

Christmas 2021

12-24-21

Always Winter - Never Christmas**I. Slide1,2a Intro:** [welcome: gym] (TY Jen, Cheryl, Danica, Chris S, CW & team)

A. **Advent**/arrival is marked by *hope, peace, joy, and love*. All of these are a *universal longing*. - We all want **to love, and be loved**. [invitation at the end to receive this Love]

1. Since we didn't get to do the 4th-**Love** this year. **My Christmas verse for this year** is about **love, and** one you might have heard of it before.

B. **Illust:** As a group of college students toured the **slums** of a city, one of the girls, seeing a little girl **playing in the dirt**, asked a guide, "*Why doesn't her mother clean her up?*" - "Madam," he replied, "that girl's mother probably **loves** her, **but she doesn't hate dirt**. You **hate dirt**, **but** you don't **love** her enough **to go down there** and clean her up. - **Until hate for dirt and love for that child** are in the same person, **that** little girl is likely to *remain as she is*."

1. **God did both for us**, He hates **sin/our dirt** & loves people/you & I.

II. Slide2b Christmas Theme: *Always Winter - Never Christmas*. (note Donkey)

A. This title was taken from the 1st of 7 novel's by **CS Lewis**, in his **Chronicles of Narnia** (*The lion, the witch, the wardrobe*). It is set in the fictional realm of Narnia, filled with talking animals and mythical creatures.

1. It's about **a curse** that could never be lifted ... **until Aslan** (Aslan represents Christ in this Christian allegory). **Narnia was ruled by an evil witch**. She had cast a spell on Narnia that caused it to be **Always Winter But Never Christmas** - **however** there was a prophecy that her rule would be broken by 4 humans (Lucy, Edmund, Susan, Peter).

B. Sometimes **LIFE** feels like *Always Winter, Never Christmas*. **Covid** feels like *Always Winter, Never Christmas*. A dead end **job** feels like *Always Winter, Never Christmas*.

C. See we live in a world where there is **a curse**, where there is **winter and cold and darkness**. Where there is **pain and hardship**. Yet, **ever before us** is the promise of **Christmas**: *that Jesus has come to the world to save us*.

D. **Christmas** is that **bright spot** in the middle of winter, that somehow makes it all worth it.

1. You know, you **don't** have to be *a believer* to *like Christmas*. I think we **have the best holiday!** (Hanukkah/dreidel/jelly donuts). Maybe because it's marketed of the best. *Christmas movies/Elf, Christmas songs, gift giving, lights.* **Christmas** is that **bright spot** in the middle of winter, that somehow makes it all worth it.
2. **But, What if there were no Christmas?** What if the Christmas season **never came?** **Think about it:** no holiday decorations, no family gatherings, no Christmas lights, no Christmas carols or concerts, no Christmas trees, no Christmas presents ... **Kids, that means no Christmas vacation!**
 - a) **Christmas** is the gift we *want*, **but Jesus** is the gift we *need*!

E. Our world is under a curse (of sin) and the whole creation is waiting for that curse to be lifted. It's a world that *is not as it should be*, and *awaits restoration*.

1. God created our world **good**, and yet because of **Satan** and **Sin**, **our World** is not as it should be. **We** are not as we should be.
2. *We are prisoners of sin, locked up, needing rescue. We need a Savior!*

F. So, my Christmas verse for this year about **love** is *John 3:16*.

III. Slide3 **JOHN 3:16** aka, the **good news** in miniature.

- A. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*
- B. **4** God...the greatest **Lover**. The **Father** initiated all of this.
- C. **5** So loved...the greatest **degree**.
 1. **NOT...God so...manipulated** the world. **Or** finally **broke** the world. **Or** disciplined the world. **Or punished** the world. **Or scourged** the world ... *until people responded to Him.*
 2. **His love does not** exist because of **our character**, **but** on account of **His**.

3. God does not love us because we are **valuable**, we are **valuable** because **God loves us**. God does not love us because **Jesus died for us**, but Jesus died for us because **God loves us**.

D. 6 The world...The greatest **number**. His divine care for the entire world. [hello missionaries]

1. Not just the Jewish nation. Not just *the elite, rich, powerful*, but the unlovables & untouchables, the one's that **detest** God, the ones that are too **busy** for God, the ones too **rich** for God, or working **against** God.

E. 7 That He gave...the greatest **act**.

1. The **measure** of **love** is always its **willingness** to **give**, its **capacity** for **sacrifice**. Is.9:6 *For to us a child is born, to us a son is Given*. [humanity/diety]

F. 8 His only Son...the greatest **gift**. Jesus is a **GIFT**.

1. We can **never know** the **costliness** of *Calvary* to God, **nor** can we ever measure the **love** that lay behind it.
2. It was **free** but not **cheap**. It didn't cost **us** *anything* It cost **Him** *everything*

G. 9 That whoever... the greatest **invitation**. (you are a *whoever*)

H. 10 Believes...the greatest **simplicity**.

1. It means **placing** one's life & trust in **complete surrender** to the One in whom we **believe**.
2. Not trying to come up with the **right feeling**, or the **right type** of faith.
3. It is not **our faith**, but **Christ** who **saves**!

I. 11 In Him...the greatest **Person**, *Jesus*!

J. 12 Should not perish...the greatest **deliverance**.

K. 13 But...the greatest **difference**. (between: perishing & eternal life)

L. 14 Have...the greatest **certainty**. [it becomes our *present possession* (*have*).

M. 15 Eternal life...the greatest **possession**.

1. **Should not perish** but **have eternal life**. That's **Jesus'** *double promise*.
2. And not just **quantity** **later**, but **quality** **now**.

N. 16 That whoever believes in Him... the greatest **invitation**.

1. He will take away our **sin** (our offenses against a perfect/holy God).
2. He will take away our **guilt** (the things we have **done**).
3. He will take away our **shame** (who we **are**).

a) **See**, I know where a **poor person** has a **chance**. Where a **sick person** can get well. Where an **ignorant person** can become **wise**. Where a **bad person** can be made **good**. Where a **good person** could be **made better**. Where a **dead person** could be made **alive** ... *In Jesus Christ.*¹

O. **Slide17,18** I can't wait for it to shift from *Always Winter - Never Christmas*, to *Always Christmas - Never Winter*. [where God wipes away every tear, & no more death, sorrow, crying or pain]

P. **Invitation:** When Jesus comes His 2nd time, *the long, dark spell of winter will be broken*, and the *newness of spring* will arrive in all its *beauty*. *God offers this new life for all who believe.*

Q. **See**, the story of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, is in reality it is **our story**.

1. When the spell of the White Witch is broken, *the melting begins!*

a) **Sin** *melts away*. The **hardness of your heart** starts to *defrost*. And your **soul** finds its worth ... in *Jesus!*

2. **Jesus** didn't come into the world to **Kill the world**, but to **Cure the world**.

3. **Jesus** didn't come into the world to say, **you're doing it all wrong**, but to show **how to do it right**.

4. There are only 2 possible **responses** to Jesus: **belief** or **unbelief**.

There are only 2 possible **destinies** to which those responses lead: **eternal life** or **eternal death** [choose life today!]

R. **Slide19 I love SB Rewards** (email: buy 3 Amer next 5 days, add stars!). **BUT** you have to *Join the Challenge* (click button). You have to **Activate** it. They won't do it for you!

¹ S.M.Lockridge (adapted)

1. Sometimes I forget to click activate. And I miss out.
 2. Did you know **the Peace of Jesus** has been given to you? (His Joy, His Love, His identity has been given to you)
 3. You just have to *Join the Challenge*, you must *Activated* it! Jesus won't do it for you. The response is on you. [*activate* this Reward today, by *believing*]
 - a) I'll give you *an opportunity to respond* in just a minute.
- S. * *While I pray*, I invite up the worship team & the candle-lighting team.
1. Pray Invitation. [*receive* His forgiveness, *receive* Him *today*]
- T. Our Christmas tradition is to always end with this "*love song*", Oh Holy Night: *Truly He taught us to love one another; His law is love and His gospel is peace.*
- U. Keywords: Believe, Forgiveness, Give, Gospel, Love.