

The Forgiveness of Christmas

Matthew 2:16-18

Preface

The Celebration Choir presented the gospel to us in this concert today. I thank God for the dedication and hard work from our choir. We have been blessed.

Scripture

³*He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴Surely he took up our infirmities (pain) and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. ⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:3-6 NIV*

Introduction

We have talked about “The Miracle of Christmas” and “The Love of Christmas.” Today we will look briefly at “The Forgiveness of Christmas.” Christmas is about God’s willingness to forgive us.

It is easy for us to talk about the joy, peace and love of Christmas but we have difficulty speaking about the Forgiveness of Christmas. In order to think about forgiveness, we are forced to think about sin and none of us really wants to go there.

But it is important that we do in order to fully understand Christmas. ⁶*We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

1. Why We Need Forgiveness

A few years ago Chuck Colson wrote a column about an event that took place when the **Nazi Adolph Eichmann**—who helped plan the systematic destruction of millions of Jews and others in the Holocaust—was put on trial in Israel. A Jewish man by the name of **Yehiel Dinur** had survived the concentration camps and had testified against Eichmann (when he was tried in absentia) at the Nuremberg trials after World War II. Years later the Israeli special forces captured Eichmann in a daring raid in Argentina returned him to Israel to stand trial for his crimes. Dinur attended the 1961 trial as a witness. When he saw Eichmann in the courtroom Dinur began to sob uncontrollably. Soon he fainted and fell to the floor. Why? Was it hatred? Fear? Horrid memories? Speaking in an interview with Mike Wallace on the show “60 Minutes,” Dinur explained that during the war he had feared Eichmann because he saw him as someone fundamentally different than he was. But now, seeing him stripped of all his Nazi glory, Dinur saw Eichmann for what he really was—just an ordinary man. “I was afraid about myself,” Dinur explained, “I saw that I am capable to do this. I am ... exactly like he.” That is why he collapsed on the floor. Mike Wallace summarized the truth in six terrifying words: “Eichmann is in all of us.”

This is in fact the central truth about human nature. Sin is in us—not just the temptation to sin, not just the propensity to sin, but sin itself dwells in us. We don’t like to hear this truth because it forces us to confront the truth about who we really are.

The words of [Romans 3:22-23](#) ring in my ears, “*There is no difference, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*”

Given the right conditions, you and I would do almost anything. And apart from the grace of God, we are just sinners.

2. How We Receive Forgiveness

When the angel told Joseph about Mary's pregnancy, he instructed him to give the name Jesus, *"because he will save his people from their sins"* (Matthew 1:21).

The angel told the shepherds to fear not, because *"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord"* (Luke 2:11).

Jesus came to be a Savior. He came to save the world from their sins. But you don't need a Savior unless you are a sinner. If you don't recognize your sins, you don't need a Savior. We must each recognize that we are sinners and need Christ as our Savior.

If Christmas means anything, it is this: God always wins in the end. God is always victorious. God forgives us to victory.

Think of this way: Herod knew about Jesus and tried to kill him. The Magi knew about Jesus and worshiped him. If information alone could save you, even Herod would have been saved.

But it's not enough to know about Jesus, you must personally respond to that truth by bowing your knee and opening your heart to him.

Forgiveness in the Bible literally means, "It no longer stands between us." Our sin separates us from the love of God. Receiving Christ restores our relationship with God through forgiveness.

Conclusion

I want you to think of the things you have done in your life for which you are the most ashamed. What is the sin you have committed that you would not want anyone else to know about?

Through Christ; because of Christmas, that sin no longer stands between you and God. **You are forgiven because of Christmas.**