



“Its Not a String!” | Christmas Kindness: Tied With Love Not Strings

Luke 19:1-10

Why do we celebrate Christmas? Why did Jesus come?

“In a 2018 Lifeway Research study, 65% of Americans said Christmas should be more about Jesus. While 2 in 3 may want more Christ in Christmas, most couldn’t give you all the details of Jesus’ birth story. Slightly more than 1 in 5 Americans (22%) say they could accurately tell the Christmas story found in the Bible from memory. A plurality of U.S. adults (31%) say they could tell the story but may miss some details or get others wrong. Another quarter (25%) could only give a quick overview and 17% say they couldn’t tell any of it.” - Aaron Earls, Lifeway Research Article

While many of us struggle to recall the details of Jesus’ birth, even more of us do not know why Jesus came in the first place! As Simon Sinek famously preaches, “start with why,” this week we dive into the question, what does kindness have to do with the purpose of Jesus’ birth? And even more, what does a vertically challenged tax collector have to do with Christmas?

Jesus entered a famous town from the OT...JERICHO. Why Jericho? Turns out...Jesus had unfinished business there. Jericho was the first fruits city dedicated to the Lord, after Israel marched around it 7 days in a row and took the city simply by shouting! God had done a miracle. God still does miracles...TO FULFILL HIS PURPOSE.

So why did he go to Jericho? Why did God become human? Leave Heaven, come to Earth, be born in a manger, to a teenage mom and generous and kind dad?→Turns out...Jericho and Christmas have a lot in common.

Luke 19:1-10: *Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. 2 There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. 3 He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way. 5 When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. “Zacchaeus!” he said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.” 6 Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. 7 But the people were displeased. “He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they grumbled. 8 Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, “I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!” 9 Jesus responded, “Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. 10 **For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.**”*

Zacchaeus wants to see Jesus.→...a hated (& short - likely under 5’) tax collector...climbs up a tree to see Jesus.

- He discovers Jesus already KNEW him→calls him BY NAME→Invited himself to his house!→KINDNESS!

Zacchaeus repents.→What does repent mean?→It means to “turn.”→To turn away from what?→SIN/Selfishness.

- Once Zacchaeus experiences Jesus the kindness of Jesus...he see with new eyes.→**NOW HE SEES!**
- *I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.* - CS Lewis
- **Rom. 2:4** *Don’t you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can’t you see that **his kindness** is intended to turn you from your sin?*
- God has been kind to us!→Candy→Cane→Jn. 14:6→Jesus in the manger...no Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius... Only Jesus can shepherd us from our sin.
 - Jesus has been kind, tolerant, & patient with me.→He has led, guided, and provided for me.
 - Old Man Marley (Jacob Marley & Christ)...& Kevin Mccallister

The ultimate result of the kindness of Jesus is restoration.→Jesus restores relationships...with God and each other.

- **Jesus is clear about WHY he came.**→10 to seek & save those who are lost.→OUR SAVIOR IS BORN!

- **The result?**→“I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!” 9 Jesus responded, “Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham.
- **2 Corinthians 5:18** -“And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him.”
- **Jesus invites US into relationship.**→Ask. Believe. Commit.→JESUS!
- **Jesus invites US into his mission.**→Who is God calling you to restore or be restored to?
 - **Manage your own expectations:** You can desire a restored relationship, but if you expect it, it feels like a string attached. People have to choose for themselves. **Honor their response.** Understand that rebuilding trust and relationships takes time, and Christmas is just the first step.
 - **Send a Thoughtful Card or Gift:** A **handwritten** card or a thoughtful gift can convey **sincerity** and let the person know you're thinking about them this Christmas.
 - **Make a phone call or send a text:** Express your desire for reconciliation. **Use "I" statements** to avoid sounding accusatory and focus on your own feelings. **Watch your tone.**
 - **Extend an Invitation:** Invite the person to meal, a Christmas party, or a **Christmas Eve service.**
 - **Practice Empathy:** Put yourself in the **other person's shoes** to better understand their perspective and feelings. Be willing to listen.
 - **Seek Common Ground:** Focus on **shared** interests, **positive** memories, or **mutual** desires/hopes to find common ground and reestablish a connection.
 - **Apologize and Forgive:** If apologies are necessary, sincerely apologize for your part in any misunderstandings or conflicts. Be open to forgiving and moving forward, letting go of grudges.
 - **Go to a Counseling Session:** Consider involving a **neutral third party**, such as a mediator or counselor, to facilitate communication and provide guidance.

→**The restoration of relationship is not a string attached, but a gift to enjoy!**

TALK ABOUT IT - Questions to GROW through with family, friends, & myself.

1. Can i tell the story of Jesus' birth accurately? Can i explain WHY Jesus was born?
2. How did Jesus show kindness to Zacchaeus? How did this kindness impact Zacchaeus?
3. According to Romans 2:4, how is God's kindness intended to impact our lives? What's the purpose?
4. What practical steps resonate with me for restoring my relationship with God or someone else?
5. **PRAYER:** “Father, help us to turn away from our selfishness and follow Jesus!”

QUOTES / SONGS:

- "Kindness is a gift everyone can afford to give." - **Unknown**
- "In a 2018 Lifeway Research study, 65% of Americans said Christmas should be more about Jesus. While 2 in 3 may want more Christ in Christmas, most couldn't give you all the details of Jesus' birth story. Slightly more than 1 in 5 Americans (22%) say they could accurately tell the Christmas story found in the Bible from memory. A plurality of U.S. adults (31%) say they could tell the story but may miss some details or get others wrong. Another quarter (25%) could only give a quick overview and 17% say they couldn't tell any of it." - **Aaron Earls**
- "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." - **CS Lewis**

ARTICLES:

- "Kindness is a gift everyone can afford to give." - <https://research.lifeway.com/2021/12/01/few-americans-confident-they-could-tell-biblical-christmas-story/>

SCRIPTURES: New Living Translation unless otherwise noted.

- **Galatians 5:22-23** - But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, **kindness**, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!
- **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** - 4 Love is patient and **kind**. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5 or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. 6 It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.
- **Romans 2:4-5** - 4 Don't you see how wonderfully **kind**, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his **kindness** is intended to turn you from your sin? 5 But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.
- **2 Corinthians 5:18** - "And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him."

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