and he lights it. And he goes, this represents the candles that we light and the stars at night and all the light in the midst of darkness.

And Peter will go, that's pretty good. And he looked at the second guy. And the second guy was kind of panicking. And he didn't know what to produce. And all of a sudden he, okay, okay, I got it, I got it. And so he reaches into his pocket and he pulls out his keys.

And he jingles them. And the keys jingling represents the sound of music and carols and the bells jingling and do-do-do-do and all this stuff. And Peter goes, that's pretty good.

Okay. Third guy, he's like, he's white. He's like, he has no idea what he's going to do, how he's going to produce. He just, you know, he has, he doesn't know how he's going to get into heaven.

[25 : 50] And all of a sudden he, and he reaches deep into his pocket and he pulls out a pair of women's reading glasses. And he lays them on the table.

And Peter looks at him going, okay, you got to, you got to help me out. How does this represent Christmas? He says, those are carols.

Okay. The red and yellows in you are going to be thinking about that. All your discernment, those are carols. What does that mean? So, but that's, that's what I love. You know, Christmas is about having fun.

It's about thinking about things. It's an amazing time to me. But Christmas is also this paradox to me. It's an anomaly to me. It's, it's, it's craziness.

As I think about it, it's a story of amazing highs amidst amazing lows. It's a story of light in the middle of darkness.

[26 : 58] It's, it's a story of hope when there was no hope in the history of the world. It's a story of life that will be centered on death.

We're celebrating a baby that we're going to kill so that we might have life. And every time I think of that, I wonder. I was at a party last night.

I don't make these stories up. You can ask me. And Tim was there. My wife was there. We were talking to our neighbors down below. And it was a great party. I mean, the people that are not churchgoers, if they were churchgoers, it would have been the most amazing evangelistic outreach party ever.

There was about 80 little kids running around and Santa Claus came in. We were singing songs and we were, we were doing all these carols. And it was just incredible. And in the midst of this time, I looked at one of the ladies and we're talking and I'm saying, isn't this amazing?

This is amazing. And all of a sudden she just looked at me and I don't know if it's something happened. And she goes, yep, you know, there's something very dark about this season.

[28 : 10] There's something very sad about this season. There's something that when I think about it, she's telling me this and I'm just sitting there and just nodding my head.

There's something very sad when I think about this time of year. And I just feel lonely. Now you and I know what she's missing.

But she doesn't. Christmas is a story full of people who miss the meaning of Christmas and they lose everything. It's a story of people who get the meaning of Christ and Christmas and they gain everything.

Christmas is a very, very interesting time. And the thing that perplexes me and amazes me is that story continues today. And so what I want to do is very briefly, I want to look at a story of people who found Christ and lost him.

You heard it read. It's in your bulletin. Today's passage is the go-to passage for all Christmas passages. Whenever you go to a church for the first time, chances are pretty high during Christmas you're going to hear Luke chapter 2 verses 1 through 19 read.

[29 : 39] Because it's the go-to passage. You probably will not hear the passage that we're going to talk about read today. Because it's not seen as a traditional Easter or Christmas passage.

But what I've been experiencing in my life is that it is a go-to passage for me. It's a think about God and what he means and how we do that. You read in the bulletin that it is the Passover.

Now the Passover was very, very special. It was a celebration that usually happened in March or April. And it was a flashback to God redeeming his people from Egypt.

It was a massive, massive celebration where all the people of God were required by religious law to go back to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. All Jewish males 13 years or older had to be at the Passover.

It was one of three holidays they had to celebrate. So that the minute a boy turned 13, he was required by law to go to Jerusalem and participate in the Passover and to sacrifice and to make sacrifices for his sin.

[30 : 49] We're told that Jerusalem, which is only one square kilometer. Now think about this. One square kilometer at this time. Now Hong Kong Island is 80 square kilometers.

Jerusalem was one square kilometer. But on this celebration, on this day, the population of Jerusalem was larger than the population of Hong Kong Island. 1.5 million people squeezed into a place about the size of Cyberport and Sandy Bay to fulfill their religious duty to sacrifice and to worship.

The Passover lasted about a week. It was usually tacked on to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And so the Jewish people would go there and they would partake in this ceremony and this festival.

On this Passover, we're told that 270,000 lambs were killed to atone for the people of God's sin.

We have records of it. You can go back and you can read them. 270,000 people. And as we look at this passage, you've got to ask yourself some questions. Why did God put this passage here?

[32 : 05] Because we're told at the end of Scripture that the stories of Jesus were so many that if you wrote them all down, the books of the world could not contain it. And so you have to ask the question, why did God put this passage here?

What's so special about this passage that he wants us to know? What does he want us to learn from this? And I think there are several things that I learned from this passage. The first thing that I learned is that Mary and Joseph, they were good parents.

They were good Jews. They brought their kids up into the tradition of the religious household of that day. They kept all the sacrifices. They did all the laws. They took the journey to Jerusalem every year.

Now, from Nazareth to Jerusalem, it was a three-day journey. Typically, people would go on this journey in a community, in a family, for protection. And so they would take three days to travel to Jerusalem.

They would partake in about a seven- to eight-day ceremony. And then they would take three days to travel back. And in this ceremony, that's how long it took. In other ceremonies, it took longer.

[33 : 08] But we're told that Jesus' parents were good Jewish parents. And they did this all the time. Another thing that sticks out here in verse 42 is this.

This is really important. Because when a Jewish boy turned 12, it was a start of one year of intensive internship.

For one year, his dad took him along and mentored him and taught him everything about his profession, about being a husband, about being a dad, about the family of God, about the religious aspects.

For that one year, beginning now, when Jesus turned 12, his dad would have had him under intense mentorship, been with him all the time, teaching him and explaining to him. Because when Jesus turned 13, he got bar mitzvah.

Bar means son. Mitzvah means commandment. He became a son of the commandment. He became an adult. So at 13 years old, he was a man.

[34 : 15] And so we know that this is Jesus' last year before he becomes a man. And it would have been a time when he would have stayed very close to his dad. He would have never ventured from his dad. His dad would have been talking to him all the time.

This passage is also interesting because it's the only time in all of the scripture where you see Jesus as a boy. All the other times in the Bible, we see that Jesus is a baby or that Jesus is a man.

But this is the only time that Jesus is a boy. And this is the first words that are recorded in all the Bible that Jesus speaks. So we get excited sometimes when we say, Daddy, Mommy, and all these things.

And these weren't his first words, but these are the first words that God chose to record for us so that we could learn about God during this season and during this time.

And then in verse 43 and 44, we see something amazing. In verse 43 and 44, we see that the ceremony is over. The celebration is over. People are on this high. They're on this religious.

[35 : 17] This is the greatest retreat ever. This is amazing. They all pack up and they leave. And they leave Jesus behind. The words are very specific.

It says that they left him behind, supposing that he was with them, thinking that he was there, taking it for granted that Jesus was with them. His family left them behind.

And they go on this journey for one day before they stop and they realize, what have we done? We've left our son.

But this isn't just our son. This is the son of God. I mean, they knew all the stories. They were ready. They were protecting him. They were guarding him. I mean, on my way to the community center this week, I went by a school.

And in the school, there was lined up all these parents outside waiting to pick their kids up because our kids are special. We protect them. We guard them. But here, you have a very special kid.

[36 : 16] You have the ultimate kid. You have the kid who's going to save us all. And they leave them behind. And you wonder what his parents were thinking. You wonder if they were thinking, I hope Herod doesn't get a hold of him because Herod's already killed all those little babies before his birth.

If Herod finds him, he's dead. I hope the Romans don't get a hold of him because if the Romans find out about him, they're going to kill him. I hope the leaders of the Sanhedrin don't get a hold of him because they know in the stars there's predicted a ruler that's going to usurp their power.

And we are really worried about what's going to happen. What is going to happen here? And so they, one day out, one day back, one day searching, frantically trying to figure out what it was all about.

Can you imagine what that would have been like? Can you imagine just the anger, the pain, the suffering, the, I thought you did this.

How come, you're the dad, you're supposed to be with him. Well, I thought he was with you. And where's Jesus? We thought he was with us.

[37 : 25] Can you, sidebar here, I got to think this. Can you imagine what it was like to have Jesus as a child? Have you ever thought about that?

I mean, you're in your room and you hear this crash in the kid's room and you run in there and my response is, who did this? Which I've been told is wrong.

My wife comes in and she tells me, don't do that. You should come in and say, hmm, how did this happen? Well, when Jesus is your kid and you hear the crash and you run into the room, what do you do?

Jesus, who did this? Okay, I trust him. Because usually at my house, when I go in, who did this? The fingers are going, you know.

And it's interesting because we're always told we don't compare our kids to each other. But if Jesus is your son, you'd be going, hey, Isaac, why don't you be more like Jesus?

[38 : 28] And it would be a good thing, wouldn't it? It would be a great thing. I mean, it would be a great thing to have him as a role model for your kids.

And then I get in a fight with my wife. And I lose my temper. And I'm just being not nice, carnal, sinful.

And I walk into my room and one of my kids follows me in there and says, dad. You were really hard on mom. You should apologize to her.

And in my mind, I'm thinking, yeah, but you don't understand, right? Because she did this and I was expecting this. And it's really not my fault because it was really her fault. And you still understand because you're a kid.

But if Jesus were your son, he would know everything, right? And he's like, okay, dad, before you bring up that excuse, I know that you're just really struggling with identity issues.

[39 : 33] You're really struggling with who you are and how I've made you. You need to lighten up a little. And really, it's not just because of you. It's not her fault.

It's your fault, right? So, dad, I think you should go back. I think you should go apologize to your mom. And, oh, yeah, after you do that, you can come repent to me. Not good, right?

You don't ever want your kids saying that at all, right? But here, Jesus' parents lose him. And they go on this journey. And they try to find him. And as I read this passage, I wonder what it would have been like to be without Jesus for three days.

And then I realize that often in my life, I'm without him for three days.

Sometimes I lose him in my work. Sometimes I lose him in my marriage. Sometimes I lose him in life. And I go on this journey.

[40 : 39] And I think that Christ is traveling with me. And I misplace him. Taking it for granted that he was with me.

He wasn't. This passage, to me, speaks over and over about how we sometimes misplace Christ in our life, especially during this Christmas season.

You know, sometimes, sometimes we misplace him because we're too busy. There have been several times this week where I've gone to three different Christmas parties, running from place to place.

I've got him to get to where I'm going to go. Supposing that he's with me as I go there. But I'm really busy. I've got to get these things done. I have the best intentions. I want to get up and I want to pray.

But my schedule is different today. It's too busy. I don't have time to pray. I don't have time to read my Bible. I don't have time to go to community group. I don't have time to prepare for things. But God is with me.

[41 : 49] And I'm going to do it tomorrow. But all of a sudden, that one day turns to two. And the two days turns to a week. And the week turns to a month. And the month turns to a year. And I'm wandering around, supposing that God is with me.

But in reality, I'm missing him. There's an amazing passage in Matthew 7. Go back tonight and check it out. But it says, Jesus is talking. And he says, in the end, people are going to come to me. And they're going to say, Lord, Lord, didn't I do this? And didn't I do that? And I should be able to get into heaven. And Jesus is going to look at them. And he's going to say, depart from me. For I never knew you.

I was never with you. You're too busy doing your stuff, your life. You're too busy to think about these things.

And you've missed me. And sometimes I miss him in my busyness. Sometimes I miss him when I have the wrong focus. And this is the biggest and the most scariest thing for me at all.

[42 : 58] Because you see it in this passage. It always amazes me that they lose Jesus at the height of their religious experience. It's not in the gutters. It's not when it's dark.

It's not when it's hard. It's not when it's difficult. They lose Jesus when it's the best of times. They've been focused on doing the religious things. They're going to the temple.

They're sacrificing. They're tithing. They're serving. They're getting clean. They're doing all the things that they're supposed to do as religious people, as good Jews. And they lose him.

And I realize that's me sometimes. So sometimes I can be so focused on doing and doing and doing that I forget to be and to be and to be with God.

And the scary thing is sometimes those things are religious things. I do all the right religious things. We do all the things that God has called us to do. But in we're doing them, we've lost focus on who we've done them for.

[44 : 08] And the passage says, be careful that you don't lose Jesus because you're focused on a religious experience or something different or something that's good, but it's not an ultimate thing.

I went home this summer and talking to a buddy who's a pastor. And we were talking about the life of churches in America and what's going on in churches. And how churches want to get bigger and popular and more name branding and just bigger and expanding.

And he looked at me and he said, you know, the problem with the church in America is that we've lost our focus. We've forgotten why we do things the way we do.

We've forgotten who we do things for. We just do, do, do, thinking that if we do, then God will show up. But this passage says that's not true. I worry about us as a church sometimes.

That we don't head down this road of doing, doing, doing. But our focus is not where God wants us to be. What would it look like for you today to have the wrong focus in your life?

[45 : 23] You came and you came to worship with us, which is an amazing thing. We're really glad you're here. We'd rather have you no other place. But what would it look like for you right now to be doing all these good things for the wrong reasons?

I was talking to my buddy. We were rugby coaches. We were talking about the craziness of the season. He said, man, I got to go to communion. He's Catholic.

I got to go to communion. Wednesday night, I got to go. I got to go. And for some reason, God just kind of stopped me. And I looked at him and I said, why?

Why do you have to go to communion? And he just kind of looked at me dumbfounded. He didn't say anything.

I don't know. It's just something I have to do. Sometimes in the Christmas season, sometimes as we walk with the Lord, sometimes we can lose our focus on who we're doing everything for.

[46 : 36] Because we're focused on really, really good things. But we forget the person who gave us those good things. The last thing that sticks out to me and hits me like a hammer in the head, if I'm honest, this is something that is, and you got to look at it here.

Because this passage is full of things that we need to keep coming back to. Verse 48. When they saw him, they were astonished.

In Greek, the word is close to being flabbergasted. If that's a word in your culture, it's in Texas language it is. And his mother said to him, which mothers would never talk to the sons, especially sons who are about to become men.

It was always the father's responsibility. So you know that Mary is a very strong woman here. She's very strong. And she looks at him and she says, son, why have you treated us this way?

Behold, your father, your mentor, the one you're supposed to be looking up to, the one you're not supposed to leave his side, the one you're supposed to be doing everything this year with, your father and I were so worried.

[47 : 52] How could you do this to us? In Texas language, she probably would have said, boy, why you do your mama like that?

Don't you know your daddy and me have been really upset? Shame on you. Verse 49. And he said to them, why is it that you are looking for me?

Did you not know that I had to be in my father's house? There's a play on words and ideas, father and father.

And at 12, he knows his father. And he's basically reteaching his mom something she learned at his birth. There's an implied statement after that.

Not only do I have to be in my father's house, but I have to be about doing my father's business. And the thing that sticks out to me as I wander through Christmas sometimes is sometimes my priorities are all wrong.

[49 : 00] And the question that Christ asked here, why are you looking at me? Why didn't you know I was here? Are the questions that we need to continually ask ourselves.

And we need to question and see, are we doing the father's business? As we walk with God this season, are our priorities right?

Are our priorities true? Have we ever stopped for just a second during the holidays and said, God, what are your priorities right now? What do you want me to do?

Have we ever stopped and said, God, you've given me this amazing job. Am I bringing glory to you right now? Am I fulfilling your priorities or am I fulfilling my priorities?

God, you've given me this amazing family, amazing mind, amazing heart, amazing resources, amazing time, amazing relationships.

[50 : 17] During this Christmas time, do we ever stop and ask, am I doing what you want me to do?

Am I fulfilling your priorities? Am I building your kingdom? Or am I fulfilling my priorities?

And am I building my kingdom? And I realized during the holidays that when I don't focus on these things, I get lost. And in the midst of this incredible celebration, sometimes I feel like I'm walking in darkness.

Have you ever felt that way? The amazing thing to me about this passage is that he gives us a solution to that.

He helps us reprioritize. He helps us refocus. He helps us not be so busy and focus on the right things. But the choice is, do we want that to happen this holiday season?

[51 : 50] I realize as I share right now, there are people in here who at one time made a commitment to Christ. You invited Jesus Christ into your life. You're walking with him. And all of a sudden, in this time, you feel emptiness.

You feel darkness. You wonder why you feel this way when everything is going so well. It is the best of seasons. It's the perfect time.

But instead, you feel lost. You feel empty. Maybe you wonder, how long is this going to take? So I just get back to my normal day.

Maybe you've become too busy. Maybe you have lost your focus. Maybe your priorities are all wrong. Maybe you have health issues.

Or you've lost somebody very close to you. And that death has changed your life. Maybe this last week, you just found out that you lost your job.

[53 : 03] And you're wondering what you're going to do next. And that joy, and that feeling, and that comfort that you once had, you don't have anymore.

And you struggle, and you wonder, why? Why? Why? Why? Why? And the passage here, for me, tells me why. It tells me that I've become so busy.

That I've lost my focus. That my priorities have changed. And I need to come back to where I lost Christ. And start my relationship back up with Him again.

The message of Christmas is no matter where you are on your journey, no matter how far that you feel like you've gone from Christ, no matter how empty or no matter how much you feel like you walk in the darkness, the message of Christmas, the message of the manger, the message of Jesus, the message of this passage of losing Him and finding Him, is that as you turn around, as you come back to Him, He's right there.

It's us who've walked away, but Christ has been waiting in the temple, doing the things of God, waiting for us to come back to Him.

[54 : 18] The question is, will we do that? I realize as I share that there's probably some people in here who've never started on the journey. You don't even know what I'm talking about. You've come because a friend has asked you.

You're wondering what it means to follow Christ. You wonder why the true meaning of Christmas. You're wondering, why is it bad to walk in darkness and hopelessness?

Isn't that what life is all about? And my prayer for you is that you would not leave here until you took and looked at the people who brought you and you asked them questions about Jesus Christ.

You asked them questions about why we celebrate this season. You asked them questions about what our hope is. You asked them questions about why they do these things. Because chances are they're afraid to tell you right now because they don't want to offend you, even though they know that you need it.

And it's the thing that's going to change your life. And so maybe you, as the visitor, should turn the tables on them and ask them why they brought you here today.

[55 : 22] And why Christmas is so important to them. I'm going to end our time right now and we'll try something I don't think we tried one time any years ago, two years ago.

As we enter into this season and this time of being lost and being found and what it means to walk with God and what it means to become unbusy and what it means to reprioritize, I'm going to ask Jeremy and Celeste to come up.

In front of you, there are tables of candles here. They're going to come up and they're going to start playing some music right now.

And when they come up, what I would like for you to do is to think about this message. I'd like for you to ask God where you're at right now in the quietness of your share.

Where are you on the journey with him? I'd like for you to ask God right now, are you feeling the type of relationship with him that he's made you for?

[56 : 31] I'd like for you to think of people in your life who, like my friend last night at the party, was very, very far away from God.

But you knew that God was pursuing them because he was on her heart. And when you're done praying, coming before the Lord, asking him to examine your heart, confessing, repenting, which the amazing thing to me about this passage is it's okay to lose him.

Actually, it's normal as his children. And he continues to bring us back to him. And if you want, we would like for you to come up and just light a candle.

This isn't a Catholic thing, but this is a thing of remembrance. And it's a commitment. And as you light this candle, we would like for you to commit to pray for your friend.

We'd like for you to commit to pray for them this year. We'd like for you to commit to present to them the message of the gospel. Whether you bring them to church, you do it at home, you take them out to a nice dinner, whatever that looks like.

[57 : 54] But we would like for you to be praying for these people in your life who need to be here next Christmas to celebrate this amazing, amazing gift.

I'll come back up in a couple minutes and close this. There's a lot of neat opportunities for people to invite friends to hear about the true meaning of Christmas and to meet Christ going on.

You see these red flyers out there on the desk. We've been having a fair here at Cyberport from 2 to 5 starting on Friday, last Friday. And it's going all the way through Christmas.

So my family is going to be out there today hanging out and taking pictures with little kids in front of a nativity scene and handing out books about Christ and like these mangas, which are at the bookstore for free, just so people have opportunity to do that and to hear about Christ.

And so I would like to encourage you to pray for the outreach out there right now. And if you want to come out and join us, be a part of it, that's great. Just an opportunity to meet people in the community. Also on the 25th, we are going to do a Christmas service here at 1030.

[59 : 08] So it's going to be from 1030 to 1130. So for those of you who come at 11, you're only going to get half of it. So I encourage you to come early to be a part of that service.

Last week, someone, I was at a party and they asked me their first time here, they said, okay, you didn't take an offering. What's up with that? We've been in the last three churches. All they do is talk about money. How come you didn't do that?

And I didn't know what to say. I just said, but we don't right now. We're on a step of faith and a journey with God. And so we have these blue envelopes that are around in a little kiosk. But we think that there's probably no greater indicator to your spiritual health than your generosity.

Because if you look at Christ and God, he is very generous. And he continues to be generous. So as you focus on the Christmas season and what the gospel and Christ means to you, we would just ask for you to give and proportion in response to that.

And knowing that your ties go to help us do these outreaches and everything that we're about as a church. Also, there's some great books for sale. Some of them are for seekers.

[60 : 18] And some of them are for people who are on the journey for a while. I want to encourage you out there. We are selling them all at 20% loss at least. But we just want to get them into your hands.

You know, one of the things I love about Christmas is the movies. And so there are about six movies that my family watches throughout Christmastime.

I'm afraid to tell you those things because you'll laugh. But we watch things like It's a Wonderful Life by Frank Capra, Little Women, which I kind of get my way through because I want to be a good dad and be there with my wife and my daughters.

We watch Santa Claus is Coming to Town. We watch Elf with a Youth Friday night. We watch Sound of Music, which is an act of love to my wife.

Last night, we watched Sound of Music. I went to bed about 40 minutes left because I just couldn't. I wanted to pray, right? But hear me on this.

[61 : 28] Christmas shows are amazing and songs are great, but sometimes they have poor theology. Very poor theology. And so I left last night when Captain Von Trapp was in a gazebo with Maria.

Maria had run off to the abbey. She falls in love with him. The evil baroness tried to break him up. Now the evil baroness has stepped aside because, you know, plenty of nothing they don't have. They can't offer anything to each other. And so she leaves. And so Captain Von Trapp is going there to talk to Maria because Maria has come back. And he's in love with her and they're in love with her. And I'm teasing Rachel, my daughter.

And I'm singing the song to Rachel as we're doing these things. And she's like, oh, come on. But there's a line in there. As they face each other and make googly eyes. Nothing comes from nothing. Nothing seldom does. Somewhere in my youthful childhood, I must have done something good.

[62 : 33] And she says that's the reason why she got the captain. Because she did something good. And I kept singing that over and over. And I'm looking at her. That's terrible.

I usually do it at a movie theater. And Christina goes, shh. But that's terrible. Because the message of Christmas is that nowhere in our past did we do anything good.

But God looked at us. And he loved us. And he sent the most precious thing in his life. Jesus. To come as a man.

To live a perfect life. To be an example for us. To die on the cross. To be the perfect sacrifice. So that there no longer had to be 270,000 lambs sacrificed on Passover.

Just one. So that whoever will believe in him put their faith and trust in him. Turn from their self-righteousness.

[63 : 48] Their pride. Their arrogance. That whoever would do that would be saved. It has nothing to do with what you've done or didn't do in your youthful childhood.

It has all to do about an amazing God and his son Jesus Christ. That's why we're here. That's why this church exists.

To point people who don't know him yet to that amazing son. Amen? Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day.

We thank you for these privileges, these opportunities to just walk with you. Lord, I pray for all of us, especially myself, that we would continue to remember the gospel, the message of grace and of mercy, that when we become flustered, when we become distant, when we become arrogant, when we become self-sufficient and self-righteous, Lord, Lord, just show us your son and what he did and to help us to realize that nothing in our youthful childhood or past could compare to him.

bring us to you. It's only about your son, Jesus Christ. Lord, we pray as a church as we go on this journey together that we would encourage each other, that we lift up each other, we would point to each other to your grace and your mercy and just your word, and we do it as a community so that people look at us at Cyberport and wherever we go and they say, wow, there is something amazing about those people that even in the midst of darkness, they have hope and they have light.

[65 : 34] And so we come before you as your people this two days before we celebrate the birth of your son who changes everything and we worship you and we love you and we need you desperately.

We pray all these things in Jesus' holy name. Amen. God bless you. We'll see you back here Christmas Day hopefully with some friends and have a great week.