

Christmas Eve's Eve

12-23-09

"It Doesn't Feel Like Christmas!"

I. **INTRO:**

- A. Rick's nephew **Ted**, brain surgery, tumor removed, not recovering well.
- B. **Erica** (H1N1)[Eddy & Janet] - trach successful. Good day. No set back.

II. **IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE CHRISTMAS!**

A. **Wrappings & Trappings!**

- B. You've heard, or have said the phrase, "*It sure doesn't feel like Christmas.*"
 - 1. You might be feeling: I'm hurt; I'm lonely; I'm single; I've lost a loved one; I'm dealing with raw wounds; my family is broken; my family is in the midst of breaking; I'm financially broke. "*Good news of great joy*" ???
 - a) Christmas can be a painful reminder of what has been **lost**.
 - 2. We as Christians are often worried about *Santa* taking center stage of Christmas. Or *elves* or *glowing nosed reindeers*. Or in a word, *commercialism*.
 - 3. **But** here in the West what Christmas means to most is "*a family celebration*".
 - a) Not a bad thing, just not the main thing. Christmas is far more than that!
 - b) "Christ did not enter our world so that we might have a comfortable, warm holiday celebration on planet earth."¹
 - c) Our *cultural traditions* have become so intertwined with the biblical *Noel*(1st Birth) It's hard for us to separate the *religious truth of Christmas* from the *human traditions* we have grown up with.
- C. So what do we do when **life interrupts** our **cultural celebrations**?
 - 1. **No Christmas carol** can fill our broken hearts with joy; **No amount of decorations** or **Christmas lights**; **No presents** can make up for what we have lost.
 - 2. What we need is something **different**, something **deeper!**
 - 3. What we need is to take a fresh look once again at **Jesus**, the true message behind the Christmas story. **The reason behind the season!**
 - a) To whom *Brennan Manning* said, (book: *Lion & Lamb: The Relentless Tenderness of Jesus*) "*Do you think you could contain Niagara Falls in a teacup?*" and also, "*The shipwrecked at the stable kneel in the presence of mystery.*"
 - 4. So we must dwell on this **mystery**. We must let it take **center stage**. It is the Christmas message that crosses all cultural boundaries.

¹ Dan Schaeffer; In Search of the Real Spirit of Christmas. Pg.143.

- D. We have many today that have been “refugees, hunted by soldiers, have had to leave everything behind, stripped naked & tortured.” **And didn’t have any choice in this!!! Jesus had a choice!** He knew all that would happen to Him,...*but still came!*
1. God had a choice, & that choice carried **serious & deadly** consequences.
- E. Ironically, in those times when it **feels least** like Christmas, it might be the **most** like Christmas.
1. When nothing seems **comfortable**, or **normal**, or **familiar**, we are closer to experiencing the purpose of Christmas than at any other time.
- F. **Examples from the 1st Christmas:**
- G. The **Wise men** must have felt nothing is *normal, familiar, & all is uncomfortable...*
1. They were away from home that 1st Christmas. Away from family & searching for, “God knows what?”
 2. Their scavenger hunt clues seemed to have only included: (Mt.2:2) **Where is He** (male) **who has been born** (a baby) **King** (royalty) **of the Jews?** (nationality) **For we have seen His star** (must be special) **in the East & have come to worship Him** (obviously worthy of worship).
 3. They could say, *“It sure doesn’t feel like Christmas!”*
- H. **Mary** must have been *uncomfortable...*
1. Being away from home; reputation shattered; dreams burst; unplanned pregnancy (from her part); looked unfaithful to her betrothed; finger pointing. **Who could identify with her pain? Who could really understand?** **And**, How did she feel when she heard of all the babies & toddlers that were murdered because of her baby?
 2. She could say, *“It sure doesn’t feel like Christmas!”*
- I. **Joseph** must have felt nothing is *normal...*
- J. Away from home; reputation shattered; dreams burst; unplanned pregnancy(from his part)
1. He could say, *“It sure doesn’t feel like Christmas!”*
- K. **Jesus** must have felt nothing is *familiar...*
- L. Truly away from home; away from family/Trinity; away from what was familiar like His glory; & taking on the unfamiliar & uncomfortable, human nature. **He took not a step up, but a leap down.**
1. There was nothing comfortable, normal, or familiar about the incarnation.
 2. He could say, *“It sure doesn’t feel like Christmas!”*
 3. Somehow **Merry Christmas** just doesn’t seem to fit their experiences.

- M. They could each say, *"It sure doesn't feel like Christmas!"* Yet, this was Christmas!
1. The **wise men**, when they saw the star, they **rejoiced with exceeding great joy** (Mt.2:10) And when they saw Jesus they **worshipped** Him.
 2. **Mary** proclaimed, this was a **blessing!** - **Read** Lk. 1:46-49.
 3. **Joseph** was **obedient** to all that was required of him. [Take her as your wife; take them down to Egypt; to return to Israel; to move up north to Nazareth]
 4. **Jesus**, Immanuel came. Leaving perfection & peace to enter chaos on a divine rescue mission. Bringing us salvation & hope. God visited our planet.
 5. The **angels** brought **good tidings of great joy which would be for all people.**
- N. We are reminded in this whole 1st Christmas story (Here's where **Hope** comes in!)
1. That life **isn't** perfect, & it'll **never be** until He comes again to make all things rt.
 2. Another far greater world exists.
 3. Jesus came so we would know He **loves us** & to **make us ready** for our new home.
- O. Some ask, **How can God truly love us when he allows such pain & suffering to enter our lives?**
1. Well I ask, **How can God hate us**, when He gave us what He loves the most? (i.e. His Son)
- P. How to appreciate the Savior?...Just **imagine** if there **wasn't** one.
1. Imagine that your pain & suffering have **no real meaning.**
 2. Your short life is ruled by **fate** & you are just **unlucky.**
 3. Wrongs will never be made right, truth is relative, & hope for a better world is just simply dreaming out loud.
 4. Your silent suffering & hidden pain have **no** divine audience; they are yours to bear alone.
 5. Here exists, quite simply, **no hope** beyond this life. **Oh my!!!**
- Q. But, we **do** have reason for **rejoicing!**
1. Yes, for a Savior **was** born to us.
 2. Our suffering **does** touch His merciful & gracious heart.
 3. He was not only moved by our suffering **but** came to **join us in it!**
 4. He lowered Himself to **suffer** what we suffer, to **feel** what we feel, to **cry** with us, to **hunger** with us, to **thirst** with us, & **live** with us.
 5. The Almighty God made Himself vulnerable to all the pain of human life.

6. And to keep us from eternally suffering, He came to die for us, taking our place. [He came to love me to death!]
7. My hope cannot be quenched, because I know my God loves me even through suffering.

R. Christmas reminds us that we can put our hope in a sure thing, *the Love of God*, demonstrated so beautifully on that wonderful day when He came forth into our world as a babe.

1. This is the Christmas we can celebrate, **with** or **without** family, friends, or familiarity.
2. It is a *spirit of Christmas* that goes beyond “*trees, decorations, songs, & presents*” to speak to our **true condition**.
3. **You might be feeling:** I’m hurt; I’m lonely; I’m single; I’ve lost a loved one; I’m dealing with raw wounds; my family is broken; my family is in the midst of breaking; I’m financially broke. “*Good news of great joy*” ??? - **Yes**, for Christ came, cares, knows, feels, understands, is purposeful, merciful, gracious, & eternal, loves us greatly & desires for us to have a very Merry Christmas, knowing He is **watching over us** & is **purposeful** in each of our lives!