

**“CHRISTMAS, GOD’S GIFT TO US”**  
Christmas Morning    December 25, 2008  
John 1:1-14

**Introduction:**

Wow! Christmas morning. Happy Birthday Jesus. If the gifts aren’t bought, wrapped and placed under the tree by now.... It might be too late.

I love Christmas. The excitement of it. The joy, the gift-giving, the lights, the trees, the songs, the (mostly) happy faces. There are traces in Christmas of how life ought to be lived, but sadly, mostly isn’t.

Christmas is obviously a mostly commercial holiday for many in our country. We’re allowed to call it Christmas when we go Christmas shopping, but not allowed to say “Merry Christmas” because that might offend someone, so we say “Happy Holidays”, trying to cover all bases but really not touching any of them.

Somehow, if I say “Happy Holiday” instead of “Happy Hanukah”, it is just not the same. Or, if I say “Have a blessed holiday” instead of “have a blessed Ramadan” I don’t think it conveys the same message.

The fact is we can say the appropriate holiday name to any religious group other than Christians. We’ve allowed Christmas – God’s gift to us of a savior - to be reduced to a seasonal Holiday. Why is Christmas and Easter so threatening to so many people who proclaim themselves to be broad-minded?

## Christmas, God's Gift To Us

I can't give you a sociological explanation but I think I can give you a spiritual one. It's because Christmas is personal. It is about a particular baby born at a particular place, time, and country, and for a particular purpose.

I can wish Jewish people a Happy Hanukah and that isn't a personal threat to me. I can wish a Muslim a blessed Ramadan, and still that is not personal to me. It doesn't touch me where I live. But if I say have a Merry Christmas, and mean it with any sense that it is a religious recognition then I am left thinking about a real baby born to a real mother for a real purpose. And, if I am not ready, or willing to deal with God in my life, then the thought of Christmas is too threatening to me. I've got to make some sort of decision about this baby, what's his name? Oh Yes – Jesus!

It is personal because the story of Christmas is about

### **A Savior Coming Into The World.**

And you can't talk about a Savior without the assumption that some body needs saving. And that gets too personal because it might be me that needs saving; only, I'm not ready to admit there is anything wrong in my life so why should I put up with talk about salvation?

Our lessons for today are full of salvation talk,

aren't they? From Isaiah: *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, ... The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of the all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*

From the Palm: *Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. ... In righteousness shall he judge the world and the peoples with equity.*

From Hebrews: *Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.*

From John's Gospel: <sup>1</sup>*In the beginning there was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup>All things were made by him, and nothing was made without him. <sup>4</sup>In him there was life, and that life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overpowered it. <sup>10</sup>The Word was in the world, and the world was made by him, but the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to the world*

*that was his own, but his own people did not accept him.*

*<sup>12</sup>But to all who did accept him and believe in him he gave the right to become children of God. <sup>13</sup>They did not become his children in any human way—by any human parents or human desire. They were born of God. <sup>14</sup>The Word became a human and lived among us. We saw his glory—the glory that belongs to the only Son of the Father—and he was full of grace and truth.*

There is nothing impersonal about those words, nor about the witness of hundreds of millions of Christians who have lived during the past 2,000 years and have bore personal testimony that Jesus is alive; he is who the Bible says he is; and the entire world deserves to have a relationship with him. That is so personal it offends some people. Many people want to believe in some concept of God but not in a God who holds them personally accountable. That's a sin of vanity isn't it? I'll create the kind of God I want to believe in; but if my god steps out of the boundaries I set than I'm taking back my belief.

There is something about Jesus that doesn't allow us to live in darkness. John said that the life Jesus brings is the "light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ... He is the true light,

which enlightens everyone, ...”

**Jesus Is The Light of The World.**

The truth is we need light. God designed us to be creatures of light not darkness. Darkness is symbolic of secrets, and death, and even evil. It is not the grazing animals that comfortably operate in the dark. It is the predators. Humans were not designed by God to be a predator, which is why predator humans seem evil to us. It is no accident that God's first act of creation was to say, “Let there be light”. Darkness already existed. Light was radical, transformational, life changing. The bible says that God is Light (1 John 1:5), not darkness.

Therefore the life that Jesus Christ brought into the world is a life that brings light – brings illumination – brings enlightenment. God wants us to come out of darkness and into the light of God's love and revelation of His nature through Jesus Christ.

So, will you come to the warmth and light of Jesus Christ?

Christmas is about receiving God's gift to us of a savior. God believes we need saving, and deserve to be saved. So, will we humble our selves, if that is what it takes, or set our pride aside, if that is what it takes, put our self-

## **Christmas, God's Gift To Us**

condemnation aside, if that is what it takes, and receive God's gift.

Inside we find a baby, holding his arms out to us, encouraging us to pick him up, and bring him close to our heart. It's not really a hard thing to do. Babies are easy to hold and cuddle, and feel close to. Jesus doesn't want anything more than that at Christmas – to be brought close and be given a chance to enter our lives.

When you come for communion today it can be your time for you and Jesus to have a personal meeting; a time for you to hold Jesus and invite Him to come into your life; a time to receive God's Christmas Gift for you.