

Pastor's ramblings - December 2011

"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea..."
Matthew 2:1a NIV

Christmas is a paradox for me. I like and dislike it. I like the reason we celebrate, the coming of Jesus, but I do not like the way it has been taken over by the world. Recent ads suggest that if there was not a Santa there would be no Christmas. If there wasn't a Wal Mart or some other merchandizing giant there would be no Christmas. The list could go on but you get the drift. Christmas has lost its meaning -- the celebration of God coming -- the celebration of God coming to a poor, couple in Bethlehem with a child who will forever change the world, Immanuel, God is with us!

Christmas does not need gifts, layaways, parties, etc. Christmas does not need cards, eggnog, elves or reindeer. Christmas has all that it needs: *"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea..."* If everything was taken away, there would still be Christmas - or at least there should be for the Church Christ came to establish. The message would still be the same. The love which came through Christ would remain the same. The need for justice, mercy, forgiveness and love would remain the same. Retailers might go out of business. Hallmark would have a decrease in sales. Santa suit rentals would be down. But, there would and will still be Christmas.

Now, I am not anti-business or gift giving. But I am against the tremendous debt that some go into to celebrate the birth of the One who came to give the greatest gift of all, God's love. I am against the emphasis that if there were none of these things Christmas would cease to exist. What if on Christmas morning there was nothing under the tree? Would this indicate that God's love had been withdrawn from the world? Would it indicate that Christ came in vain for the world? Or, would it allow us to focus our attention and worship on the true meaning of the day? Would we hear the angels sing with greater clarity the song of good news and peace coming for all humankind?

Many will struggle with attending worship on December 25 - after all what does Christmas have to do with worship? Who will cook the dinner, clean up the paper and ribbons? But, where else should we be on the day we celebrate the birthday of our hope?

Sermons for December

December 4 - Communion Sunday

Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25
Joseph and Mary

December 11

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; John 1:6-8, 19-28
Preparing the Way

December 18

2 Samuel 7:1-11; Luke 1:46-56
Generation to Generation

December 25 - Christmas Day

Selected Scriptures
Songs from the Manger

What to give?

To your enemy, forgiveness.

To an opponent, tolerance.

To a friend, your heart.

To a customer, service.

To all people, love.

To every child, a good example.

To yourself, respect.

Adapted from Oren Arnold