

## Don't Waste This Christmas

### **THE READING OF THE WORD**

1 Timothy 3:14-16

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, 15 if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

He was manifested in the flesh,

vindicated by the Spirit,

seen by angels,

proclaimed among the nations,

believed on in the world,

taken up in glory.

### **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, draw near to our hearts as we hear your word. We acknowledge you are here. And we ask for your Spirit to speak to us now in Jesus Name amen.

### **WARM UP**

Good morning my name is Eric Mattie. I have been invited by the Elders to come and preach the Word of God this morning. As I considered this date, it took me a while to lock in as I realized it was the week before Christmas. It caused me to pause. As I remember the time I served as a pastor, my favorite time to preach was Christmas. Well, By God's providence I found those messages a couple of weeks ago complete with the bulletins I had made. See, years ago I had lost all of my sermon and teaching from my pastorate when my external hard drive dropped and froze. Thus, making everything on the hard drive irretrievable.

But I found on two of the bulletins, poems I had written for the season. Again, I lost all my writings so to find these poems just got me giddy.

I mean, I'm not going to win any awards with them, but it was just the hope that my simple attempts to use the poetic genre to minister to people was found in these long lost bulletins.

I was so excited to find them. It was on a whim really, because I was looking for something completely different. So I went downstairs and shared them with Melanie and Allison. One of them liked one and one liked the other. So there you go.

But one in particular, did actually minister to me and began to flicker the idea of what I was going to preach on this morning.

So the main word I have, comes this morning as a word of encouragement for some of us. But for others, it's a word of warning. So if you don't get anything else I say, just pray and ask God to help you meditate on the title of my message which is "Don't Waste This Christmas"

## **Introduction**

I'm not here argue the holiday of Christmas

All of us here are on a spiritual journey. We have a spiritual side to our lives that desire to connect and worship the Living God. For us the journey takes us to The written Word. The living breathing word of God to be the Light the hope, the good news in our lives. It brings us to the Word- Jesus Christ

I realize some of us fall into the category talked about in Romans 14:5 that you esteem one day as special and others of us esteem all days alike.

Around Christmas there are those who are carolers, singing of the festive season, and other play out there best imitation Scrooge- who detested the holiday season overall.

But as Christians, God's word reminds us today: Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh.

Remember last week Pastor Dan defined the word "mystery" not as something that we don't know and will not know. But rather, biblically when the word is used here it's something that was previously hidden but now revealed.

Paul is reminding Timothy and the believers at Ephesus that their foundation as a church is Christ. That since false teacher will always oppose Christ, they are reminded that the foundation of Christ will never be destroyed. As long as there are opponents to Christ, we best remember our foundation in Christ will forever stand.

We should make it our song. "He was manifest in the flesh" vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

## **PREACH**

- This proclamation of Christ should evoke a response from us. With Christmas It doesn't matter if Jesus wasn't actually out of Mary's womb on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December. It doesn't matter that some Christmas carols have it wrong. Or that pagan traditions intermingle on this holiday. We can get caught up in fruitless debates if we are not careful.
- Sure be ready to answer these trivial matter, but be especially ready to explain the hope you have and what this celebration means to you and your salvation and being set free.

- We are called as Christ followers to set the record straight **of more important matters**. Errors abound and we have opportunity more than any other time of the year to explain
  1. Why Jesus came.
  2. Why he's vindicated by the Spirit and seen by angels.
  3. Why it's important that he be proclaimed among the nations and believed around the world.
  4. And what the promise of his coming brings to all of us on this spiritual journey.
- If I can orientate us going into this coming week, to not waste this Christmas opportunity. Whether you are Grinch who needs to grow your heart three times bigger or you are watching every Hallmark Christmas movie and fall in love all over again... Don't waste this Christmas spiritually speaking.

The picture of wasting something has a couple of undertones.

First: We waste something when we are careless with it. Don't be careless with this Christmas.

Second: We can allow things in our life to be wasted by letting them get weak or wither away. Don't be like the person who says I could care a less about Christmas

I want to address three ways we can waste this Christmas, if we are not careful.

I want to address three ways we can waste this Christmas if we don't stir and strengthen ourselves in the more important matter of the season.

In the Bible there is a metaphor for the Christian Life. It has been compared to both a walk and a race.

- God exhorts us:

**“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,”**  
**Ephesians 5:15**

- The Lord also says:

**“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works”**  
**Hebrews 10:24**

- Along with:

**“Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.”**  
**Hebrews 12:12,13**

That's the main idea for this morning that you would walk wisely, stir and strengthen your spiritual life in this season.

So...Let's dive into this

## **We Waste This Christmas...**

### **1. When we distract ourselves with the material of the season.**

When I use the word material, I'm not just talking about materialism. But let's go there for just a minute.

What is materialism? It is a preoccupation or emphasis on material things rather than intellectual or spiritual things.

- Christmas marketing of the western world we live in does not show kids and adult depressed and disappointed when they open gifts.
- Christmas commercials never keep running film into the afternoon when they toy breaks or the gadgets we get isn't connecting with our Wi-Fi.
- From as early as October 31 through December 25, we stress of the price of the season to the point we get into debt that carries into the rest of next year.

Will we really have our hearts so fickle and whiney that if we don't get what was on our list that our happiness will be replaced with anger? If you don't get the Red Ryder BB Gun what will rule in your heart at that moment.... Anger disappointment? If so, what is ruling your heart this season?

Don't be distracted and waste this Christmas. Look what Jesus says in his parable about what can choke the Word that is planted in our hearts:

**"...the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful."** **Mark 4:19**

We know this as Christians. And Christmas time for some of us can be a functional materialism for us as we slide like the rest of the world into consumer mindset that he with the most toys or coolest toys wins and is validated.

Jesus warns us though:

**And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."** **Luke 12:15**

I'm going to let those words sit right over here about materialism, and move forward on what I mean with the phrase "material of the season"

(pause)

When I talk about the material of the season, I'm referring to the physical emphasis we put on this celebration and by default, the sometime stressful element of running around getting things ready, cleaning and decorating and inviting and rushing to provide and bless our families and friends. Getting caught up in the traditions and family rituals that we are prone to maintain after years of doing them.

There is a real life account of a woman so distracted by good tasks like this, that she lost focus on the reason why she did them.

**“Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.” But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”**  
**Luke 10:38-42**

- Martha invited Jesus into her home yet lost sight of why she would do that in the first place. She invited him in order to have fellowship with him. But she was doing everything but fellowshiping. Yes she served him and there is an aspect of that but Jesus saw her troubled heart.

In the book: Have a Mary Heart in a Martha World author Joanna Weaver says:

“Does it sound harsh to say that cooking or cleaning or taking care of your children or doing your job might be sinful? But think about it. The very definition of sin is separation from God. So no matter how important the activity, no matter how good it seems, if I use it as an excuse to hold God at arm’s length, it is sin.” p. 105.

***We waste this Christmas if we are so distracted by the material of the season rather than focusing on the Meaning of the Season***

- I don’t know about you, but I feel this holiday season has just snuck up on me.
- And I want to shout out to our worship team and Pastor Ryan, they have crafted each week of this advent season’s worship to aid us in getting our hearts ready through song and reflection. Thank you Guys.
- And It’s not that I haven’t used the advent readings on my bible reading app to listen to things to get me ready.

But it’s been the rushing around with all the good things that dislodge my heart and maybe you’ve experienced it too. It’s like a crowbar that detaches the meaning of Christmas from my heart. And ultimately, it distracts me from fellowshiping with Jesus...

... which is the very reason why he came.

And it’s the very way, we can waste our Christmas.

**The Meaning of the Season is to remind and celebrate that God came to earth so that we might have fellowship with Him.**

We can lose the awe and wonder of the birth of Jesus, when we forget that in that moment **God** drew near. God wants us to know what he is like. Jesus shows us this in his first coming because...

**“He is the image of the invisible God,.. Colossians 1:15-16**

- So He came to earth in the form of a child. A child not to be feared, but to have fellowship with.

- Through Jesus life and through Jesus teaching, we learn that God is loving. We learn that God is forgiving. We learn that God is near and that he cares. We learn that we are not to be terrorized by God, but rather to trust Him.
- When was the last time you sat at the feet of the Lord, sat still and observed that he is God.
- Would I dare ask you to take an hour this week to do this? What if I told you, you can take it in 10 minute increments over the next 6 days?
- What would you think about for those 10 minutes? Let me give you some food for thought

I'd encourage you to Slow down this week and think about how

Christmas is about Christ's mission.

It's not about Santa, it's about a Savior.

It's not about jingle bells, it's about Jesus.

It's not about rushing around; it's about a redeeming plan.

It's not about the gifts; it's about the Good News.

It's not about elves, it's about enjoying God.

Brothers and sister don't waste this Christmas by being distracted by the material of the season. Slow things down and enjoy the fellowship with God that he came to establish for you and Him.

Now this point is probably the warning word. But my next point is more of the encouraging word.

## **We Waste This Christmas...**

### **2. When we embrace the heartache of the season**

I wish to be very careful here. Because even though the songs say it's the most wonderful time of the year and that we are encouraged to have a holly jolly Christmas, and we tell each other to have a merry Christmas the truth is the heartache of the season is very real. For many the Christmas season is a painful season.

If we are not careful, we can embrace the heartache of the season. To the harm to our souls.

It can be season of fighting off depression and loneliness when we sit around people who love us, yet we don't feel it. Sometime Christmas season can stir unresolved issues and disappointing relationships and expectations.

- This will be my second Christmas without my mom. And growing up, I learned over the years how tough Christmas was for my mom. It was the season she lost one of her children from her first marriage.
- Painful memories can sometime overwhelm our souls. High celebratory season can sometimes make things worse. That can be the case for you this year when its fresh or if it been 20 years.

I'm not here to tell you to get over it and move on. But I will say The message of Christmas reminds us that:

[Psalm 34:18](#) - The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

[Psalm 147:3](#) - He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

**And that Jesus has been sent as it says in Isaiah 61:1**

“ to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound”

{Pause}

Don't waste this Christmas be embracing the heartache of the season.

If you are down, pressed, crushed in spirit. If your heart is breaking and tears are easy... God says, he is near and he saves. He has proved it in his coming. And will prove it again in his return.

Christmas heart ache can feel very dark. You know It's easier to walk through a dark hall or a dark tunnel, if you can see a little bit of light. Jesus is the light

There is a story that comes out of the Lewis and Clark Caverns. I'm not sure how true it is But When you go on the tour and climb down the stairs, they shut the lights off. And they say its pitch black. The tour guide tells the story of the original explorer who walked along the top of that mountain and fell through a hole deep down several hundred feet into the cavern and was stuck in total darkness for over a week. He cried out everyday “Help me” Hoping someone would hear his voice and figure it out.

Finally someone did hear him and found the hole and dug him out. That is how they found the giant cavern.

They asked the guy “How did you hold out hope day after day in the total dark. He said “There was one little pinhole ray of light that was coming through and I just kept my focus on that ray of light.”

Don't waste this Christmas by embracing the heartache of the season, embrace the Light and Hope it offers.

- Jesus is that light, Jesus is your hope.
- He loves you and wants to comfort you. He's not done with you yet. And he believes in you. He know what you are going through and his love is so deep for you that
  - He sits in the dark cavern you maybe tempted to stay in and says, “trust me, look to me, I'll save you from this.”
  - He walks in the dark tunnel with you saying “ follow me and I'll bind up these hurts and heal you

Christmas reminds us: Jesus is the Light of the World.

And we can waste our Christmas embracing the darkness of our souls and allow our hearts to sink into the quick sand of despair. We are ok to not be ok and cry. But don't allow your heart to cry without hope. Go ahead and cry but don't despair. Go ahead and feel the hurt but don't let your heart sink. Cast the stress and find Jesus' rest.

God's word says:

**Matthew 11:28 - Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

**John 6:37 - All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.**

**John 7:37 – "...Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.**

These are not platitudes, these are pin holes of light that you may need in this dark period of Christmas. Just one verse or maybe all of them. You may be too tired and groaning in your spirit Yet God hears you and does love you.

Embrace the hope of Christmas season by singing

Lord the light of Your love is shining  
In the midst of the darkness, shining  
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us  
Set us free by the truth You now bring us  
Shine on me  
Shine Jesus Shine

Brothers and sisters don't waste this Christmas week by embracing the heartache of the season. Turn it around to find the hope of this season that heals. That hope is Jesus IS your comfort and savior.

Lastly

## **We Waste This Christmas...**

### **3. When we forget its present reality.**

Many people say the Purpose of Christmas is fulfilled in the Passion of Easter. This is true and understandable when we are talking about salvation. That's a whole message in itself.

But I would dare to add for those of us who are saved and are still being sanctified or in other words, being made more like Jesus: **We forget that looking at Christmas through today's lens is a past event we celebrate and a present reality we live in.**

- Just like the Gospel that appeals to evangelize the unbeliever and edify the believer. the reality of Christmas, is not just for those who need saving.
  - BTW: is that you this morning? Do you need to call out to God for forgiveness? For him to save you?
  - I invite you to do that right where you are sitting.



- Do it today, if you are sensing God calling you to believe and call out for God's mercy.
  - What would be better than this Christmas season than for you to have new life start right now?
- The present reality of Christmas is not just for those who need saving. But also for those who need sanctifying.

**There are two aspects of Christmas that affect our reality today.** \_\_\_\_\_ And they are both promises

Here's the first one

### **1. The promise of God with us is broader than the incarnation of the Son of God.**

**The promise of God with us is fulfilled in both God the Son becoming enfleshed, and God the Spirit living within us.**

In his coming, the Trinitarian God revealed in Scripture, is not just "God the Father with us" inviting us to drawing near.

But he is God the Son who by the incarnation is by our side sympathizing in our weakness.

He is God the Spirit who by indwelling, lives within us and is our Helper Strength and Comfort.

Both of these things I just fleshed out in the previous point for those who are struggling this season but for those who are not- let me remind us:

**Hebrews 4:14,15- Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.**

**1 Corinthians 3:16 - Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?**

**1 Corinthians 6:19 - Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,**

**2 Timothy 1:14 - By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.**

To know that Jesus walked where we walked, helps us to know he is by our side. To know the Spirit is in us, we also know that He is for us.

This is a simple cause for rejoicing in the present reality of Christmas.

The present reality of "God with us", we can lift our heads and raise our hands, and sing with heart "Glory to God in the highest" "Greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world."

Don't waste this Christmas by forgetting the God is with us.. always. Not just this one season of the year  
The second aspect of Christmas that affects our reality today

## **2. The Promise of the return of Christ can be trusted.**

Soon and very soon, our King is coming.

"Jesus' first coming makes his Second coming "good news"." - Matthew Payne

- At Christmas we remember he came as a humble baby. When he comes again, he is our victorious King.
- Because Christ came at Christmas to redeem sinner the first time, He will come again to reign with saints the second time.

The return of Jesus inaugurates the beginning of the new heavens and the new earth. When he returns he will do so in His physical body as the conquering king.

At that moment every knee (even those who oppose him) will bow to his glory. This will be the moment when death itself will finally be defeated and we will receive our sinless, glorified bodies. Satan and all who have died apart from Christ will be banished to the punishment of eternal fire.

- Because Jesus himself said that no one would know the day or hour of his return, our call is to diligently pray for his return, to be waiting expectantly and to be living each day as if today will be the day.
- Jesus also made it clear that as we wait we should be serving one another as would serve him, thus hastening the day of his return and the renewal of all of creation.
- And because the curse remains, we are also called to live now as exiles, looking forward to the kingdom that is to come.

**"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also"**

**John 14:1-3**

**so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.**

**Hebrews 9:28**

Don't waste this Christmas by forgetting the present reality of the hope we live in now as God is with us and in us, Christ is coming again just as he promised .

### **Wrap up**

There is still 6 shopping days till Christmas. That means there is still time to not waste this Christmas. Don't be careless the next few days. Intentionally carve out what this may look like for you. Take just a minute and look at these three points:

We Waste This Christmas...

1. When we distract ourselves with the material of the season.
2. When we embrace the heartache of the season
3. When we forget its present reality.

Which one of these points can you return to this week? Go ahead and write it down or circle it in your notes. Put it on a sticky note by your bed side or favorite sitting place. Then every day, take a look at the point, pray about it. Ask God to meet you in that moment. And ask him to help you walk wisely and aware of his presence in this season. To walk in the security of his love and the comfort of his hope.

Let's pray: Father, this coming week may our hearts quiet down and hear your voice. May we grow spiritually closer to you in this season, no matter where we are at or what we are struggling with. Come soon Lord, as we anticipate your victorious return. In Jesus name. Amen