

Title: We Need Christmas

Text: Romans 3:9-18

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Place: Decatur Church of God

Theme: Romans

Although for us it is a Christian holiday, Christmas is celebrated by an increasing number of non-Christians worldwide. Some popular modern customs of the holiday include gift-giving, music, an exchange of Christmas cards, church celebrations, a special meal, and the display of various decorations; including Christmas trees, lights, garlands, mistletoe, nativity scenes, and holly. As a part of this worldwide celebration many acknowledge several figures, known as Saint Nicholas, Father Christmas, and Santa Claus, among other names that are associated with bringing gifts to children during the Christmas season.

For us of a Christian tradition, Christmas is so much more. We can enjoy the holiday music, the plethora of Christmas videos, and the seasonal foods but there is more we must acknowledge.

We must ask the all-important question “why”? Why is there a Christmas? Why does it happen? Why should it make a difference in my life?

As we have been studying in Romans, Paul gives us a theological study that helps explain the need for Christ and the need for God’s mercy.

Romans 3:9-18

What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. ¹⁰As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹²All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." ¹³"Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit."

"The poison of vipers is on their lips." 14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 ruin and misery mark their ways, 17 and the way of peace they do not know." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Why do we need Christmas?

I. We are all under sin.

Galatians 3:22a

But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin...

- A. We stand under sin's power and control.
- B. We are under the condemnation that results from it

Psalms 5:9

Not a word from their mouth can be trusted; their heart is filled with destruction. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongue they speak deceit.

II. None of us are righteous.

- A. Paul makes the point that all people without exception are not righteous.
- B. All people do not understand God nor seek Him out.
- C. All people have turned away from Him.

Psalms 14:1a

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile...

- D. All people are worthless or become useless (used only here in the NT).

Psalm 140:3

They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent's; the poison of vipers is on their lips.

- E. All people fail to do good (“kindness,” or “benevolence in action”).

* Apart from the indwelling Holy Spirit people cannot exhibit the fruit of the Spirit called kindness (Gal. 5:22). They have no inner spiritual capacity whereby they can normally and automatically exercise genuine kindness toward others. Instead sin causes them to be selfish and self-centered.

* The famous and luxurious Biltmore House in Asheville, North Carolina, was originally owned and managed by George and Edith Vanderbilt, an elegant couple known for their exceptional treatment of rich and famous guests. But today when people summarize the Vanderbilts' management of the Biltmore House, they don't just retell stories about how they treated their wealthy guests; they also point to the story of how George Vanderbilt treated a young employee named Bessie Smith.

A 2011 article about the Vanderbilts described the following scene:

Smith was a teenager when she began working at the Biltmore, and she was intimidated by its opulence. On her first day as a server, she walked into the house's grand banquet hall and, startled by the vastness of the room, dropped the tray of monogrammed china she was carrying.

George [Vanderbilt], a professorial figure with dark hair and a slightly curved moustache, rose from his chair as his guests looked on, their eyes begging: *What on earth are you going to say about this distraction?* But he didn't say anything. Instead, he got down on his hands and knees and helped her pick up the shards before saying, 'Come see me in the morning.'" Bessie Smith assumed she was going to be fired. Instead, [George Vanderbilt] promoted Bessie to chambermaid, so she wouldn't have to carry such heavy dishes.

Why do we need Christmas?

III. We do not understand.

1 Tim. 6:4 (false teachers)

He is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions

- A. We are talking about any teaching that takes us in opposition to Christ.
- B. We are talking about decisions that we make because we do not respect or trust in God.

Psalm 36:1

An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes.

Why do we need Christmas?

IV. None of us do good.

- A. Are you seeking God? Do you think he really exists?
- B. Initially we are not God-seekers thus we do not do the good God wants from us.

Psalm 14:1-3

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.

²The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.

³All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Conclusion: Why do we need Christmas? We need Christmas because it is the beginning of the plan that brings us hope. God knew that we needed Jesus...that we need Jesus.

Galatians 3:22

But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

* In his book, *The Great Divorce*, C. S. Lewis tells of a busload of people who travel to heaven on their way to take up residence in hell. These people appear thin and almost ghostlike in the robust atmosphere of heaven, and most of them immediately flee back to the comfort of their bus. One Ghost, who is plagued by a talkative red lizard (representing the power of sin and lust) that sits on his shoulder, ventures out into the plains of heaven and encounters an angel. Lewis describes their meeting, which is a parable of God's invitation to break the power of sin in our life and to transform it into something for his glory:

A mighty angel approached the man and asked, "Would you like me to make the lizard quiet?"

"Of course I would," said the Ghost.

"Then I will kill him," said the Angel, taking a step forward.

"Oh—ah—look out! You're burning me. Keep away," said the Ghost, retreating.

"Don't you want him killed?"

"You didn't say anything about killing him at first. I hardly meant to bother you with anything so drastic as that."

"It's the only way," said the Angel "Shall I kill it?"

"Look! It's gone to sleep of its own accord. I'm sure it'll be all right now. Thanks ever so much."

"May I kill it?"

"Honestly, I don't think there's the slightest necessity for that. I'm sure I shall be able to keep it in order now. Some other day, perhaps."

"There is no other day"

"Get back! You're burning me. How can I tell you to kill it? You'd kill me if you did."

"It is not so."

"Why, you're hurting me now."

"I never said I wouldn't hurt you. I said it wouldn't kill you."

[Suddenly] the Lizard began chattering loudly: "Be careful," it said. "He can do what he says. He can kill me. One fatal word from you and he will! Then you'll be without me for ever and ever. I'll be so good. I admit I've sometimes gone too far in the past, but I promise I won't do it again"

"Have I your permission?" said the Angel to the Ghost.

"You're right. It would be better to be dead than to live with this creature."

"Then I may?"

"Blast you! Go on can't you? Get it over," bellowed the Ghost: but ended, whimpering, "God help me. God help me."

Next moment the Ghost gave a scream of agony such as I never heard. The Burning One closed his crimson grip on the reptile: twisted it, while it bit and writhed, and then flung it, broken backed, on the turf.

Then I saw, unmistakably solid but growing every moment solider, the Ghost materialize into a man, not much smaller than the Angel.

At the same moment something seemed to be happening to the Lizard. At first I thought the operation had failed. So far from dying, the creature was still struggling and even growing bigger as it struggled. And as it grew it changed. Suddenly I stared back, rubbing my eyes. What stood before me was the greatest stallion I have ever seen, silvery white but with mane and tail of gold.

The man, now free from his torment, climbed upon the stallion that had been his sin and rode into the glowing sunrise towards the Savior.