

A Survivor's Guide to the Holidays

November 22, 2015

Prelude – Feliz Navidad

Greeting – Mark

Worship – This I Believe

Pastoral Prayer – Rick

Please have a seat and let's pray together.

God, there is truly no one like you. You transcend this world – you're "out there" in eternity – yet, at the same time because of your great love for us, you became part of our world so that you could redeem it – and each one of us – from the curse of sin. So, we want to say right now that we love you for that and we appreciate you.

And we're also thankful for the faith we have –

the things we believe that you have revealed to us as being true. We're thankful that our faith is not based on human philosophy but it's rooted in history and what you've already accomplished in Jesus. We're thankful that we have an anchor that holds steady in times of trouble. Because of what you have done, we can have confidence as we face both the present and the future.

But so often, Lord, we do not live with confidence and faith. So many times, instead of praying and trusting you, we worry, we scheme, and we demand. That's where some of us are right now, this morning. And we confess that as yet another sin on our part ... and we're thankful that you have already forgiven us in Christ ...

... but, Lord, as we always say, we want to be more than just forgiven (as wonderful as that is). We want to be different. We want to be transformed. We want to experience the peace that passes all understanding and is not dependent on our circumstances.

So, right now, Lord, we cast our concern about the turmoil in this world, our concerns over our health, our finances, our family, our jobs, our future, our relationships on You ... because we know that you care for us. You've already proven it in Jesus and what He did for us. We ask you to lead us and guide us and give us strength in all of those things. And we ask that our lives would bring glory to you and that others would be drawn to you because of what you have done and are doing for us.

And we pray all this in the name of the one who makes it possible, Jesus of Nazareth.

Amen.

Announcement Video – Shannon

Feature Song – Everything’s Gonna Be Cool / Offering

Drama – December 27th

So, what about you and me? Come December 27th what will you and I be saying about our experience of the upcoming holiday season? Will we echo the characters in the drama – “next year’s *got* to be different”? Or, will you and I be harvesting the positive fruit of wise choices we made before the storm hit?

And for a lot of us, that’s what the holiday season is like – a storm ... though I don’t use that metaphor to imply that celebrating Thanksgiving and Christmas and New Year’s is a bad thing. It’s not or, at least, it doesn’t have to be.

It’s just that the way most of us do the holidays is chaotic and disruptive and filled with tension and when it’s over, we feel a sense of relief like

we do when a storm ends ... which is why, today, I want to share with you what I am calling “a Survivor’s Guide to the Holidays.” I hope that what I say to you this morning will help you enjoy this season and maybe even bring some glory to God in the process.

Contrasting Visions

I want to begin by telling you two stories. The first one is a personal story that I’ve told you before but I’m going to tell it again because it turned out to be a defining moment in my life; the beginning point of a dramatic change in how I thought about the holiday season.

It happened on Christmas Eve a little over 10 years ago. All three of our daughters at that point were teenagers and still living at home. After spending most of the day preparing to speak at the Christmas Eve service that evening, I had barely enough time to prepare the “McGinniss Family Annual Christmas Eve

Steamed Shrimp Dinner” – a tradition that harkens back to my father’s family; a tradition for which I felt a great responsibility to carry on within my own family. I’m not sure *why* I felt that responsibility but the holidays are like that. You do stuff just because it’s what your parents and their parents did.

Anyway ... I had finished steaming the shrimp, setting the table and getting everything ready and then I announced that it was time to eat. But no one came. Everyone was still busy – out shopping or wrapping presents or on the phone with friends making plans for later that evening. So I waited. And I waited.

By the time everyone finally made it to the table, the shrimp was cold and *I* was steamed. I was angry and I was bitter and I made sure they all knew it.

And because they were all late, we had to rush through dinner, rush to get dressed, then rush

here to this building so I could stand up and talk to everyone about “Peace on earth, goodwill towards men” – a sentiment that was very far from what I was feeling internally because (and this is very important) ... *my expectations of what should happen and how people ought to act and respond had not been met.* And I was unhappy about that.

Ok, that’s the first story. Here’s the second. It’s from the Bible; the Gospel of Matthew chapter 1 beginning in verse 18.

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

*Matthew 1:18-23
(NIV)*

Ok, now keep all that in mind as we read Luke’s side of the story about Mary’s experience.

In verse 26 of chapter one, Luke writes ...

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.

The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and

give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. For nothing is impossible with God.”

Luke 1:26-27, 30-36

(NIV)

Now, here's what I want you to see. In that culture (which was driven by honor and shame), for a woman to become pregnant out of wedlock was about the most terrible thing imaginable, second only to a man *choosing to marry* a woman who was pregnant out of wedlock ... *with a child that wasn't his*. So, if there was ever a set of unmet expectations about what should and should not happen and how people ought to act, these two certainly experienced it.

But, as you read further in the story of the birth of Jesus and all that occurred after it, it's apparent that they survived it without becoming bitter and hard-hearted. How did that happen?

Well, let's look back at Luke's account and Matthew's account and let's see how Mary and Joseph responded to the situation.

After Gabriel gave Mary the news that her whole life was going to be disrupted in a way that literally defied human explanation ...

This is what she said:

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.”

Luke 1:38 (NIV)

Translation:

“It’s not about me. I am here to serve. And I’m not here to be *my* servant. I’m not here

to be the servant of what this culture believes is honorable or shameful. I am *the Lord's* servant. And I will do whatever He needs me to do in this difficult situation. May it be to me as you have said. Bring it on.”

Amazingly, Joseph responded in the same way. After receiving the news that *his* whole life was going to be disrupted in a way that literally defied human explanation ...

Matthew tells us that ...

Joseph did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

Matthew 1:18-24 (NIV)

... because, apparently, he too had decided:

“It’s not about me. I am here to serve. And I’m not here to serve myself. I’m not here to serve what this culture believes about

what ought and ought not to be. I am the *Lord's* servant. And, though the situation is very challenging, I will do what he commands me to do. Bring it on.”

I don't know about you, but I am so glad they responded in that way. I'm so glad they put their hearts in that position of submission to God and to each other and to the child who would be born – and, in truth, *to you and me and the whole world*. Because they did, that child grew up to be our savior! It's amazing.

The Vision That Changes Everything

So, we have two stories of unmet expectations. In the first, the disappointment was trivial but resulted in a lot of anger and bitterness. In the second, the disappointment was traumatic and life-altering but, instead of anger, there was a calm acceptance. Why? What was the difference?

Vision.

- In the first case, the vision was all about *me* and what *I* wanted and what *I* thought should happen. It was about everything and everyone meeting *my* desires and *my* expectations.
- In the second, in the case of Joseph and Mary, it was just the opposite. It wasn't about them and what they wanted. It was about God and what God wanted and their role in meeting *His* desires.

I don't think it takes a rocket scientist to see that their way – their vision – is much better than my way and my vision (which, truth be told, is probably also *your* way and *your* vision).

And I would be grossly exaggerating if I said that I've gotten a grip on this 100%, but I can say with integrity that as I have increasingly embraced their way and their vision and let go of my way and my vision, it has dramatically changed how I

look at and think about and experience the holiday season. Bottom line, I don't feel nearly as tapped-out and tired-out as I used to ... and as some of you still do.

So let's look in a little more detail at the vision of Joseph and Mary; a vision that can change everything; a vision that encompasses two simple affirmations that, together, make up the *Survivor's Guide to the Holidays*.

Here's the first one.

#1. "It's not about me."

"Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's – all of the activities and events and time and money – none of that is about me and what I want or what I think it ought to be like. It's not about me."

In fact, would you all say those four words with me? "It's not about me."

Feels good doesn't it? Let's say it again, this time with conviction. "It's not about me."

That's the first affirmation; the first key to surviving the holidays. The sooner you and I understand that and embrace that, the happier we'll be.

Of course, it's much easier to say "it's not about me" than to actually do it because everything around us – the culture, our inborn propensity to sin and even Satan himself are constantly telling us otherwise, especially at this time of year.

"It is about you. *You* are the most important being; *your happiness* is the most important goal. So demand that the holiday season be done your way, according to your will. Control, manipulate, beg, whine, plead, sulk, explode – do whatever it takes to make your vision come to pass."

That's how I felt and what I did that night when

no one was there to eat the hallowed steamed shrimp: “Dadgum it! This is how Christmas Eve is *supposed to go!* And you all are ruining it!”

I’m sure you can relate to that. I’m sure you have ideas and traditions in your head that, when you stop and really look at them honestly, are a lot more about *you and your vision*. And when that expectation doesn’t get met (and it’s not going to, not 100%) – you’re going to get all chewed up inside. And to get free from that, you have to embrace the opposite idea: that *it’s not about me*.

So let’s all say it again. “It’s not about me.”

Of course, this leads to an obvious question: *if it’s not about me, then what is it about?*

If you’re tempted to say “Jesus” I suppose that makes sense because, after all, “Jesus is the Reason for the Season” right? But, that’s not a very practical answer. Yes, it’s a good thing to

focus on Jesus and worship God for what He did through Him and to be thankful for that and to celebrate that, but in terms of ...

- What I do
- How I set my agenda
- What I spend my money on
- What I prioritize in this season

If all of that is not about me, then what is it about?

Well, I don't think it's possible to improve on the answer Mary gave. Remember what she said?

#2. "I am the Lord's servant."

And that's the second affirmation, the second part of the *Survivor's Guide to the Holidays*.

"I'm not here to serve myself. I'm not here to serve this culture and what it is telling me I ought to do and not do during this season. I am

the *Lord's* servant.”

And, if you dare, say that together with me: “I am the *Lord's* servant.”

Now, again, I don't have this down 100%, but this is my goal. In fact, one reason I'm even doing this message today is to *remind myself* that, in this season from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, instead of trying to make it all about me, I want to be the *Lord's* servant. I want God to use me and my time and my resources in whatever way He wants to.

And I'm challenging and encouraging you to make that your goal as well. I'm challenging you let go of your expectations and your desires and embrace the role of serving God ... which is, obviously, a worthy goal for any time of the year, but even more so at this time of the year.

The Lord's Servant

But what does that look like? How does being “the Lord’s servant” during this “most wonderful time of the year” work itself out in practical ways?

For those of us who are believers in Jesus, it would probably be a good idea to actually spend some time brainstorming that question; to maybe even sit down with our families and ask: “what would it look like for us collectively to be the Lord’s servants from now until the New Year?” and then decide on some goals.

In fact, if you really want to keep this idea front and center in your mind, you might consider writing “the survivors guide” on a 3x5 card and putting it where you can see it every day.

“It’s not about me. I am the Lord’s servant.”

And since we have it on the screen, let’s say the whole thing together one more time. Ready?

“It’s not about me. I am the Lord’s servant.”

Now, what I want to do in the time I have left is to share what it looks like for me, personally, to be the Lord’s servant in this holiday season because I think it might apply to you as well. I have four goals for this holiday season; four attitudes and actions that I think move me in that direction.

Goal #1. Make things easier and more pleasant for others ... whether they appreciate it or not.

And that last part is really important because a lot of times when we try to make things easier and more pleasant for others, especially at this time of year, it’s really not about them. *It’s about us being recognized and appreciated for our effort in trying to make things easier and more pleasant.*

- We want to be seen as the perfect parent or the perfect son or daughter, so we run ourselves and our kids into the ground by

saying “yes” to everything: yes to every party, yes to every school function, yes to every family function, yes to traveling all over the place, yes to spending money we don’t have.

- We won’t say “no” *when we should say no* because “I don’t want the conflict with my parents” or “I don’t want to look bad to my kids.” “I ... I... I...” It’s still about us.

And if we keep giving in to that way of thinking, we eventually become bitter because we’re not really serving. We’re grinding.

Instead, what I mean by “making things easier and more pleasant for others” is doing very simple things and doing them *with no strings attached* - no need to be recognized or thanked or paid back in any way. I’m talking about things like ...

- Avoiding arguments with people who I only

see once or twice a year and, instead, being tolerant and gracious to them.

- Letting other people set the agenda instead of me.
- Pitching in to clean up after the typical holiday messes *without being asked*.
- Letting go of expectations that are causing me and everyone else stress (like the McGinniss Family Annual Christmas Eve Steamed Shrimp Dinner).

I think you get the idea. Being the Lord's servant means simple acts of service that make it easier and more pleasant for others ... with no strings attached.

Goal #2. Embrace disruptions to “the plan” as the hand of God directing me.

When it comes to complex events and situations like those that happen during this time of year, I like *having* a plan, *knowing* the plan and *sticking* to the plan. I don't deal very well with *changes* to

the plan, especially when I'm the last to know. (Some of you can relate to that).

But, if I really am the Lord's servant (and it really isn't about me) then I can trust that what the Bible says is true.

*A person plans his course, but the
Lord directs his steps. Proverbs
16:9 (NLT)*

So often those of us who are Christians complain that God isn't leading and guiding us because God doesn't leave a note under our pillow. But then, when we make our plans and those plans are disrupted, we get frustrated and upset instead of thinking, "you know, that might be God trying to direct me!"

So one of my goals this year is to pay better attention when things inevitably change and ask "OK, God, how can I be your servant in this? Do you have a special assignment for me?" And then just do whatever I sense in that moment.

Now, I hesitate to tell you my third goal because some of you are going to hear this in a way I don't mean it. You're going to hear it as bragging or you're going to think "oh, Rick and his family are so spiritual."

So, please give me an umbrella of grace ... and trust that is not my purpose whatsoever ... because the truth is there was nothing spiritual about how we got to this goal. Actually, what happened is that I got so jaded and disillusioned about Christmas that I was willing to try something radical; something that Jesus said would lead to blessing instead of bitterness.

I'll tell you what He said in a minute but here's the goal.

Goal #3. Devote half of our holiday budget to help the less fortunate (instead of people who already have everything they need).

Several years ago, Jetta and I reached the point where we could buy pretty much anything our family wanted or needed at any time (within reason, of course). Need a new phone? Go buy it. Need clothes or shoes? Put it on the credit card. We'll pay it off at the end of the month (and we do).

And because of that, Christmas for our family was just more of the same. Literally. More. Of the same. So I started to become jaded and even bitter about the whole gift-giving aspect of Christmas. I thought “what’s the point of buying presents? We already buy presents all the time. Our *whole life* is a present!”

Not too long after that, I discovered Santa Claus – the actual historical person, *St. Nicholas of Myra*. And I realized what, for me, was missing from the gift-giving part of Christmas. The difference between St. Nick and me – the difference between St. Nick and most of us – is that *his*

generosity was primarily targeted to those who had nothing and could not give back to him.

When you read his story – and it’s well worth it to do that sometime; just Google “historical St. Nicholas” – it’s clear that Nicholas understood that Jesus wanted to use his life and his family’s great wealth to bless the people around him who could not immediately return the favor.

He understood Jesus was getting at when he asked:

“Do you think you deserve credit merely for loving those who love you? Even the sinners do that!”
Luke 6:32 (NLT)

“If you do good only to those who do good to you, is that so wonderful? Even sinners do that much!”
Luke 6:33 (NLT)

By the way, Jesus wasn’t saying that it’s

unimportant to love the people who love you and to be generous towards the people who love you. It *is* important. It matters. *But ...* there's nothing truly "special" about it because, as a father, a mother, a teenager or an adult child, a friend ... *that's what you're supposed to do. That's what you ought to do. That's what pretty much everyone does who has any sense at all.*

If you want to do something really special – something God-like, Jesus said – then go beyond what everyone with half-a-brain naturally does and be loving to people *who may not even know you and therefore cannot love you in return*; be generous to people *who have very little and therefore can offer you very little in return.*

And when you do that, Jesus said, something awesome will happen to you.

**When you begin to think and act that way,
Jesus said ...**

"Your reward from heaven will be

very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind [even] to the unthankful and to those who are wicked.”

Luke 6:35 (NLT)

There's a literal tangible reward that will be yours in the world to come, Jesus is saying. But there's also an *intangible* reward that comes now – an experience of oneness with the God of the Universe *who is kind and generous to people - like us* – who are, many times, ungrateful for His blessings, do not return His love, and do not give back to Him.

Anyway, because of that discovery (and because I was jaded), I went to my family and told them what I was thinking: that I wanted to re-do our Christmas budget so that about half of what we had been spending on ourselves went to those less fortunate than us; people – some who we knew and some we didn't know – who couldn't give us anything in return.

And they agreed. And the financial side of Christmas got to be a lot more fun and exciting.

So, we're going to do it again this year. We've already got our number of how much we're going to give away. And we're looking for how God might direct us to do that.

Now, again, as I said, I hesitated to share this goal because I don't want you to take it the wrong way. And I don't want you to feel pressure to do what we do *to the extent that God has enabled us to do it.*

But I *do* want to challenge you: if you really want to be the Lord's servant in this season ... and you are planning to spend money on Christmas gifts and activities ... don't spend every penny on your inner circle. Do what St. Nick did: spend some on people who can't return the favor; people who are not going to exchange gifts with you on

Christmas.

And I'll talk about a fun (and radical!) way to do that for just \$29.95 in just a bit ... but here's the final goal I want to share with you.

Goal #4. As the Lord's servant this holiday season, I want to somehow point people to Jesus.

I want to help people discover the grace and truth of Jesus like I have. So, how can I do that?

Well, obviously, if the situation presents itself and the person is open, I can just talk about who He is and what He has done. Unfortunately, in our culture, that opportunity doesn't happen all that often.

However, surveys have shown for years that people who do not participate in church are far more open to an *invitation to church* at this time of year than any other.

And that's why we're going to do something very different this December in our services. We've got two huge invitational opportunities.

Practical Projects

The first one we've been talking about for a couple of months – the “Celebration of Christmas” project – and I'll talk about that in just a minute.

But the second opportunity I wasn't planning on until the Royals won the World Series. If you've been around NHCC for a while you know that sometimes I see things that happen in our culture and I see a connection to God and people and then I make a series out of it. It's what I do every year with the movie series.

Well, as the Royals were making their amazing postseason run, I saw some things in how people responded that I think point directly to God and our need for God and our desire for God, even

when we don't recognize it.

And I had this crazy idea for a three-week series called "A Royal Blue Christmas."

And I tried to ignore it and forget about it, but I couldn't. So I'm going to do it.

And if you know a Royals fan who doesn't attend church (and I know several), this is a grand opportunity to invite them. We're going to have great music. We're going to show video highlights of some of the best moments from the playoffs. I'm going to give three of the best messages I've ever given.

It's going to be *Royals*. It's going to be *Christmas*. It's going to be *awesome*. And you'll be hearing more about it right after Thanksgiving.

That's the first invitational project.

The second one (which Shannon mentioned earlier) is what we're calling "A Celebration

of Christmas” which is going to happen on Monday and Tuesday night, December 21 and 22 in lieu of Christmas Eve services.

As I said when I first introduced this back in late September, we’re going to take a break from doing Christmas Eve services this year because it’s a lot of work and it’s just not effective at reaching people in our local community who aren’t part of a church (which is why we started doing Christmas Eve services in the first place many years ago).

Instead, we thought we would try another approach and take the effort we put into Christmas Eve (and other activities) and move it to a night – two nights, actually – where local folks would be more inclined to show up.

That’s what *Celebration of Christmas* is. It’s going to start at 6pm with Winter Wonderland and then, at 7:30 we’re going to have an awesome variety show featuring lots of Christmas music, crowd-participation games, drama, dance and a

unique presentation of the Christmas story. It's going to be like nothing we've ever done.

Now, I've heard some folks say they're not too jazzed about this plan because they really *like* Christmas Eve services. I get that because I really like Christmas Eve services and I'm going to miss it this year. In fact, lately, I've been thinking, "Gosh, I'm going to *miss* Christmas Eve services. I've *always* gone to church on Christmas Eve. Now, I'm going to have to do something *different* that night."

Do you see what's happening? "I ... I ... I ... I"

But, remember ... *it's not about me*, is it? *I am the Lord's servant* in this season. And this year, in this season, I think God wants me – and you, too, if this is your church – to do something different that better serves *His purposes* in this community and not my own.

Now, as for Christmas Eve, when we get into

December, we'll be providing ideas for several things you could do that evening on your own and with others that would still make it a special and spiritual experience. But, again, I'm going to challenge you – and me – to get over ourselves *just a little bit* and serve God in this project.

And there are two ways you can do that.

- The first way is to come to it and, if at all possible, invite a non-church attending friend or family member to come with you.
- The second way is to volunteer one or both nights. Help in pulling it off because it's going to take a lot of people.

Now, let's talk about volunteering for just a bit.

Shannon, how can people get involved?

- Describe kinds of help we need
- You got a volunteer card on the way in

(raise hand if you didn't get one) ... fill it out during the closing song and give to an usher on the way out.

- Pre-work is specifically listed on the card ... can also just say "I'm available" on 21/22
- Best scenario is to work on night and come the other
- Volunteers on 21/22 will try to get you into the show on time

OK, let's talk about actually coming to the show. It's going to be a little bit different from how we do regular services, right?

- You have to buy a ticket for \$5 per person.
- Why we are selling tickets = convenience / assured we have used seats (don't bail at the last minute)
- Where does the money go? Hope Fund to help people in need at Christmas.
- Must buy a ticket even if volunteer; if you

can't afford to buy we will comp.

- How to buy tickets ... website today

Ok, thanks Shannon.

So, that's the *Celebration of Christmas*. It's going to be great and a great and practical way be the Lord's servant in pointing people to Jesus.

OK, one last thing before we go. I said earlier that I would tell you of a fun (and radical!) way to spend some of your Christmas budget on people who can't return the favor and who won't be exchanging gifts with you on Christmas.

I'm a little bit nervous because we've never done this before but I'm going to do it anyway because, hey, it's not about me, right? I'm just the Lord's servant.

If we sell out this auditorium for both nights

(and I fully expect that we will – I’ve already bought 10 seats), we’ll raise about \$3,200 for our HOPE Fund which is great but, honestly, we need a lot more than that because we use that fund to help people throughout the entire year – not just at Christmas.

So here’s what I’m going to ask you to do.

Today before you leave this building I want you to give at least \$29.95 for each adult in your family to the Hope Fund.

And I know some of you are thinking, “I can’t believe he just said that. How rude. How obnoxious. Preacher begging for money.”

Hey, here’s the deal. You’re going to drop \$29.95 on lunch when you leave here. Then you’re going to spend \$29.95 on snacks and beer for the Chiefs game. And you’re going to drop a whole lot more than that on Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

For most of us here today, \$29.95 per adult isn’t a

lot of money ... and quite frankly some of us (like me) *could* and probably *should* add a zero to that number. It's not a lot of money for a lot of us but it will make a huge difference to people in this congregation and community who *can't* and probably *shouldn't* give \$29.95 today.

And some of you – that's where you are right now. You're in a position of need right now. Listen, you are the reason we have the Christmas blessing program. You don't need to be giving, you need to be receiving! And you need to let us know so we can help you.

Now, here's how you do give. During the closing song, take the envelope in the seat pocket in front of you and either put in cash or write a check and then when we're done, give your envelope to an usher on the way out.

And some of you are saying “but I don't carry cash, Rick. I don't write checks.” We've got an option for you, too. While the band does the

closing song, you can open up the NHCC app on your phone and go to the Invest tab and hit the “Give Money” button and fill it out.

“But Rick I don’t have the app on my phone.” We’ve got an option for you, too. When you leave the auditorium, we’ve got a table set up with three credit card scanners and you can just give them your card and tell them how much and our folks will swipe it right then. EZee PZee.

Conclusion

Well, that about does it for what I wanted to say this morning. If you want to survive this holiday season and maybe even thrive, I invite you to make the two affirmations that can change everything. “It not about me. I am the Lord’s servant.”

And when you do that, I think you’re going to find that what Jesus said is true:

“Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.” Matthew 16:25 (NIV)

Let’s pray.

<PRAYER>

The gospel sets us free from self-centeredness. God did it for us we can now do it for others as we abide in Jesus.

Closer – Give This Christmas Away

Dismissal – Mark

Endnotes