

I. Introduction

- A. Merry Christmas! Thank you for coming today. We have a tremendous event to celebrate and remember today: the day God gave his only begotten Son.
- B. Let me start with a story.
- C. A business man walked through a crowded airport, waiting for a flight home. He decided to get a cup of coffee and a donut, so he went into a very busy food court. He was hungry so he picked out three donuts.
- D. He had to find a seat, but all the tables were taken. He walked around a bit with his bag of donuts, and his cup of coffee, and his wheelie suitcase dragging around behind him.
- E. Finally, a man reading the paper, and drinking his own cup of coffee, waved him over, inviting the businessman to share his table. So he did. He set his stuff down, pulled out the chair and sat down.
- F. The other guy sat there reading his paper, and sipping his coffee. The businessman sat there sipping his coffee and checking voicemail.
- G. Clear out of the blue, the man with the newspaper reached over into the bag of donuts, pulled out a donut, and started eating it—still reading his newspaper.
- H. Well, the first man was offended but he didn't want to say anything, because after all, the guy with the newspaper did share his table. So, the businessman gave the other guy that look you give somebody you're mad at—you know the look you give when you pass a slowpoke in the left lane, and you had to move over to the right lane to get around him or her—so he gave him that look, reached in and grabbed a donut for himself, and brought the bag close to him.
- I. They both sat there sipping their coffee and chewing their donuts.
- J. A few minutes later, the first man at that table, the guy with the newspaper, folded up his paper, stood up, reached all the way across the table, stuck his hand into the bag of donuts, and took out the last donut. He broke it in half, stuck one half in his mouth, returned the other half to the bag, and slid the bag back by the businessman. Then, he smiled and left.
- K. Well, our businessman was really ticked off. Who is this guy, to steal my donuts? Just because he shared his table, doesn't give him the right to eat my donuts. I'm not gonna eat that half donut in there, who knows where his hands have been!
- L. So the businessman decided to walk back to his gate. He stood up, put on his jacket...
- M. And then he bent over to grab his wheelie suitcase.
- N. And there, sitting on top of his wheelie suitcase, he found his own bag of donuts; all three donuts, sitting there, untouched.
- O. That's when he realized, the man wasn't stealing his donuts—the man was SHARING his donuts.

II. The moral of the story

- A. So, the Bible says:
 - 1. *18 Now this is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. 19 Joseph, her fiancé, being a just man, decided to break the engagement quietly, so as not to disgrace her publicly. 20 As he considered this, he fell asleep, and an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "Do not be afraid to go ahead with your marriage to Mary. For the child within her has been conceived by the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All of this happened to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: 23 "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and he will be called Immanuel (meaning, God is with us)." 24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord commanded. He brought Mary home to be his wife, 25 but she remained a virgin until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus. (Matthew 1:18-25, NLT).*
- B. Christmas is God's story. The "once upon a time" stretched into the infinite past, before time itself existed and the "happily ever after" reaches forward into eons of eternity, long after the sun has burned its hydrogen, and the cosmos has burned its fuel.
- C. From eternity past, to eternity future, God is telling a story.
- D. You are part of that story. You are written in. Your life story merges with God's cosmic story.
- E. But there's a twist. The outcome of God's story is certain, and fixed.
- F. But the outcome of your story—you get to choose.

III. My kids and Santa

- A. My daughter is eight and my son will be seven on Christmas day. In all those years, I think we only have one, maybe two, pictures with my kids on Santa's lap.
- B. And it's not because Margi and I are anti-Santites. We're not.

- C. It's because my kids, when they were little, had a love-hate relationship with Santa. They wanted to see him, but they didn't want to get up close and personal with him.
- D. So, we'd go to the mall, and look at him from afar, and wave. But go sit on his lap, and get a picture? No way. The closer we got, the more frantic the screaming got.
- E. One Christmas, Santa was extra nice. He saw us waving, and he waved back, and he motioned us to come on over.
- F. "Look kids," we said. "Santa's inviting us over!"
- G. Both our kids pulled back, and said, "No!"
- H. "Why not?"
- I. "We're scared!"
- J. "But he's nice!"
- K. "We know."
- L. "So let's go see him."
- M. "No. We're scared."
- N. My kids had a love-hate relationship with Santa Claus.

IV. Just like...

- A. Just like so many people today have a love-hate relationship with God.
- B. On one side, we humans feel a natural pull toward God. He's our Maker and our Father. He gives our lives purpose and meaning and value. He draws us, the Bible says, with bands of love.
- C. On the other side, we fear that when we come to God, he's going to mess up our lives.
 - 1. He's going to kill our fun times.
 - 2. He's going to make us give Him our money.
 - 3. He's going to repress our sexual instincts.
 - 4. He's going to turn us into Billy-Bob-Baptist robot clones.
- D. In other words, it is a natural human fear that if we draw close to God, the only thing He's going to do is EAT OUR DONUTS.
- E. And so many people have bought into the story that makes God a gigantic taker. Serve. Work. Obey. Sacrifice. Give. Suffer. Pay. Surrender.
- F. Ever since the human race fell, we've had this incredibly distorted picture of God in heaven.
- G. So God, in His tender mercies, and in His infinite compassion, has told and retold a different story. Because God knows that we will never willingly draw near to Him as long as we believe the old story.
- H. So what if God's story is a radically different story than any other story you've ever heard?

V. God's Story

- A. What if in God's story, God knew that you would freak out if you saw even a fraction of His glory. You'd run faster from Him than my kids ran from Santa.
- B. And what if, knowing this, God decided to make Himself small?
- C. What if God decided to veil His own glory, set aside His own dignity, and relinquish His own majesty?
- D. What if God made Himself so small, weak, and vulnerable, nobody could ever possibly fear Him?
 - 1. So the Bible says:
 - a) *10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."* (Luke 2:10-12, NKJV).
- E. What if, in God's story, what really motivated Him was LOVE? He just wants to sit with you, hang out with you, and visit with you. What if what God has wanted from you all along was to sit down at a table with you, dine with you, and fellowship with you?
 - 1. So the Bible says:
 - a) *10 This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.* (1 John 4:10, NLT).
 - 2. And...
 - 3. *20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.* (Revelation 3:20, NKJV).
- F. What if, in God's story, you were
 - 1. Lost, but didn't know it,
 - 2. Bankrupt, but wouldn't admit it,
 - 3. Diseased, but couldn't feel it.
- G. And what if He sent baby Jesus to grow into Savior Jesus so He could...
 - 1. Heal your soul's diseases, and...

2. Pay your spirit's moral indebtedness, and
3. Take your hand and guide your wandering self safely home.
 - a) So the Bible says:
 - b) *25 Once you were wandering like lost sheep. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.* (1 Peter 2:25, NLT).
- H. And what if, in God's story, He's not out to steal your donuts, He's only out to share His and I've got news for you. What He has to share is better than donuts. He has Biscotti, and creamy gelato, and brownies made with dark chocolate, and all the things that satisfy every longing of every heart for all of time?
 1. So God says:
 - a) *1 "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come; buy wine and milk Without money and without price. 2 Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. 3 Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies [hesed] of David.* (Isaiah 55:1-3, NKJV).
- I. Lying in that manger was the only Savior whose life could tell the story of a God who is not a taker, but who is the undisputed, undefeated, all time Champion of self-giving, self-sacrificing love.
 1. We do not preach a message of what you give to God, but of what God gives to you.
 2. We do not preach a religion, but a relationship to God through Jesus Christ.

VI. Christmas is how:

- A. Christmas is how the world gets its ruler, but even better...
- B. Christmas is how the world gets its Savior.
 1. If our problem were money, God would have sent a financial advisor.
 2. If our problem were sickness, God would have sent a doctor.
 3. If our problem were busyness, God would have sent an organizer.
 4. If our problem were loneliness, God would have sent a good buddy.
 5. If our problem were hunger, God would have sent food.
 6. If our problem were confusion, God would have sent a guide.
 7. But our problem was SIN, so God sent a SAVIOR.
- C. What do you think Jesus means? It is the Hebrew word for Savior, Rescuer, and Deliverer. You were going down for the last time, and Jesus jumped in, rescued you, and died in the process.
- D. That is the true meaning of Christmas.
- E. That is the real story.

VII. Savior

- A. And because of that Savior
 1. You give Him your sin, He gives you His righteousness.
 2. You give Him your dead old self; He gives you His everlasting life.
 3. You give Him your impurity; He cleanses you and gives you His own purity.
 4. You hand Him your weakness, He gives you His strength.
 5. You bring to Him despair, He brings you His hope.
 6. You hand Him defeat, He wins your victory.
 7. You bring Him sorrow, He brings you joy.
 8. You bring loneliness, He brings love.
 9. You create craziness, He gives rest.
 10. You come in stuck in addiction, in brokenness, in fear and He sets you free—your Redeemer lives.
 11. You walk in darkness, Jesus brings the light.
 12. You come in poverty, and Jesus, through His poverty makes you rich.
 13. You come an unreligious sinner; He makes you an unreligious saint.
 14. You come condemned, and He issues your pardon.
 15. You come doomed to everlasting condemnation; Jesus saves you and gives you everlasting life.
- B. That's what Christmas means.
- C. A Savior is born.
- D. Jesus.

VIII. Conclusion

- A. Is He your Savior? Have you made room in your story for Jesus? Does your memoir have a come-to-Jesus paragraph written in?
- B. A student asked a history teacher, "What is the best day in world history?" The teacher didn't have an answer.

- C. What might you answer?
- D. Some might say:
 - 1. Christmas, because that's the day we got our Savior. But that's not the best day.
 - 2. How about Good Friday, when Jesus died? That's when our salvation was finished.
 - 3. Or Easter when Jesus rose from the dead, sealing our salvation?
 - 4. Or that glorious day when Jesus returns, King of kings and Lord of Lords?
- E. Those are all good days, but none of those are the best day.
- F. I can tell you what the best day in history was ever.
- G. God's best day.
- H. God's best day was not too long ago, when a little seven year old boy sat in a living room in a home down the street from his church. It was summer vacation, and the little boy's mom brought him to his church's Vacation Bible School. But the church was too small, so they used Aunt Alice's house, just a few doors away, for the seven year olds.
- I. And old Aunt Alice, a sweet, chubby little lady, told the story the little boy had heard a thousand times before. Jesus came, born in stable, laid in a manger. Jesus died on the cross for your sins. Jesus rose again. Jesus offers eternal life as a free gift. Are you ready to receive Him?
- J. And there, in that little living room turned sanctuary, a cute, little, adorable, 7 year old Italian boy, prayed to receive Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.
- K. And that boy was me. And that was the best day, ever, the best day in history.
- L. And I can tell you, through the years, I have let Jesus down countless times, but Jesus has never let me down even once.
- M. He has given me everything.
- N. He owns all the donuts and all I have is just me reaching into His bag, whether I realize it or now, and enjoying what comes from Him.
- O. And I'm wondering if you've ever had that day, that come-to-Jesus day, in your life.
- P. This weekend, before Christmas, would be a perfect day to turn the page to a new story with happily-ever-after so good, words can hardly describe it.
 - 1. *"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6, NKJV).*
- Q. Will you receive Him today?