

Christmas Express

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon explores the contrasting meanings of Christmas through personal stories and the revelation of Jesus Christ as the true image of God.

Scripture: Luke 2:7-14, John 1:18-19, Colossians 1:17, Colossians 2:9, Hebrews 1:3

Topics: "The Meaning of Christmas", "Transformation through Christ"

Description

Erlo Stegen emphasizes the significance of Christmas as a time to reflect on the birth of Jesus, who came into a broken world to save sinners. He contrasts the painful memories associated with Christmas for some, like Bing Crosby's son, with the hope and transformation that the birth of Christ brings, as illustrated by Geoffrey Bull's experience in captivity. Stegen highlights that Jesus, the express image of God, entered a humble and dirty stable, reminding us of the reality of His incarnation. The sermon challenges listeners to consider how the true meaning of Christmas has changed their lives and to embrace the fullness of God found in Christ.

Transcript

Luke 2: 7-14; Heb 1:3; Jn 1:18,19; Col 1:17, Col 2:9

`Christmas Express'

Although there are many varieties of opinion about the exact date of Christ's birth (most agreeing that it was not 25 December) it is an opportunity to celebrate and remember that Jesus was born into this wicked and defiled world to save us sinners. Where would we be if He hadn't come?

For some people Christmas means nothing but pain. An example is the son of Bing Cosby.

Bing Crosby's son Lindsay killed himself during the Yuletide season because he couldn't bear facing another Christmas -- a holiday that brought back graphic, hated memories of the father he despised. All his life Lindsay had carried the scars of being physically and emotionally abused as a child by Bing -- who often beat him at Christmas. Everyone revered Bing because of his famous song and movie *White Christmas*. So Lindsay once vowed to a friend that if he ever killed himself, he would do it at Christmas -- just to show the world what a rat his dad really was. And on December 11 -- less than 24 hours after watching *White Christmas* on TV -- 51-year-old Lindsay blew his brains out.

"Lindsay once said: 'People think Bing Crosby personifies the Christmas spirit because he sings White Christmas. But he was a total phony. He was no Father Christmas -- he was a cold, cruel Ebenezer Scrooge. His meanness and cruelty has dominated my life. And when I hear my old man singing White Christmas on the radio, it makes my skin crawl. I have to run out of the room.'"

On the other hand consider what Christmas meant to Geoffrey Bull, a missionary to Tibet, who was taken prisoner by the communists in the 1950's. During his imprisonment he was made to do menial tasks. In his notebook he recorded that on Christmas Day he had to work with the pigs. As he squelched through the mire the stench was awful. It was then he remembered other Christmases with his family at home. The warmth of the fire and the chatter of excited children. Soon he was jolted back to the reality of the stench where he stood. It was then he realised that this is how it must have been for Mary and Joseph and the Christ child.

Jesus, being perfectly holy, came to a dirty stable - not the sanitized images we see on Christmas cards.

No one has seen what God is like. But God's revelation of Himself is in the person of Jesus Christ who is the "express image of God". Only in "Him dwells all the fullness of God dwells bodily"

Have you been thoroughly changed through the Christmas Express Image of God?

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