TITLE: The Perspective of Christmas!

TEXT: Jn 19:1-18; Lk. 23:33-46; Mk. 10:45;

Jn. 12:23-27; Is. 53:4-11; 1st Jn. 5:11-13

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about the perspective of Christmas or how to keep Christmas in its proper perspective.

Before I do let me ask you a question this morning…

What does Christmas mean to you? What is your perspective of Christmas?

The picture that we so often see this time of year is a cute little baby wrapped up in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger in Bethlehem, surrounded by Mary & Joseph, some cattle and sheep and other barnyard animals, the wise men who have come from afar bearing gifts to lay at the feet of the Christ child…..

We may picture the poor shepherds who where out in the fields tending their flocks when the night skies became brilliant with light as the angels came to proclaim the Saviors birth….

All this makes us feel good and all warm inside. It is a time for families and friends to get together and exchange gifts and over stuff ourselves with all the Christmas Cuisines.

(Not that there is anything wrong with that).

Christmas should be a joyous time for us! Christmas should bring out the best in us! Christmas should be a time of love and charity and celebration….

But if this is the entirety of our perspective of Christmas then what we will find is that when Christmas day has passed we will be left feeling kind of empty or even depressed….

Let me share some verses of Scripture with you this morning that I think really help to bring Christmas into its often overlooked but proper perspective.

**John 19:1 (NIV) Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.**

**2 The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe**

**3 and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face.**

**4 Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him."**

**5 When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"**

**6 As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"**

**….."Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews.**

**15 But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away!** **Crucify him!"**

**16 Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.**

**17 Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).**

**18 Here they crucified him…**

**Luke 23:33 (NIV) When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals--one on his right, the other on his left.**

**34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." …..**

**35 The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One."**

**…..44 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour,**

**45 for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.**

46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

You may be thinking, well, what does reflection upon the cross have to do with keeping Christmas in its proper perspective?

Why is what we usually focus upon just in the spring of the year, at Easter time, important for our maintaining a proper perspective of Christmas?

Why is reflecting upon Jesus standing before a hateful crowd, His being whipped, beaten and ridiculed by Roman soldiers, His being nailed to a wooden cross and crucified for crimes that He didn’t commit have to do with having a proper perspective of Christmas?

Simply this….

Because it is for this express reason, this one purpose that Jesus came to this earth!

It is for this reason that the wise men traveled such great distances to come and worship this Christ Child!

It is for this reason that this babe that lie in the manger came to lie in that manger!

J. Sidlow Baxter in his book, “Awake, My Heart”, says this…

“Separate Christmas Day from Good Friday, and Christmas is doomed--doomed to decay into a merely sentimental or superstitious or sensuous "eat-drink-and-be-merry" festivity of December.

Bethlehem and Golgotha, the Manger and the Cross, the birth and the death, must always be seen together, if the real Christmas is to survive with all its profound inspirations.”

Mark 10:45 (NIV) For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus came to give his life as a ransom for many."

Sever Christmas from what happened on Good Friday and the result would be to doom Christmas as nothing more than a time to be merry and gay based on Lore.

It would be to reduce Christmas to nothing more then a time to feel good and gratify self!

The whole reason that Jesus came into this world was to give His life as a ransom for many!

His sole purpose in His being born in the flesh was to give His life for your and my sin on Calgary’s cross!

And if we look into the manger and don’t see, don’t reflect upon the cross, then we miss the real message and significance of Christmas!

For many, Christmas has become one of the most stressful holidays that is celebrated in this country!

It may be intertwined with good times but often there is an underlying stress that is associated with it!

The stress of spending more money then we have to spend. Sometimes incurring debt that will take us the entire next year to pay off.

The stress of preparing for holiday parties or holiday guest will get some so stressed that they can’t even really enjoy the day when it does finally arrive!

EXAMPLE: Years ago when I worked in the grocery business…I came to dread the Christmas season…All the extra business was great but doing business with people who had become too busy and had become stress filled wasn’t all that fun….

Usually on Christmas Eve I would have to work until 6:30 or 7:00 in the evening and then go directly to our family Christmas Eve gathering. After servicing a couple thousand demanding, stress out customers for the previous 10-12 hours the last thing I wanted to do was go to as festive family gathering and sing JOY TO THE WORLD!

Most Christmas Eve’s I could identify more with Ebenezer Scrooge or the Grinch that stole Christmas.

We know that Christmas and the Christmas season has been a stress to us when we find ourselves relieved when it is all over!

Just the fact that we find ourselves getting stressed over Christmas should show us that our perspective isn’t quite right!

Most often what happens when we find ourselves in this stressful condition is that we haven’t put Christmas in its proper perspective!

I believe what happens most often is that we celebrate the manger without reflecting upon the cross!

And it is only at the cross that the full significance of the manger will be realized in our life!

For that is what this babe that lie in a manger came to do!

Jesus came for the sole purpose of going to the cross!

He came solely **to give his life as a ransom for many**!

He came to give His life for your and my sins, came to be the atoning sacrifice for your and my sin!

He came to face death in the physical so that we could find life that is eternal!

**John 12:23 (NIV) Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.**

**24 I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.**

**25 The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.**

**26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.**

**27 "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? `Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.**

Jesus is speaking of His upcoming death on the cross when He said: **The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified…**

**Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? `Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.**

Jesus came to die on a cross! He came to pay the penalty and the price of your and my sin!

Just as was foretold of Him hundreds of years before His birth….

**Isai 53:4 (NIV) Surely he took up our infirmities**

**and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.**

**5 But 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.**

**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.**

**7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.**

**8 By oppression and judgment he was taken**

**away. And who can speak of his descendants?**

**For he was cut off from the land of the living;**

**for the transgression of my people he was stricken.**

**9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.**

**10 Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.**

**11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.**

Church, if we look into the manger and don’t see, we don’t reflect upon the cross-- then we don’t have the right perspective of Christmas!

When we look into the manger we need to see more then just a cute little baby wrapped up in swaddling clothes!

We need to see and reflect upon the savior of the world and the price that He would go on to pay for the possibility of our redemption and salvation!

We need to see and reflect upon how 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.**

Church, Christmas is but just the prelude to the cross!

Bethlehem led to Golgotha, the Manger led to the Cross, the birth led to the death!

And it was all done expressly for you and me!

**1Joh 5:11 (NIV) And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.**

**12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.**

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

This is the reason for the season! Jesus came to give His life on a cross so that we may one day pass from death to life and that life being eternal!

**And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.**

**12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.**

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

This morning, have you, will you put Christmas into its proper perspective?

When you look into the manger do you see, not just a cute little baby wrapped up in swaddling clothes, but do you see the king of all kings and the Lord of all Lords?

When you look into the manger do you see the spotless and pure Lamb of God that came as a sacrifice for your and my sin?

When you look into the manger to you see the cross?

Do you see the empty tomb?

Do you see the resurrected Lord of all Lords and King of all Kings who came on that star filled night in the form of a babe lying in a manger?

And most importantly, have you come to embrace that Christ child as the Lord and savior of your life?

For this is how we truly put Christmas in its proper perspective!

**12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.**

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Have you embraced the message of Christmas? Have you embraced Jesus as the Lord and Savior of your life, giving you, not just the hope of eternal life, but the assurance of eternal life?

This is the real reason for the season!

Play song “Where is the line to see Jesus”

by Becky Kelly