

Why do we celebrate Christmas?

(Luke 2: 11)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Text:

Luke 2:11 - "***For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.***"

Dear Friends in Jesus,

The obvious question, "Why do we celebrate Christmas?", appears to have become most unobvious to so many people today. Why do we celebrate Christmas?

Could it be that a child was born? Hardly – thousands of babies are born in our world each day.

Could it be that the child was born in poverty? No – in this very hour hundreds of children are being born in squalor, cold, desperate need, conditions much worse than the stable.

Could it be that there were shepherds looking after their sheep on the hills surrounding Bethlehem? No – the world has plenty of simple and honest folk.

Could it be that some wise men were led to Bethlehem by a bright star over a long period of time? No – there have been far greater phenomena in nature.

Could it be that the angel appeared to the shepherds near Bethlehem? No – on many occasions angels appeared visibly in Old Testament and New Testament history.

Could it be that the wise men brought gifts to Bethlehem? No – countless other children, perhaps your children too, have received Christmas presents far more costly.

Could it be that the new-born child was admired by those who came to see him? Tell me where there is a baby who is not admired by someone. When a new-born baby is crying and screwing up its face, parents and especially grandparents will say, "Isn't he/she beautiful!"

Why, then, do we so enthusiastically celebrate the anniversary of Jesus' birth?

There can only be one answer. He is the Child, not just any child. Just who this Child is, and the purpose for which he was born, are extremely important. The answer is given to us by the angel, as he speaks to the shepherds and to us: "**For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.**"

Christmas is about God and human beings. It's about God's great love for human beings. After all, He created them in His own image. When an old pastor was once asked how the Christmas story could be told appealingly year after year, he simply answered, "Just tell it as though you had never told it before. And imagine that those to whom you tell it, have never heard it before." The Christmas story is not only about a weary young couple, an uninviting stable, a new-born baby, frightened shepherds, rejoicing angels, wise men, a brilliant star, and costly gifts. It's mostly about God and human beings!

It really began when humans deliberately turned their backs on God. In righteous anger God drove Adam and Eve from the beautiful and fertile Garden of Eden, because they deliberately disobeyed his command. But in his amazing grace and love he at once promised them the gift of a Saviour, through whom the door of heaven would again be opened. And throughout the Old and New Testaments God repeated this glorious promise to all people over and over again.

We certainly need these reassurances today. We often have our moments when we become very aware of our limitations and our weaknesses. We often have our moments when we feel very insecure and very worried. The evil in our world causes us deep concern. The evil in our own lives troubles us. Surely, we have an overwhelming awareness of our own inadequacy for life on this earth and especially for life eternal. Humanity, in spite of all its technology and achievements, is spiritually bankrupt. We are all sinners. In God's holy eyes we deserve to suffer and die eternally. Who can help us? Who will help us? God's priceless Christmas gift, Jesus Christ, is his wonderful answer to our hopeless position.

Yes, Christmas is God's wonderful answer! The Old Testament prophet Isaiah said, centuries before Jesus' birth: "**Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name IMMANUEL.**" Immanuel means, 'God is with us'. What a name! And the angel took up the refrain: "**For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.**" What a Saviour!

God became a human being, one of us, without ceasing to be God. The Christ who was born in Bethlehem; who increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and humans; who sympathetically healed the sick, the deformed, and the demented; who was mockingly crowned with cruel thorns, and crucified on the cross in shame; who rose triumphantly and victoriously as Conqueror over sin, death, and the devil on Easter morning – **HE WAS AND STILL IS GOD!** That gives Christmas its real glory and meaning and purpose this evening and every day of our lives.

God sent his own Son, Jesus, to live here on this earth, so that humans might forever have a perfect example for living on this earth. But, most of all, God sent his own Son, Jesus, to this earth, so that he might rescue us from our sin, selfishness and shame. He did this when He gave his life for us and took away our sins on Calvary's cross. We, now, by simple and explicit faith and trust in Jesus as our personal Lord, and Saviour, and Friend, know that our sins have been taken away. We know that Jesus lives with us and in us every day. We know that we live with Jesus now and later on in the eternal joys of heaven. What a wonderful Christmas gift!

At this Christmas and always may you frequently come to this Saviour, Jesus, for the forgiveness of your sins and for his constant love and care. May your faith and trust grow in Him, as you eagerly and constantly read and study His life-giving Word. May you place Him first in your hearts and lives. May you, by word and deed, serve Him daily, and proclaim His saving name to others.

Thank you, God, for your priceless Christmas gift to me and to others, Jesus, my Lord, Saviour and Friend. **AMEN.**

May the peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Sermon by Pastor Graham Zweck, Christmas Eve 24 December 2020