

Christmas:

IT'S ALL GOOD

Better Than True

The earliest believers in Jesus classified his life, teaching, and mission as “good news.” Yet, for many of us, that term feels foreign when applied to what we know as the Christian religion. But if our version of Christianity isn’t good news, we may have the wrong version. Because what transpired in Judea two thousand years ago isn’t just a good story. When we examine the accounts closely, it’s hard not to agree with the earliest followers, who realized that it is actually *good news*.

Start Talking

1. Which strikes you as worse news: Netflix doubling their monthly price, or Amazon prime going up significantly?
2. Is there an email sender or phone number that immediately causes your stomach to sink when you see it show up in your inbox or replies? (examples: emails from a picky boss, credit card company, etc...) Why? What about the opposite? Do you have a contact that immediately lifts your spirits?
3. If you were going to make up a grand story of “good news” for all people across the whole world, what would it be?

Looking Back

1. What did you do to start the slow, difficult work of prevention this past week? What interventions might it save you from down the line?
2. Did you form an actionable plan to begin regularly giving to a local church, and God’s redemptive work in your community this week?
3. What did you do to remind yourself to give out of thankfulness for the generosity of God, rather than guilt or self-centeredness?



What About You?

1. Have you ever felt compelled to document the life of someone you personally knew? Odds are you didn't and won't. What does the fact that Luke and others documented the life of Jesus imply?
2. Does anything about Jesus or his teaching strike you as less than good news? If so, what? Why?
3. In what ways has the church made the good news less than good?
4. In what ways have you made the good news not so good?
5. What things about the world right now strike you as good news? Not so good news?
6. In your seasons of doubt, do you have more trouble believing that the story of Jesus is true, or that it is good news?

Look It Up

Read the Following Passages: Luke 1: 1–4, 2:11, 5:20 – 32. 6: 27–36, 16:16.

1. How does Luke's stated purpose for writing his account of the life of Jesus affect your reading of his words? What does he want for us? Why?
2. Beyond the miraculous fact that in doing so, Jesus changed a life, what was significant about his healing of the paralyzed man lifted through the roof? Why was it so controversial?
3. How was Jesus' brand of "doing good," different than what most people tend to think of as good behavior?
4. What is the difference between believing and doing? Which is easier in your experience? Why?
5. What kinds of people did the message of grace tend to threaten? Why? Who was attracted to it? Why?

Putting It All Together

1. How can you keep the good news of Jesus' actual message front of mind in a world that so often attempts to stamp Jesus' name on all kinds of belief systems and agendas?
2. Do you tend to see Jesus' grace as threatening or welcoming? Positive or negative? Why?
3. Who do you find yourself most tempted to place yourself above, to see yourself as being more "worthy" of God's grace? (You don't have to answer out loud.) What can you do to remind yourself of your equal need for the good news of forgiveness this week?
4. How can you put Jesus' brand of "doing good" into tangible action this week?
5. What will you do to rid yourself of self-righteousness this week?

