

**Christmas** December 10, 2023  
*For God so loved the world...*

**John 3:16 AMP** For God so greatly loved & dearly prized the world, that He even gave His One & only begotten Son, so that whoever believes & trusts in Him as Savior shall not perish, but have eternal life.<sup>17</sup> For God did not send the Son into the world to judge & condemn the world (...) but that the world might be saved through Him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes & has decided to trust in Him as personal Savior & Lord is not judged [*there's no judgment, no rejection, no condemnation*]

**John 1:10** He came into the very world He created, but the world didn't recognize Him. <sup>11</sup> He came to His own people, & even they rejected Him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who believed Him & accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God.

**Luke 2:9** Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, & the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified,<sup>10</sup> but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.<sup>11</sup> The Savior-yes, the Messiah, the Lord has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! <sup>12</sup> And you'll recognize Him by this sign: You'll find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others - the armies of heaven - praising God & saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in highest heaven, & peace on earth to those w/ whom God is pleased."

*We're the point; the focus of His attention; the object of His affection.*

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." <sup>16</sup> They hurried to the village & found Mary & Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> After seeing Him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened & what the angel had said to them about this child. <sup>18</sup> All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, <sup>19</sup> but Mary kept all these things in her heart & thought about them often. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying & praising God for all they had heard & seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

*The shepherds were the first evangelists. They spread the good news & what they saw, & shared it w/ everyone they met; great joy to all people.*

***Christmas offers a unique opportunity to spread the Good News...***

**1 John 4:9 AMP** By this, the love of God was displayed in us, in that God has sent His One & only begotten Son, the One who's truly unique, the only One of His kind; into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us** & sent His Son to be the propitiation (*that is, the atoning sacrifice, & the satisfying offering*) for our sins - fulfilling God's requirement for justice against sin & placating His wrath. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us in this incredible way, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time. But if we love one another w/ unselfish concern, God abides in us, & His love, the love that is His essence, abides in us & is completed & perfected in us. 13 By this we know w/ confident assurance, that we abide in Him & He in us, because He has given to us His Holy Spirit. 14 We, who were w/ Him in person, have seen & testify as eye-witnesses that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

**2 Corinthians 5:17 AMP** ...if anyone's in Christ, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior, he's a new creature, reborn & renewed by the Holy Spirit; the old things-the previous moral & spiritual condition have passed away. Behold, new things have come-because spiritual awakening brings a new life. 18 But all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ (*making us acceptable to Him*) & gave us the ministry of reconciliation; so that by our example we might bring others to Him, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting people's sins against them but canceling them. And He's committed to us the message of reconciliation-that is, restoration to favor w/ God. 20 So we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal through us; we (as Christ's representatives) plead w/ you on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God. 21 He made Christ who knew no sin to judicially be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we would become the righteousness of God- that is, we would be made acceptable to Him & placed in a right relationship w/ Him by His gracious lovingkindness.

*Christmas is the easiest time of the year for us to share the good news w/ our friends, family, & neighbors. But often, busyness suppresses our passion for sharing about Jesus w/ people who need to know it.*

**2 Peter 3:9** The Lord isn't really being slow about His promise, as some people think. No, He's being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.

### *6 keys to sharing about Jesus during Christmas*

#### **1. PRAY**

Follow Jesus' example – pray first. Be intentional w/ your prayers, ask God to lead you opportunities to share your faith w/ friends, family, neighbors, or strangers. Think of specific people in your life & pray for wisdom & discernment for yourself in knowing how best to love them. Pray that their eyes would be opened.

**1 Timothy 2:1** I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, & give thanks for them. **2** Pray this way for kings & all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful & quiet lives marked by godliness & dignity. **3** This is good & pleases God our Savior, **4** who wants everyone to be saved & to understand the truth. **5** For, there is one God & one Mediator who can reconcile God & humanity - the man Christ Jesus. **6** He gave His life to purchase freedom for everyone.

#### **2. GIVE IT TO GOD**

Good news about the good news: it's not all up to you. Our evangelism efforts can seem fruitless & discouraging at times. But, we don't save people, God does. Some people won't be interested in having a spiritual conversation, but we're called to share the good news w/ those who want to hear it. By serving & loving others at Christmas, seeds are planted. We may not be the ones that see the seed grow, but the Holy Spirit is moving.

#### **3. SERVE**

Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry, & gave hope to the broken. He didn't just preach, but met physical, emotional, & spiritual needs. Many people are truly hurting this time of year, whether visibly or beneath the

surface. Consider how you can love the people around you & help meet their needs. Whether volunteering to help the homeless or delivering cookies to your neighbors & co-workers. *It's a lot easier to believe that Jesus loves you when one of His followers has shown that love to you.*

**Romans 2:4** Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, & patient God is w/ you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that His kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?

#### 4. BE AWARE OF OPPORTUNITIES

You don't have to go far to find Jesus at Christmas, opportunities to share your faith can come up almost any time. Pay attention. "Friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, etc. who've shown no interest in church, may be open to hearing about the birth of Jesus, & what that means to you. People don't care what you know, until they know that you care.

*\*How are you planning to celebrate Christmas?*

*\*Did your family have any religious traditions at Christmas time?*

*\*Have you ever thought about the non-commercial meaning of Christmas?*

*\*Why do so many more people go to church at Christmas time?*

*\*What would the world be like if there was no Bible Christmas story?*

*\*What does the story of Baby Jesus mean to you?*

#### 5. MOVE BEYOND THE MANGER

So much of the focus at Christmas is on baby Jesus, lying in a manger. That's good for starters, but we don't stop there. We let people know who He is, why He came, what He accomplished in His death, resurrection & ascension. And how they can follow Him & be transformed by Him.

#### 6. INVITE PEOPLE TO CHURCH

If there's any time in the year that unchurched people are open to an invitation to church, it's Christmas. Everyone's open to a Candlelight service. A recent national survey discovered that nearly 60% of people would attend a Christmas event if invited by someone they knew.