

How Do We Keep Jesus at the Center of Christmas?

<u>Isaiah 9:6</u>: (KJV) For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.



Christmas has changed. While the holiday has always had many non-Christian aspects, it seems as though the Christ-based pieces of the tradition are ever-fading. In its place we have Santa, reindeer, trees, gifts, lights, ornaments, food, family, and for this year, social distancing. Now, most of those things are not bad, with the notable exception of the social distancing. In fact, they do tend to bring a cheerful sense to our lives. Putting Christ in Christmas is about much more than good cheer - it is about a message of glad tidings of great

joy, and it is for all people! How do we get back to focusing on bringing joy to the world instead of just a moment of emotional excitement?

Most of us love to be given gifts, especially if they carry deep meaning. Let's look at Christmas this year with two things in mind. First and most obvious, Jesus is the greatest gift of all. Without him, life would be fleeting and sorrowful. Second, because Jesus came and ransomed the world, we who follow him are blessed with other specific and meaningful gifts relating to the gospel message.

We find these gifts through the experiences of those surrounding Jesus' birth. We will touch on four specific gifts.

First Specific Gift: Being chosen to do God's will in a unique way. Our example: Mary - Jesus' mother.

Did you ever wonder how Mary was able to not only accept the unlikely proclamation by the angel Gabriel, but how she could live with all the baggage that was to come with it? After all, what Mary was told was impossible!

Think about experiencing impossibility - the prospect of being faced with something so contrary to reason that it resides beyond your imagination.

Mary was faced with such a reality:

Luke 1:26-29: (NASB) ²⁶Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city...called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And coming in, he said to her, Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you. ²⁹But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.

The angel Gabriel was re-appearing six months after Elizabeth conceived a son who would be John the Baptist. This time the circumstances were opposite - Elizabeth was married and beyond child-bearing years. Mary was only engaged and was young. Gabriel had spoken to Elizabeth's husband, Zacharias, with the



first announcement, but here he spoke directly to the young bride-to-be. His greeting was one of great favor, yet Mary's reaction was confused and fearful.

Think of the questions that would have flashed before her mind - an angel of God is speaking to me? For what reason? What has happened that there is such favor and blessing upon me?

The angel continued:

Luke 1:30-33: (NASB) ³⁰The angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end.

The angel used her name - *do not be afraid*, *Mary*. There is no mistake that he came specifically to her.

Now the questions would have gone into hyperdrive in Mary's head:

I'm going to have a son named Jesus who will be called the son of the Most High? He will be THE deliverer and a KING? His reign will be everlasting?

Mary had no basis in the reality of her life to be able to process this. It was a natural impossibility.

For Mary, faith might perceive many parts of these proclamations, but there was one question she could not fathom:

Luke 1:34-37: (NASB) Mary said to the angel, how can this be, since I am a virgin?

Gabriel answered:

³⁵The angel answered and said to her, the holy spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy child shall be called the son of God. ³⁶And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.

The promised Messiah had been prophesied in Israel, so they were in expectation of him. Perhaps it would have been on the minds of everyone. The angel told Mary your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age. This gave her a sense of reality.



Well, this mighty messenger from God had an answer. It was unexpected, out of the ordinary and impossible from a physical perspective. But Gabriel's last words must have rung true in the deepest recesses of Mary's young heart.

Her response was one for the ages:

Luke 1:38: (NASB) And Mary said, Behold, the bondslave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her.

It was beyond her understanding, but Mary was willing to do whatever God wanted her to do.





How do we respond to that which IS impossible? Are we listening or are we doubting?

John 14:1-2: (NASB) ¹Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

We can say Mary was a singular chosen individual to carry out a singular work. What is our status?

<u>1 Peter 2:9-10</u>: (NASB) ⁹But you are a chosen race, A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Being able to serve God in such a unique way is an incredible gift.

We can say Mary had the direct influence of God working through her. What do we have?

John 14:16-17: (WEY) ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to be for ever with you-the spirit of truth. ¹⁷That spirit the world cannot receive, because it does not see it or know it. You know it, because it remains by your side and is in you.

God's power and influence (the holy spirit) working within us was not possible before Jesus' sacrifice.



Mary was chosen by God to be the mother of Jesus, not because she had any social standing or wealth or influence. She was chosen because she had a heart for God and an unquenchable desire to serve Him. We, too, must realize that our gift of being chosen is because God sees something in us that is not necessarily evident on the outside. Let us embrace His choosing and serve Him with our heart, mind, soul and strength!

Mary's experience makes us really think about the life-altering opportunity we are given. Let's say thank you!



Check out our Co Kids video: WHY DID GOD CHOOSE MARY TO BE THE MOTHER OF JESUS?? christianquestions.com/youtube



Once we humbly accept the gift of being chosen by God, what are we supposed to do with it?

One of the most profound aspects of serving God through Christ is the process that God gives us to be successful in using the gifts He gives. The followers of Jesus are chosen and that is a gift of grace. Those followers are then commissioned into service and that is also a gift of grace.

Second Specific Gift: The responsibility of caring for the things of God. Our example: Joseph - Jesus' earthly father.

(Come Thou Long Expected Jesus," (Verse one) Skit Guys

Come, thou long expected Jesus Born to set thy people free From our fears and sins release us Let us find our rest in thee Israel's strength and consolation Hope of all the earth thou art Dear desire of every nation Joy of every longing heart Born thy people to deliver Born a child and yet a king Born to reign in us forever Now thy gracious kingdom bring

The necessary events surrounding the birth of Jesus would continue to present gifts that were disguised as challenges. Joseph would be deeply tested by what God would require of him. He would face a mountain of disgrace and doubt that only extreme trust in God could overcome.

Through this he would learn the gift of responsibility for the things of God:

<u>Matthew 1:18-20</u>: (NASB) ¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the holy spirit. ¹⁹And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. ²⁰But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the child who has been conceived in her is of the holy spirit.

The dilemma Joseph faced would have been untenable for a devout and upstanding Jewish man of that time, for the covenant of marriage was in those days truly sacred. Mary's story of being miraculously pregnant seemed a farfetched tale spun in desperation by a young woman who was searching for a way out of some deep trouble. Every logical thought of Joseph was bent towards what he thought was the hard but inevitable solution. He had concluded he would have to separate from Mary and not marry her. He would have to put her away privately.



Blessed

The angel in his dream continued:

<u>Matthew 1:21-23</u>: (NASB) ²¹She will bear a son; and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. ²²Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which translated means, God with us.

Joseph was told not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife.

Responsibility for the things of God will come to us, but accepting it requires us to step up in faith. Gabriel engaged Joseph's faith through the quoting of prophecy. Responsibility for the things of God also requires us to step out of our comfortable and imperfect human ways to apply it - this is trust. Joseph had to trust beyond what he physically knew, and he was called upon to trust in something that would inevitably bring judgment by others.

Trust is not easy; it feels dangerous and vulnerable. Once Joseph's faith was focused, he could now be prepared to walk the pathway of trust laid before his feet. Walking this path would make him look foolish and immature to his peers. Joseph was willing to absorb these consequences in order to do the will of God. Being responsible for the things of God (a gift) often brings unsettled circumstances and persecution to our lives.

But in our hearts, there will be blessing and peace:

<u>Matthew 1:24-25</u>: (NASB) ²⁴And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, ²⁵but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a son; and he called his name Jesus.

The angel confirmed what Mary had spoken to Joseph. Joseph took her as his wife and he thoroughly respected her and the will of God.

This was but the beginning of Joseph's responsibility for the things of God. He would be called upon three more times to protect Mary and the child Jesus by way of three more angelic visits in dreams that would direct him to act in specific ways. Each time Joseph would trust these clear instructions and thereby preserve the lives of Mary and Jesus so the will of God for the salvation of the human race could be fulfilled. Joseph grew into and faithfully executed his role of responsibility for the young Messiah and was blessed.



How do we respond to the gift of responsibility for the things of God? Are our hands and hearts willing, or are we finding excuses and doubting?

Joseph had Scripture to guide him in his specific responsibilities; so is ours:

<u>Romans 12:5-8</u>: (NASB) ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ⁷if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.



We are told what to do from the Scriptures. We are to bring glory to God by using the things He has given us in His service.

Joseph's responsibilities were to those who were chosen vessels of God; so are ours:

<u>1 Corinthians 12:25-26</u>: (NASB) ²⁵so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

It is a sober responsibility to care for other chosen vessels of God. We are to be part of their lives by entering into their experiences, encouraging them and feeling their pain and suffering. We are told what to do just like Joseph was, except for us, it is written.

Joseph's faith was defined by his works; so is ours:

<u>James 2:15-17</u>: (NASB) ¹⁵If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, Go in peace, be warmed and be filled, and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? ¹⁷Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.



The point here is there is something we must DO with our faith.



To be responsible hardly seems like a gift, and yet it is a gift of major proportions. Joseph had the unique and difficult privilege of protecting and nurturing the Messiah. We also have the unique responsibility of protecting and nurturing the prospective body of Christ. As with Joseph, such an important responsibility shows God's trust in our ability.

To be responsible for the things of God means God trusts those things to us. Now THAT is an unmerited gift!



Christian Questions ©2020 all rights reserved



Being chosen and being responsible are sober gifts. What about a gift that is built upon sheer joy?

God's gifts to us are all meant to bring us closer to Him. The seriousness of some of these is there to help us recognize the depth of His character and plan. Built upon these realizations are the gifts that feed our emotions. These gifts also bring us closer to God, but they use joy and praise to do it.



Sometimes when there is a world-changing event in God's plan, there are those who get to observe and participate by virtue of being in the right place at the right time.

The humble shepherds who were out tending their sheep that night in Bethlehem were given this distinct gift:

Luke 2:3-7: (NASB) ¹Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. ³And all the people were on their way to register for the census, each to his own city. ⁴Now Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, ⁵in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. ⁶While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.



Check out our Co Kids video: WHAT IS THE STORY OF JESUS' BIRTH? christianquestions.com/youtube

The birth of Jesus began as a very private event. Only Joseph was there with Mary and a stable full of animals. Here we have the Savior of the world born and *seemingly* no one knew about it. We imagine that for Joseph and Mary, this would have been preferred, as neither one of them were the type to seek attention.



God, however, designed for the word to get out in a most unorthodox way: Luke 2:8: (NASB) In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

Hope was about to be revealed, and that would bring rejoicing. When we think about being able to truly rejoice in something, it seems evident that those who are sincere, who work hard and have relatively simple lives would be best able to embrace rejoicing. The shepherds who were given this opportunity to rejoice in the longed-for hope of the Messiah's birth were this hardworking type. God chose them to hear, to see, to rejoice and to spread the good news. There was something special about the simplicity of their lives. They were not jaded in their outlook on life. CORewind SHOW NOTES

Joseph and Mary were also simple and humble. Elizabeth and Zacharias, the parents of John the Baptist, were also simple and humble. These same characteristics flow through all of these individuals.



The shepherds were nameless, yet chosen of God to hear and rejoice in an incredible message:

Luke 2:9-15: (NASB) ⁹And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; ¹¹for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Even though the message is short, the angel of the Lord terrifies them! Who is expecting this bright angel of God in the middle of the night? And not only is this bright thing happening, but there is this powerful voice. The voice says, *DO NOT BE AFRAID*! (Angels spend a lot of time in the Bible saying not to be afraid when they appear. They are unexpected and overwhelming in their spiritual power.) ... *I bring you good news of great joy for all people - there has been born for you a Savior*.

Already the message is overwhelming! An angel, a glorious appearance and a prophecy fulfilled:

¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. ¹³And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.

Singing in the heavens, praising God in a way that had never been seen before! What a privilege to see. What a privilege to hear. And there they are, just tending their sheep with that humble expectation of life - quiet fields, quiet skies lit with familiar stars, a quiet night broken only by the "baas" of the sheep. Then this GLORIOUS thing happens right in front of them!

What happens? What do they do?

¹⁵When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.

These shepherds simply and joyfully responded to this message, for the hope they had seen was powerful. It was obviously of divine origin and therefore sure. They were given a gift of such magnitude they had to witness it in person.

They wanted to see for themselves:

Luke 2:16-18: (NASB) ¹⁶So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as he lay in the manger. ¹⁷When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.

They could not keep quiet. Shepherds were not gregarious by nature - they spent a lot of time by themselves with only their sheep to talk to. However, we are told they spoke to everyone they met about the wonders of what they had just seen.



The shepherds courageously delivered the good news that they had heard and seen because their rejoicing could not be contained:

Luke 2:19-20: (NASB) ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

They ran to the stable and saw this humble babe and worshiped him. They then headed back to the sheep - all along the way praising God. They rejoiced in seeing the confirmation of what the angel had told them. The rejoicing of the heavenly hosts at Jesus' birth infected them with this same joy! These humble men were given a glimpse of God's glorious plan and their simple



response was to let everyone know. True rejoicing brings praise to God.

Mary and Joseph also received the confirmation that night that Jesus was from God. They each had an angelic visitation when Jesus was conceived. Now nine months later, others had been given the same confirmation and shared it with Mary, Joseph and anyone else in the vicinity. The message was everything God had told them. It says Mary *pondered these things in her heart*. When the shepherds said what the angel had told them, it confirmed to Mary and Joseph that they were in the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing.

How do we respond to the gift of the ability to see God's plan unfold before us? Do we rejoice in it? Are our hearts open to this paradigm shift or do we seek to stifle it because it makes us vulnerable?

Rejoicing can make us vulnerable - many people are uncomfortable with rejoicing in God.

We, like the shepherds, Mary and Joseph, are in the right place at the right time:

<u>Matthew 13:16-17</u>: (NASB) ¹⁶But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. ¹⁷For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Jesus is telling us that we are blessed. Our eyes, ears, hearts and minds are blessed. We see the gospel in front of us. How are we rejoicing in this unmerited gift?

Like the shepherds, we have an opportunity to have our rejoicing in what we know change our lives and the lives around us:

<u>Philippians 4:4-7</u>: (NASB) ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

How Do We Keep Jesus at the Center of Christmas? Ep. 1157 - December 21, 2020





To be given insight into God's plan and to truly rejoice in it is a rare opportunity. The shepherds did not expect it, but when it came, they poured themselves into it. We also can pour ourselves out in our rejoicing over God's plan. Let us see it every day and live our gratitude by rejoicing in its message, *GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE*!

The mere thought of knowing what the mind of God has in store for all humanity makes rejoicing a necessity.

Where do the gifts of being chosen, being responsible and rejoicing lead? What is their conclusion?

Thus far, the three gifts we have examined all contribute to us becoming more worthy servants of God's plan and better footstep followers of Jesus. The end result of all this is to walk through our lives in a new and living way. Our final gift is an expression of a life so lived.



Most everyone wants to live a life that gives them a sense of fulfillment. God's grace is such that He gives those who follow in Jesus' footsteps this opportunity in a grand way.

The example of Simeon the prophet shows us the peace that a Godcentered fulfillment brings:

Luke 2:21-24: (NASB) ²¹And when eight days had passed, before his circumcision, his name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. ²²And when the days for their purification...were completed, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord... ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord...

They were going up to Jerusalem for Jesus' circumcision on the eighth day after his birth. This reminds us that Mary, Joseph and Jesus were given no special entitlement or dispensation. They are simply given the opportunity to obediently show their faith, fulfilling the requirements of the Law like they were supposed to as devout Jews.



They sought fulfillment in the simplicity of following the Law that God had centuries before given to Israel:

Luke 2:25-33: (NASB) ²⁵And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the holy spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the holy spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Simeon was focused on godly thinking and godly actions. Here was a man who had not forgotten hope, who had not allowed doubt or fear to rule his heart; rather, he lived in anticipation and expectation of God's gift.

Because Simeon was old and this was a time of expectation in Israel, he was attentive and obedient to the spirit's leading. Age tends to mellow and focus individuals. Having been in



the way of trying to fulfill God's will for his entire life gave him a strong, mature focus he would not have had as a younger man.

²⁷And he came in the spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for him the custom of the Law, ²⁸then he took him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, ²⁹Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word;

Simeon's life had been fulfilled, and he could die in peace. This encounter was the most important thing Simeon looked forward to in his life. He was granted a glimpse - just a glimpse - of God's gift of redemption in the form of this eight-day-old baby. He sees the baby, takes him in his arms and knows that his life is now fulfilled. He is thinking: In my arms, I hold the hope of the world - the consolation of God! Salvation will come through this baby, and I am holding God's salvation in my arms!

What a gift of a fulfilled life:

³⁰For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹Which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²A light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel. ³³And his father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about him.

Joseph and Mary pay attention to everything. They absorbed what the shepherds and angels said, and now what Simeon is saying. Simeon realized the full import of redemption - *I have seen your salvation* - with my own eyes! He is a light of revelation that even reaches to all Gentiles - there is even a prophecy here for the Gentiles. He is a light that is the glory of Israel!

This light is now just a baby, but this baby is the hope of the world who will eventually save the lives of every human being:

Luke 2:34-35: (NASB) ³⁴And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed - ³⁵and a sword will pierce even your own soul - to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.

After the glorious proclamation comes this devastating statement, *a sword will pierce even your own soul*. Why does he say this? Simeon knew that fulfilling the plan of God would bring a great sacrifice - sometimes heartbreaking



sacrifice. It does not make the glory of God's plan any less; it actually makes it of *greater* value. He sees the comprehensiveness of what is going to happen as a result of Jesus coming.



How do we respond to the gift of a fulfilled life? Are we willing to work for it, to watch, listen and wait for it? Or are we impatient and maybe even skeptical?

Simeon showed us patience through a long lifetime of waiting and serving God. He did not wait idly but used the time in the best way he could in the service of God. It is a beautiful thought of responding to the gift of a fulfilled life. This is why seeing the baby Jesus fulfilled Simeon's life so fully. His heart and mind were so ready for God's gift.

We, like Simeon, live in a time of expectation. In this year 2020, how many have said that this must be the time of the end?



We are privileged to know and see things about God's plan that were not previously understandable.

We live on the cusp of the kingdom, and the plan is becoming clearer each year. The fulfillment of *our* privilege and *our* calling is unfolding right before us.

The prophets sought to know and see what we know and see:

<u>1 Peter 1:10-13</u>: (NASB) ¹⁰As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, ¹¹seeking to know what person or time the spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

The prophets searched and tried to find out more than had been revealed to them. The prophets' own fulfillment came in knowing they were serving a larger picture than the context of their own lives.

Even the angels want to know:

¹²It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the holy spirit sent from heaven - things into which angels long to look.

The prophets knew they were serving something bigger - they served us, the footstep followers of Christ! Simeon is such a beautiful picture of this. Even the angels longed to look into these things and see the future. We are a part of this unfolding, this fulfillment.

We are, of all humanity in all the ages past, most privileged! Let us focus that privilege and realize just how much we have to fulfill our lives:

¹³Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

CORewind SHOW NOTES

How Do We Keep Jesus at the Center of Christmas? Ep. 1157 - December 21, 2020



To be given insight into God's eternal plans, to be called to follow the savior of all humanity, to be blessed with the opportunity to share the gospel is fulfilled living. Are we living a fulfilled life according to the responsibilities, privileges and opportunities we have been given? We should ask ourselves this question every day.

(I)) Remember, The Skit Guys

Christmas isn't just a time to decorate your house, to spend time with loved ones and to open long-awaited presents. Christmas is a time to remember:

- * To remember that salvation doesn't come from within; it comes from above.
- * To remember that infinitely better than the magic of Christmas is the miracle of Emmanuel.
- * To remember that God was not and is not untouched by the pain and suffering of this world.
- * To remember that Jesus isn't just part of the Christmas story, but Christmas is part of the Jesus story.
- * To remember that there is no grace without a cross and no cross without a manger.
- * To remember that Jesus doesn't just want us to remember what he did, but to join him in what he is doing.

So, this year, let the lights remind you of the light of the world who came into darkness for us. Let the gifts remind you of the greatest gift of all and this year make your heart like Bethlehem and receive the King.

It is phenomenal to think that God, even in His heavenly realm with Jesus, never forgot the suffering of the world. He sent His son.

All of these things we see and celebrate in this season should help us to remember the *greater gift*, the *bigger gift*, the *gift that gives us all life*, not only now if we are followers of Jesus, but for the world later, forever and ever and ever. Remember the most important things.

There is a lot we do not know about the early life of Jesus, but we do know the event of his humble birth was enough to teach his followers simple and powerful lessons through the giving of simple yet powerful gifts.

< CQ.Rewind SHOW NOTES

How Do We Keep Jesus at the Center of Christmas? Ep. 1157 - December 21, 2020



F**irst Specific Gift:** Being chosen to do God's will in a unique way. Our example: Mary - Jesus' mother.

Second Specific Gift: The responsibility of caring for the things of God. Our example: Joseph - Jesus' earthly father.

Third Specific Gift:

The ability to see God's plan unfold and rejoice in it. Our example: The Shepherds. We have that same opportunity.

What a sober responsibility he had of caring for Mary and Jesus, the Messiah! What a sober responsibility we have of caring for the body of Christ, ministering to each other.

Am I rejoicing with the same passion the shepherds rejoiced with when they saw God's plan unfolding?

FourthSpecific Gift: The gift of a fulfilled life. Our example: Simeon the prophet.

Am I living a fulfilled life according to the opportunities and blessings which have been given to me?

This only scratches the surface: Luke 2:14: (KJV) Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Today our purpose was to look at the simple gifts we saw in the people around the birth of Jesus to show us the gifts we have been given. What are we doing with those gifts? How are we changing our lives? How are we appreciating and rejoicing in those humbling and sometimes scary responsibilities? How are we living to fulfill what God has given us?

As we are in the season of celebrating the birth of Jesus, let us remember the power of Jesus' life, his death and his resurrection. Take the gifts given and use them!

So, do we keep Jesus at the center of Christmas? For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions... Think about it...!



The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away. – *Pablo Picasso*



Join us next week for our podcast on December 28, 2020 Ep. 1158: Has My Christianity Been Compromised?

پلیلیلیلیلیلیلی (مراجع) المحاط الجام (مراجع) "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus," lyrics by Charles Wesley

Come, thou long-expected Jesus Born to set thy people free From our fears and sins release us Let us find our rest in thee

Israel's strength and consolation Hope of all the earth thou art Dear desire of every nation Joy of every longing heart

Born thy people to deliver Born a child and yet a king Born to reign in us forever Now thy gracious kingdom bring

By thine own eternal spirit Rule in all our hearts alone By thine own sufficient merit Raise us to thy glorious throne

By thine own sufficient merit Raise us to thy glorious throne



Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1157: How Do We Keep Jesus at the Center of Christmas?

https://christianquestions.com/character/inspiration/1157-christmas/



See:

- 1. What is the first gift (which was given to Mary)? (See Luke 1:26-37)
- How do we respond when something in our lives seems impossible? How is our status similar to Mary's? Is the direct influence of God working in our lives? (See John 14:1-2,16-17, 1 Peter 2:9-10)
- 3. What is the second gift (which was given to Joseph)? (See Matthew 1:18-20)
- 4. Why was this situation untenable for a devout, upstanding Jewish man of that time? What two steps are required to accept responsibility for the things of God? What is the result of this acceptance? How many more times did God instruct Joseph in how to protect Mary and the child Jesus? How did Joseph respond? (See Matthew 1:21-25)
- 5. Where do we look for guidance in our specific responsibilities in the things of God? What do our responsibilities involve? How is our faith defined? How does this compare to Joseph's circumstances? (See Romans 12:58, 1 Corinthians 12:25-26, James 2:15-17)
- 6. What is the third gift (which was given to the shepherds)? (See Luke 2:1-15)
- 7. Who were these shepherds? What were their lives like? How must this experience have impacted their lives? What was the message that they were to share? (See Luke 2:1-14)
- 8. What was the shepherd's reaction once the angels went away? (See Luke 2:15-20) How do we respond to the gift of seeing God's plan unfold before *us* right now? (See Matthew 13:16-17, Philippians 4:4-7)
- 9. What is the fourth gift (which was given to Simeon)? (See Luke 2:21-35)
- 10. Why were Jesus' parents taking him at 8 days old to Jerusalem? What does this show about their lives? What was Simeon's hope? What did Simeon prophesy that this babe would do for the world? How did his prophecy end and why? (See Luke 2:21-35)
- 11. What can we learn from Simeon? How are our lives similar? What privileges do we have that the prophets and angels did not have? (See 1 Peter 1:10-13)
- 12. Take a look at your life are you living a fulfilled life according to the gifts, responsibilities, privileges and opportunities you have been given? What choices can you make so that you are living up to your greatest potential?

