

MARK JENKINS MINISTRIES

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December 2016
The Guest Of Honor Is Jesus

Dear Friend,

Christmas has always been one of my favorite holidays of the year. As a child, my parents worked hard to insure we had a wonderful Christmas and as a result I have some great childhood memories. By the time Christmas day arrived, I had already counted all my presents under the tree and figured out what order in which to open them. Getting to sleep on Christmas Eve was almost impossible for me because of the anticipation of opening those presents.

More importantly, we were together as a family celebrating one of the greatest events of all time. I believe that it blesses God to see dads and moms spending time with their children in celebration of the birth of His Son into the earth.

In today's culture, with all of the festivity it seems that some very important aspects of Christmas are being overlooked for the sake of the celebration. It is like someone having a birthday party yet forgetting the guest of honor because all the guests are focused on the party. Doesn't that sound a little odd?

Changing the focus from the **celebration** of Christmas, let's spend some time understanding the **meaning** of Christmas. While huddled around the Christmas tree opening gifts, why not take advantage of an opportunity to have a teachable moment about Jesus? On His birthday we can honor Jesus with a few minutes of our time appreciating all He has done for us.

This can be a tremendous opportunity for parents and grandparents to instill within our children the **true** meaning of Christmas. Instead of allowing the world to redefine Christmas for our children, we can take advantage of this time to give our kids a better understanding of why Jesus needed to come to earth. Doesn't it sound reasonable to refocus some of this excitement and enthusiasm towards God? I believe in the long run our families will have a much better appreciation of Christmas, don't you?

Many parents, feeling they are unqualified, leave the task of explaining the miraculous birth of Jesus to the Sunday school teachers or a preacher. Instead of assuming that someone else is going to do this job accurately, why not do it yourself? I would imagine in most cases parents are intimidated by the thought that they might not have the right answers to the questions their children are going to ask. For example, how do you answer this question when it comes from your pre-adolescent son or daughter without opening up a huge can of worms under the Christmas tree? “Daddy, what’s a virgin?”

It’s at this point you can either “punt” and send the kids to the Sunday school teacher for answers or take the bull by the horns and give them an age appropriate answer they can appreciate.

A good way to begin this conversation might be to ask if anyone knows **why** Jesus came into the earth. They may tell you about a star in the sky or about shepherds in the field or an angel appearing or about Jesus being born in a manger, which is all true. But, I would imagine most children and sadly many adults have no understanding about why He came and why He **had** to come in the manner that He did; born a baby.

Here’s a great statement to begin with in answering this question. **“We needed Jesus to come to this world the way He did so that he could do for us what we could not do for ourselves.”** From this starting point there are a few directions you can head in. For example, you can talk about how every person since Adam sinned was born into this world spiritually dead, except Jesus. This begs the question; “What does it mean to be spiritually dead?” Now we are getting to the heart of why Jesus had to be born via a virgin birth.

Illustrations are good for answering questions with children, and adults as well. They help to paint a picture on the inside, which makes the concept easier to understand. It is especially helpful if you can relate your illustration to something they are familiar with. In this case, let’s use the Grinch’s heart to help us explain man’s condition and his need for a savior to be born of a virgin.

If you will recall, the Grinch’s heart was three sizes too small. Since the fall of Adam, mankind has suffered with a “heart” problem as well. So for illustration purposes... Man’s heart is black because he is dead on the inside. It isn’t that we have done something to become this way; it is the way we were born. In this condition it is impossible for mankind to have a relationship with God, whose “heart” is white with the light of life.

Often people believe if they can do enough good things they can change their hearts from black to white. **Man cannot change himself.** Spiritual death isn't something a person catches like they catch a cold. Spiritual death has been passed on from one generation to the next since the fall of Adam. It is how we are born into this world. If you don't believe it, take a look at a 3 or 4 year old and ask yourself, "Who taught little Johnny to lie". No one had to teach little Johnny, he was born this way. When God created Adam He created Him spiritually alive with the life of God, sinless. After Adam's fall he became spiritually dead and the lying began.

When Adam sinned his heart turned black and that spiritual death has been passed on to every baby born in the world.

In order to interrupt the cycle of death, (each man born with a black heart) someone with a white heart had to be born. But there was no one in this world who could have a baby with a white heart.

Only God had a white heart. So God would have to have a Son. But God's Son would also have to be a man so that men's hearts could be changed from black to white. So God sent His Son who had to be born as a baby.

Why did He do it? Because of His great love for us. God loves us so much that He wasn't willing to leave us with a black heart and sentenced to an eternity in hell. God was willing to join us in order to provide us with the opportunity to exchange our black heart for a heart that's white with the light of life.

(John 3:16)

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God's great love for us was the reason He gave to us the greatest gift of all time, His Son Jesus. The cycle of spiritual death had to be interrupted to save mankind but how could God do that since there is only one way into our world?

Yes, there's only one way into our world! You must be born into this world making it impossible for someone to ever break this cycle of death, so long as both mother and father are human. John speaks about this unique entryway into this world in the tenth chapter of his gospel. I'm sure you have never heard this verse used at Christmas time, but it will help explain why Jesus had to come the way He did. (John 10:1-2)

“Verily, Verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. (2) But, He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.”

There is only one door into this “sheepfold” of humanity, and that is through being born of a woman. This meant that for God to have a Son, Jesus had to be born of a woman who was a virgin.

It isn't necessary to go into a long drawn out explanation of how a woman conceives, although it is necessary to explain that neither Mary nor Joseph had any part in the conception process of Jesus, other than believing the words the angel spoke to them. Look at what the angel told Joseph. (Matthew 1:20-23)

“But while he (Joseph) thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. (21) And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins. (22) Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, (23) Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which is interpreted, God with us.’ ”

Because both Mary and Joseph believed God's words, the “door” was opened to Jesus. The Holy Ghost was able to introduce the life of God into our world of spiritual death and **the man** Jesus was born of God's Life. The cycle of spiritual death was interrupted by God. (John 1:4-5, 9)

“In Him was life; and the life was the light of men, (5) And the light shineth in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not.”

(9) “That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”

Here is where the celebrating can really begin. **We can celebrate how much our heavenly Father truly loves us.** He loves us so much that He was willing for Jesus to join us, to become one with us, in order to redeem us from spiritual death. In other words, God wasn't willing to leave us with a black heart having to suffer and die and go to hell. God loves us so much that He took on a human, flesh and bone body and walked this earth just as we walk in order to deliver us.

Do you see that God forever altered Himself to save us? God came to this world and joined us in a body like ours. (John 1:14)

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

This point is difficult to understand, and yet it is so essential to see the extent HE was willing to go to deliver us. **God, who has existed forever, stepped into His own creation and took on a body like ours in order to free us.** By calling Him Emmanuel (Mt 1:23), we see that Jesus was God in a human body. God never had a fleshly body until the word of God was moved on by the Holy Ghost and Jesus was conceived in a virgin bringing life into this world. It is in Jesus' death on the cross that the door has been opened to us now to be reborn with a new white heart.

When God raised Jesus from the dead He received a glorified body and throughout all of eternity Jesus will forever have a glorified human body. He has forever altered Himself to redeem us.

How can you say this Mark? Look at the conversation Jesus had with Thomas after His resurrection. (John 20:27)

“Then said He (Jesus) to Thomas, ‘Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.’ ”

This is Jesus in His glorified body. It apparently looks just like our body and yet look at what this glorified body can do. (John 20:19)

“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, ‘Peace be unto you.’ ”

Notice how they said all the doors were shut and yet Jesus, in His glorified body appeared in their midst. I don't know if He just stepped through the walls or how He got in the room, but it was not through the usual means. My point is that Jesus will forever have this glorified body. He has forever become one with His creation. **This shows the depth of the love God has for us, but it doesn't stop there.**

God has made it possible for us to call Him Father, to become a member of His family. By accepting Jesus as our Lord and exchanging our black heart for His white heart, we are reborn into God's family as His sons and daughters. Here is another verse you might not have heard mentioned at Christmas.
(I Corinthians 15:22 & 45)

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit.”

When we make Jesus Christ the Lord of our lives we pass from death to life. The person we used to be dies the death of the cross in Jesus, our “heart” changes from “black” to “white”, and we are raised to life in the family of God. **We have a new Adam** who is the head of our family, **the last Adam - Jesus**. He will never sin like the first Adam did and send us back into spiritual death. We are free once and for all.

Thank God for Jesus. Thank God for His great love for us that He wasn't willing to leave us the way we were. We truly have so much to be thankful for as we recount the glorious entrance of Jesus into our world. In all of our celebrating and fellowship with one another let's not forget **the guest of honor of this party is Jesus**. Our celebration would not be possible had He not been willing to join us in our world. Most importantly, He did it because of His great love for us. This is more than enough reason to celebrate. **God loves us!** I encourage you to take advantage of this teachable moment and give your family the truth about the greatest gift of all, Jesus.

Merry Christmas

~ Jesus Loves You!

Mark Jenkins