

Is Commercialism Ruining Christmas

December 23, 2018

I **SLIDES** Christmas float

II Last Week

A) **SLIDE** The baby has grown up

- 1) **Luke 12:49 (NASB)** [Jesus declared,] "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!"
- 1) **Matthew 10:34-36 (NIV)** [Jesus said,] ³⁴ "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn "'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- ³⁶ a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'

B) It is time to let Jesus grow up!

II **SLIDE** Commercialism and Christmas

A) Internet articles

- 1) Take the commercialism out of Christmas
- 2) This Christmas, don't fall for the lie of commercialism
- 3) How did Christmas become commercialized?
- 4) Sick of the commercialization of Christmas?
- 5) The Catholic Guide to Surviving Christmas Commercialism
- 6) People are stealing presents that have been delivered to homes
- 7) Someone broke into Jonathan Walden's car yesterday and stole all the gifts they had just purchased

B) Secularization of Christmas

- 1) Some believe that commercialism is the main cause behind the secularization of Christmas
- 2) Think: Christmas decorations before Thanksgiving
- 3) Black Friday, Cyber Monday, More Black Fridays,
- 4) List of must-have toys and gifts

- 5) Decorations and more decorations
 - 6) Agony of what to buy and for whom to buy
 - 7) Gift cards are now a staple of Christmas, along with gift receipts
 - 8) It seems we talk more about presents than about Jesus.
 - 9) How many of us have agonized over a present or presents?
 - 10) So, have we taken the Baby Jesus and used Him as an excuse to indulge ourselves?
 - 11) Are we neglecting our Lord and King for the newest toy, clothes, or electronics?
- C) Here is my take: I do not think commercialism is ruining Christmas, and I will give three reasons
- D) **SLIDE** Reason 1
- 1) **Matthew 2:9-11 (NIV)** ⁹ After [the Magi] had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.
 - 2) **SLIDE** AND THEY GOT UP AND LEFT. RIGHT?
 - 3) **SLIDE** No, they brought Him - GIFTS - expensive gifts
 - 4) **SLIDE** Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of **gold** and of **frankincense (incense)** and of **myrrh**.
 - a) At the time, frankincense and myrrh were worth more than their weight in gold
 - b) These were very expensive gifts for a two-year-old baby
 - c) Yet, God considered it important enough to include these gifts in His Word for us
 - d) Today, these gifts might be considered commercialism, since they center around money
- E) **SLIDE** Reason 2
- 1) There is an old story about Saint Nicholas, as recounted by Bill Bennett

- a) He was a Christian bishop who lived during the fourth century in what is now Turkey.
 - b) When Nicholas was a young man living in his hometown of Patara, families provided dowries for their daughters when they married
 - c) Think *The Quiet Man*
 - d) Nicholas heard of a family that had fallen on hard times.
 - e) The desperate parents were too poor to provide dowries so that their three daughters could marry.
 - f) So, they decided that the only way to keep their daughters from starving was to sell them into servitude.
- 2) Nicholas, a Christian, could not bear to see the daughters sold into servitude, so he decided to do something about it
- a) He put a few gold coins he had inherited into a small bag and, one night when the family was sleeping, tossed it through a window into their home.
 - b) It was enough money to provide a dowry for the oldest daughter, who was soon married.
 - c) When Nicholas saw the effects of his gift, he, in turn was blessed and filled with joy.
- 3) So, when he had saved more money, he returned and tossed another bag of gold through the window so the second daughter could be married.
- a) Nicholas knew he could not stop there, so he returned several nights later with a third bag.
 - b) The tearful father was waiting to see who their secret benefactor was.
 - c) Nicholas begged him not to tell anyone, but his act of generosity set him on the path to becoming the world's most **famous gift giver**.
- 4) Granted, the story of Nicholas has been changed and added to through history

- a) However, we know that he was a man of God who worked tirelessly for his flock.
 - b) But the most remarkable part of his story comes after his death.
 - c) People began to tell stories about the bishop and his power to change people's hearts.
 - d) Because all the good he did was a kind of miracle, they told stories of the miraculous—stories of a man who could accomplish things no ordinary person could.
- 5) "It is easier to count the waves of the sea, the drops of rain, the stars, and with a glance see all the Atlantic than to recount in detail God's marvels accomplished through Saint Nicholas," an eighth-century hymn proclaimed.
- 6) Nicholas gradually became an international phenomenon in the Old World. By the end of the fifteenth century, more than 2,500 churches, monasteries, hospitals, schools, and works of art had been dedicated to him in Western Europe.
- 7) We live in a time of social turmoil and drama.
- a) Nicholas's standing endured such a time during the Reformation, when Protestants turned against traditions surrounding the saints.
 - b) The most zealous reformers took hammers to sculptures of Nicholas and other saints.
 - c) They smashed stained-glass windows depicting their deeds.
 - d) Pages containing lives of the saints were used to polish boots or wrap fish.
- 8) The legacy of Nicholas was driven from many churches, but he could not be driven from people's hearts.
- a) Over the centuries, something extraordinary happened.
 - b) He moved into homes and became a hero to families.
- 9) In America, of course, he transformed into the champion bringer of gifts. Those three bags of gold have become Santa's sack of toys.

- 10) Santa Claus comes from Sinterklass, the Dutch name for Saint Nicholas. (*Miracle on 34th Street*)
 - 11) So, yes, Virginia, there was a Santa Claus.
 - a) Over the years, have we commercialized Christmas and have people made a profit from it? Yes.
 - b) Have some lost the true meaning? Yes.
 - c) But the Christmas we celebrate can be tied to a man who believed in Jesus, who knew that faith without works is dead, and who believed that it is more blessed to give than to receive
 - d) Nicolas championed generosity, selflessness, largeness of spirit.
 - 12) **SLIDE** There is one essential truth in the stories of Nicholas and Santa Claus: the goodness of the gift offered with no expectation of anything in return.
 - 13) That spirit lives in any person who with secret joy watches a wonder-struck child or a friend or a family member or a stranger receive a gift on Christmas.
 - 14) The legacy of Saint Nicholas has rippled across seventeen centuries, bringing messages of faith and joy.
 - a) It is a story rooted in Jesus Christ
 - b) It is a story rooted in money and gift-giving
- F) **SLIDE** Reason 3
- 1) Jesus' Toy Box
 - 2) **SLIDES**
 - 3) What would that have been like without gifts?

III **SLIDE** What is the problem?

A) Commercialism is not ruining Christmas; man is

B) Scriptures

- 1) **Matthew 15:19 (NIV)** ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.

- 2) **Luke 6:45 (NIV)** ⁴⁵ The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.
 - 3) **SLIDE** What is marring Christmas is not the gifts but the hearts of those giving gifts
 - 4) If we give gifts because we want something from others or because we covet the attention, then our hearts have tainted the gifts
 - 5) If we buy children gifts so we can show off how much we have, then our hearts are at fault
 - 6) But, when our hearts are centered around Jesus, our gifts can become a way to show love, acceptance and worth
 - 7) Addie and her pink flamingo - \$32 + \$8 in change
 - 8) 19-year-old cashier working for college -pays for mother's gifts
 - 9) Little girl with nothing to give her teacher: "This kiddo wanted to get me something so badly, but had nothing to give. So rather than give me nothing, this student opened up her free breakfast cereal this morning, took the packaging of her spork, straw, and napkin, and finally took the time to take every marshmallow out of her cereal to put in a bag—for me."
 - 10) When I buy a gift for my wife, I seldom consider the cost
 - 11) I do consider how much I love her and how much that gift will make her smile
 - 12) God gave us Jesus, a priceless Gift; Jesus gives us His Spirit
 - 13) We give gifts to show our love for Jesus, to glorify Him as the reason for our giving, and to bless others - period
 - 14) At least we should.
- C) Pruning has begun
- 1) Part of the pruning process involves our true motivations
 - 2) As Rachel said yesterday, "We need to be more aware of Jesus," which will make us more aware of our hearts
- D) **MERRY CHRISTMAS**