

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: December 24, 2017

Sermon Title: Why Christmas Matters

Text: 1 Tim. 1:13-17

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

Date: December 24, 2017 A.M Service
Title: Why Christmas Matters - Pt. 1
Text: 1 Tim. 1:13-17
Theme:

Introduction:

I wish to welcome you on this Christmas Eve morning. It is always with joy I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is possible in the midst of all the chaos and uncertainty surrounding us that we fail to hear what the shepherd's heard, see what the magi saw, hold what Simeon and Anna held, understand what Mary and Joseph understood, and [if an unbeliever fear] what Herod feared. Christmas is a pivotal moment in the Great Biblical Narrative. Paul calls it the fullness of time. In the incarnation God is fulfilling ancient promises carrying us all the way back to Genesis 3:15. Yet are we so illiterate as to the Bible that we fail to hear, see, and hold the Christ? Are we like people who are alive, yet dead; do we seek to fill our cravings with chaff and not the kernel, that seek to warm ourselves at pictures of fire, and fill our empty existence with shadow rather than the substance? Friends, let us not forget why we gather on this day. In the birth of Jesus, we celebrate His death, His burial, and His resurrection. The incarnation of Jesus is a punctuation point in the sentence of God. Pentecost is His confirmation that God keeps His word.

"In his well-known classic, *Pilgrim's Progress* ([Spire Books], p. 211), John Bunyan has Greatheart say to Christian's boys as they journey to the Celestial City, '[Forgetful Green] is the most dangerous place in all these parts. For if at any time the pilgrims meet with any brunt, it is when they forget what favors they have received, and how unworthy they are of them.' I fear that as American Christians, living in this day of a watered down, feel good about yourself "gospel," we have forgotten what favors we have received from God and how unworthy we are of them. My aim today is to get any of you who may have wandered into Forgetful Green out of there as you think again on God's abundant grace that covers all your sins."¹

THE BIG PICTURE:

As a church, we have been journeying in 1 Timothy. I would like to look at one paragraph that speaks of the gospel and show *Why Christmas Matters*. I have only three points and I trust this will honor the text and our Lord by their clarity.

Outline:

- I. Christmas Matters Because We Can't - Paul's Past Life (v. 13a)
 - "even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor" (1 Tim. 1:13).

Notice how the apostle Paul describes himself. He does this same kind of thing in Philipians 3:4-8.

- ⁴ “although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. ⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ” (Phil. 3:4-8).

How might you describe yourself? We often desire to paint a picture of ourselves far lovelier, compassionate, or stellar than is the reality. We are “good” only because we are made in the image and likeness of God, but the fall into sin and from grace has marred us deeply and without the intervention of God, all would be lost.

“On September 23, 1908, at the Polo Grounds in New York City, there were two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning. The New York Giants and the Chicago Cubs were battling for the National League pennant, with the score tied at 1-1. The Giants had two men on base: 19-year-old Fred Merkle on first and Moose McCormick on third. Al Bridwell slapped a single up the middle, scoring McCormick. The game seemed to be over. But instead of tagging second base, Fred Merkle trotted off the field to the Giants' locker room. The Cubs threw the ball to second, forcing out Merkle. The run didn't count, the Giants lost the pennant, and Fred Merkle picked up the name, ‘Bonehead Merkle.’ But that's not the end of the story. Fred Merkle got another chance and went on to play for 14 more seasons, including five trips to the World Series.”²

This reflects the idea that God gives second chances. We are blasphemers, persecutors, and violent aggressors. We, like the apostle, are sinners. Yet, God relentlessly pursues those who are His and seeks sinners to save.

This brings us to our second thought in our text.

II. Christmas Matters Because God Can - God’s Present Mercy and Grace (v. 13b)

- ^{13b} “**Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;** ¹⁴ **and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant,** with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 1:13b, 14).

The word “more than abundant” is a compound word meaning, “To super-abound.” It is found only here in the New Testament. The word **abound** occurs in only eight verses. Two of the more familiar ones are Romans 5:20 and 6:1.

- “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. **But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound**” (Rom. 5:20).
- “What shall we say then? **Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?**” (Rom. 6:1)

However, in both cases, it is the word without the prefix super. The ideas of mercy and grace stand as two pylons driven deeply into the soil of our souls. God’s mercy withholds from us a judgment that is justly deserved. God’s grace gives benefits that we cannot earn. How does this entire transaction happen?

This brings us to a third point in our text.

III. Christmas Matters Because Jesus Did (vv. 14, 15)

A. His mercy and grace seen in the Mission of Jesus (vv. 14, 15)

- ¹⁴“and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, **that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners**, among whom I am foremost of all” (1 Tim. 1:14, 15).

Paul revisits this idea in several paragraphs within 1 Timothy.

- ³“This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵**For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,** ⁶ **who gave Himself as a ransom for all,** the testimony given at the proper time. ⁷For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth” (1 Tim. 2:3-7).
- ¹⁴“I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; ¹⁵ but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. ¹⁶ By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: **He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory**” (1 Tim. 3:14-16).
- ⁹“It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. ¹⁰For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, **who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.** ¹¹Prescribe and teach these things” (1 Tim. 4:9-11).

“If man had his way, the plan of redemption would be an endless and bloody conflict. In reality, salvation was bought not by Jesus' fist, but by His nail-pierced hands; not by muscle but by love; not by vengeance but by forgiveness; not by force but by sacrifice. Jesus Christ our Lord surrendered in order that He might win; He destroyed His enemies by dying for them and conquered death by allowing death to conquer Him.” ³

It seems awkward that we celebrate a season but deny and/or reject the reason for the season in the first place. However, Christmas matters because in its absent, all would be lost.

There are two other supporting points as to the consequences of Christ's work.

B. His mercy and grace seen in the Transformation of Paul (v. 16)

- ¹⁶“Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life” (1 Tim. 1:16).

In the saving of sinners, lives are transformed, people change. Christmas is transforming. Christmas brings healing to the diseased, hope to the depressed, and wholeness to the dysfunctional.

Paul knew firsthand the impact of Jesus. This encounter changed Paul and moved him from being one who persecuted Jesus to one who adored Jesus.

C. His mercy and grace seen in the Adoration by His people (v. 17)

- ¹⁷“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (1 Tim. 1:17).
- ¹³“I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵which He will bring about at the proper time--He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen” (1 Tim. 6:13-16).

Christmas matters because you can't, but God can, and Jesus did. During this Advent season, we look to and wait for Jesus because without Him we can do nothing. It is only in the person and work of Jesus that sinners are saved from sin and death and transformed into adoring worshippers.

“Nothing teaches us about the preciousness of the Creator as much as when we learn the emptiness of everything else.” **Charles Spurgeon**⁴

“A popular play and movie this time of year, one I always enjoy watching is *A Christmas Carol*. There is one scene that has always fascinated me. The Ghost of Christmas Past has just paid a very discomfoting visit to Ebenezer Scrooge. Clearly the old miser is shaken by the entire ordeal. But when he awakens from his sleep does he take the message to heart. No, he simply dismisses it by saying: Bah, humbug, it wasn't real. ‘Just a bit of last nights undigested beef,’ he says to himself, ‘There is more gravy about you than the grave.’”⁵

If you and I were to remove from our present experience the purchasing, giving, and receiving of gifts, how would we mark this Advent season? How would we remember what this entire season is all about?

This holiday season, let us consider the substance behind all this shadow and recognize that God can be tasted and seen in and through the shadow. This shadow is not the end. This shadow reminds us that we can't, but God can, and Jesus did.

For this, let us bow down and adore Him.

“John Newton, was a wild, drunken sailor. His language was so foul that the captain, hardly a model of piety, rebuked him! He was often put in irons and whipped for his rebellion. He became a slave-trader, falling even further into sin. He narrowly escaped death a number of times. Finally, after nearly perishing in a severe storm at sea, he turned to God and was saved. Even so, he remained in slave-trading for a few years. Eventually, by God's grace, he became a

pastor. You probably know him for writing the hymn, 'Amazing Grace.' He wrote Deuteronomy 15:15 in bold letters and put it over the mantle of his study, where he could not fail to see it: 'Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt and the Lord thy God redeemed thee.' He also wrote his own epitaph which read, 'John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy.' (The above taken from Newton's autobiography, *Out of the Depths* [Moody Press] and from Barclay, p. 46.) John Newton never forgot that he was a great sinner who had found even greater mercy and grace in Christ. Neither did Paul forget. Neither should we."⁶

Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now am found
T'was blind but now I see

T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear
And Grace, my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

Through many dangers, toils and snares
We have already come.
T'was grace that brought us safe thus far
And grace will lead us home,

Amazing grace, How Sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now am found
T'was blind but now I see

Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. Do you know you can't? There is nothing you can do to undo the fall.
2. Do you know that God can? Do you understand that whatever hope you have for the now and future is wrapped up in the mercy and grace of God?
3. Finally, do you know that Jesus did? Jesus has done for you what you could never do for yourself. Today, will you believe this simple but profound truth?

¹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-4-grace-abounding-chief-sinners-1-timothy-112-17>

² <http://www.sermonsearch.com/sermon-illustrations/5781/bonehead-merkle/>

³ A.W. Tozer, *Preparing for Jesus' Return: Daily Live the Blessed Hope*

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/salvation>

⁴ <http://www.mediashout.com/inspiring-worship-quotes/>

⁵ <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/c/christmas.htm>

⁶ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-4-grace-abounding-chief-sinners-1-timothy-112-17>