

Embracing Christ or Kris Kringle

by Phil Beach Jr.

The sermon emphasizes the importance of embracing the Spirit of Christ, which brings humility, brokenness, and meekness, rather than the Spirit of Kris Kringle, which brings pride, commercialization, and materialism.

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Scripture: Isaiah 53:1

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Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the importance of choosing between embracing Christ and the commercialized figure of Kris Kringle during the Christmas season. He highlights the need for humility and a right spirit to truly understand the message of Christ, contrasting the genuine humility of the first Christmas with the distractions of modern celebrations. The sermon encourages reflection on the true meaning of Christmas, urging listeners to seek the Spirit of Christ rather than the superficiality associated with Kris Kringle. Beach Jr. calls for a deeper engagement with Scripture to grasp the significance of Christ's birth and its implications for our lives today.

Transcript

And we do pray, Lord, that you would give us humility and grace and mercy this morning, and that you would give us the Holy Spirit's power to be able to hear what you're saying to us through your Word and through your Spirit, Lord. This is all that we desire, Lord, and we know, Lord, that this is what you desire for us. And so we want to look to you today as you put this together for us, Lord, and challenge our hearts and help us all to ponder carefully your Word and what you would be speaking to us at this time, Lord.

We ask these things in Christ's name, amen and amen. We're going to all participate this morning, so I want to warn you. Tim's shaking his head going like this.

You don't have to participate in an embarrassing way. It'll be an inconspicuous participation this morning. The burden in the Lord's heart this morning is simple.

And I don't always have a title, but when the Lord gives me one, I share it. And he has a sense of humor based on the title he gave me. Today's message is this.

Who are you embracing during this season, Christ or Kris Kringle? Christ or Kris Kringle? Let's ask the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to speak to our hearts this morning. We need humility. We need

brokenness.

We need meekness or God's Word will be offensive to us. But if we pray, O God, as Pam said, we're all wrong and only he is right and his Word is right. And if we happen to be right because we're standing on God's Word, there's a good chance we have a wrong spirit because we get proud when we're right.

And so we really need God's help to stand because the bottom line is only he can give us the grace and the ability to both be right by standing for his Word and have a right spirit at the same time, which is a spirit of meekness and a spirit of gentleness and a spirit of humility. So we need help this morning. We're going to begin by looking at a verse in Isaiah chapter 53.

Isaiah chapter 53. Christ or Kris Kringle? Which spirit are we embracing? Now, beloved, there is substantial evidence in the scriptures to prove that both Christ and Kris Kringle have a spirit. And there are certain things that happen in us and through us when we are embracing the spirit of Christ.

And there are certain distinct things that happen to us and in us and through us when we are embracing the spirit of Kris Kringle, which is the Christmas celebration of the world. There's distinct characteristics that each spirit has and each spirit causes us to act in a distinct way, depending on what spirit is in our hearts and in our minds and in our homes. That's what will depend on what we're seeing and what we're hearing and what is motivating us.

Isaiah chapter 53. Isaiah chapter 53, beginning in verse number one. Who has believed? That means to trust in and rely upon and cling to.

Who has believed our message? Particularly notice, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Or to whom has the arm of the Lord been disclosed? To whom has the arm of the Lord been made known? Of course, in the scriptures, the arm of the Lord is referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. So here the Spirit of God through Isaiah is asking this question, who has believed our rapport? The rapport, the good news is the gospel. It's the message of Jesus Christ.

And it starts with God sending His Son as a baby. Okay, so that's the very beginning of the message that we embrace when we're clinging to Christ. Before we begin to show the difference between these two, just want to read a little bit more here.

Verse 2, 4, the servant of God grew up before Him, that is His Father, Christ, the blessed Son of God, grew up before His Father, like a tender plant and like a root out of dry ground. Dry ground. He has no form or comeliness.

Now, the Spirit of Kris Kringle puts form and comeliness on the Christ child. Makes Him attractive. Makes Him something that we would like to embrace for ourselves.

But the Word of God says that this Christ child grew up before His Father as a tender plant, as it were, in a dry ground. He has no form or comeliness. Looking into some of the words here, the meaning of the words, different facets of the meaning we could derive that this is referring to.

He didn't have a royal, kingly appearance. In other words, He wasn't attractive to those who were worldly. He's not attractive to the worldly in heart, to the proud in heart.

He's not attractive to those who are after something for themselves. What spirit are we embracing this morning? Christ or Kris Kringle? Okay. He has no form or comeliness that we should look at Him and no beauty that we should desire Him.

No beauty that we should desire Him. Verse 3. He was despised and rejected and forsaken by men, a man of sorrows and pains and acquainted with grief and sickness. And like one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised.

And we did not appreciate His worth or have any esteem for Him. Surely He has borne our griefs. That means our sicknesses, our weaknesses, and our distress.

Are we getting a little picture here of what happens when we embrace Christ? When we embrace Christ, our eyes begin to see Him. Not the Christ that Kris Kringle talks about. That's not the Christ of heaven.

Okay. Surely He has borne our griefs and sorrows and weaknesses, carried our sorrows and pains. Yet we ignorantly considered Him stricken, smitten, and afflicted by God, as if with leprosy.

That is, we looked upon Him and He was so repulsive. There was nothing about Him that we could find any advantage in getting to know Him. You know, most friendships, unless the Holy Spirit has purged the heart, are really not friendships.

It's, I want to get to know you because I see something I can get from you. I see something beneficial. And so, God dressed up His Son in such a way, where when we looked at Him, we said, There's nothing He's got that I would want.

Nothing. Absolutely nothing He's got that I would want. Matter of fact, He reminds me of a leper.

One who's been rejected of God, one who's under a curse. Now see, it's these words that the Holy Spirit bears witness to. But the spirit of Kris Kringle doesn't.

The spirit of Kris Kringle doesn't like these words. But the Holy Spirit bears witness to these words. The Holy Spirit loves these words.

The Holy Spirit inspired these words. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement or punishment needful to obtain peace and well-being for us was upon Him. And with the stripes that wounded Him, we are healed and made whole. All we like sheep have gone astray.

There you go, Pam. All we like sheep have gone astray. All of us have gone astray.

We have turned everyone to His own way. And the Lord has made to light upon Him the guilt and iniquity of us all. He was oppressed.

Yet when He was afflicted, He was submissive and opened not His mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away.

And as for His generation, who among them considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living? Verse 9. They assigned Him a grave with the wicked and with a rich man in His death. Although He had

not done any violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it was the will of the Lord to bruise Him.

He has put Him to grief and made Him sick. When you and He make His life an offering for sin, He shall see His offspring. He shall prolong His days, and the will and pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.

Now here's where we're going to participate together. Let's think together about what is it that... And I'm going to use this phrase because it seems to be the only phrase that adequately portrays and communicates what's in my spirit from the Lord. What is in our face during this time of the year? And what was in their face the first Christmas? What were the surroundings of the first Christmas? What were the things happening? Who were the people involved and what was God doing when the Christ child was made manifest? And what is in our face now? Let's make a list.

Let's start with what's going on now. Everyone, raise your hand and go ahead and speak out. And be honest, please.

What is it that's in your face now when it comes to this whole season of Christmas? Everything that you can think of. I'll start out. Trees.

Stress. But let's get to the root of it. Stress, because of why? Alright, now we're dealing with it.

Spending money. Now let me just ask one question, alright? And we need to be honest with ourselves. Did spending money have anything to do with the first Christmas? Thank you.

No. Okay. Now.

Okay, Mike just said commercialization. Okay, now let's put this list together. Let's put this list together.

We're not going to write it on the board. Alright, now. Alright, let's be putting the list together.

So far what do we have here? Stress, money, commercialization, extended hours at the mall. Although employees like that because they get time and a half. They get home later.

Christmas trees, lights, presents, busyness, hustle, bustle, wrapping. Alright, let's write. That's right.

Everything associated with it. Wrapping paper, Rudolph. Alright.

Joy, family, friends. Huh? Christmas cards. That's part of it.

Let's put a big master list together. Food. Okay.

A lot of food. Right. Okay, an attempt.

An attempt from some places we see to try and bring the message back possibly to what it originally meant. Okay. Okay.

Any other lists that you can think of? Right. Yeah. Right.

Right. Understood. Understood.

So we're getting the idea here, right? We're getting the idea. So we have a list here. We're thinking about the various different items that are in our face that are associated with this season.

I'm sure we could probably come up with many, many more different things that are associated with this season. And it's not really necessary. Our point is that what we want to do is take the current list that we have and now let's take it back.

And let's go to the very first Christmas and let's see what was happening during that time. But not just what was happening outwardly, but what God was doing in the hearts of men and women. Okay.

Where shall we begin? Where shall we begin? Matthew. Now, Matthew chapter one beginning in verse number 18. Now, the birth of Jesus.

Matthew chapter one, verse number 18. Now, just try and think about the circumstances that were occurring at the very first Christmas. And what was happening in the hearts of men and what God was doing.

Because if we embrace the Christ of Christmas, the very same things that happened here as we read them from the Scriptures will be happening in the hearts and lives of those who embrace the Spirit of Christ. And then we'll begin to find a distinct difference between what happens as we read the Scriptures in the lives of those who embrace Christ versus what happens in the lives of those who embrace Chris. Chris Kringle.

Okay. Then finally what we want to do is say, Lord, is Chris Kringle knocking at my door and am I mistakenly embracing him? Because what we're going to find is Chris Kringle is actually at enmity to God. He's at enmity to God.

Chris Kringle was born in hell to take the hearts of men from the Christ that God sent to the world. And he has done a very good job at that. Matthew chapter one, verse 18.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place under these circumstances. When his mother, Mary, had been promised in marriage to Joseph before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Okay.

The first observation that we want to make here. Those who embraced the first Christmas, Mary and Joseph, embraced a Christ that brought dreadful reproach in their lives. Think about it.

A young woman, anywhere between the age of 13 and 16, found pregnant. Under Jewish law, she should have been what? Condemned and stoned. So did the embracing of Christ the first Christmas bring joy to Mary only? Only? No, what did it bring? Great reproach.

Think about it. Think about it. A reproach that couldn't be undone.

Do you really think if she got up and called all Jerusalem together and said, Let me explain to you what happened. This is not really Joseph. An angel came to me.

Oh my God. Not only was she bearing the reproach of being a fornicator, but she now has to bear the reproach of being a looney tune. She's all for a rocker now.

And I'm sure the Pharisees said that's because she was so unwilling to admit her sin that she has been given over to visions of grandeur. Listen carefully. Embracing this Christ.

Not the Christ Kris Kringle talks about. Not the Christ that Kris Kringle's commercials teach us about. Not the Christ that Kris Kringle's advertisements in all the stores are talking about.

Not that Christ. But the Christ of the Scriptures. The Christ of the first Christmas.

If we embrace Him, He will pierce our soul with a sword of reproach. A sword of reproach. Verse 19.

And her husband Joseph, being a just and upright man, and not willing to expose her publicly, and to shame and disgrace her, decided to repudiate and dismiss her quietly and secretly. So not only is this touching Mary, but this is touching the one that she loves the most. If we embrace the Christ of the first Christmas, it's going to require that our relationships with those who also have embraced the Christ of the first Christmas will have to be purified and cleansed from all self and all selfishness because Joseph had to make a decision here.

He had to make a decision. Am I going to dismiss this girl and look good in the eyes of all of Israel? Or am I going to embrace her? And in embracing her, basically, I'm going to give all her enemies the right to say he's guilty. And as he was thinking over this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, which means Savior, for he will save his people from their sins. All this took place that it might be fulfilled, which the Lord had spoken through the prophet, behold, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which when translated means God with us. Then Joseph, being aroused from his sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took her.

And he had no union with her as her husband until she had borne her firstborn son. And he called his name Jesus. Okay, brothers and sisters, the next observation that we want to make about the first Christmas is that Joseph was utterly dependent upon help from God to know what to do, because he embraced a Christ and he embraced a woman who embraced the Christ, and it was getting him in a whole lot of trouble.

And there was nothing he could do except hear from God. He had to have a word from God for direction. His whole life was being weighed in the balance.

And as he pondered on these things, God spoke to him through a dream and guided him. So, so far, what have we gathered together the first Christmas? We've gathered together great news. God comes to a little virgin girl.

Actually, let's look and see. Luke chapter 2, or Luke chapter 1, forgive me. Verse number 26.

We'll read this and then we're going to put all this together. Okay, we're going to put all this together and we're going to see and compare what's going on here, the first Christmas and what's going on in the world. Verse 26, chapter 1. Now, in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee named Nazareth.

Now, first of all, we want to make this note that Nazareth was a very insignificant town. Nazareth was considered a town where nothing was happening. Very poor, very small.

Nazareth wasn't a place that would have attracted the young yuppie or the young entrepreneur. Right, it's not Hoboken. Maybe Nazareth would be something like Alamuchia down south in Mississippi.

Something where there's just, like, Nazareth, is that in this state kind of thing? All right, so we're learning. We're learning about the first Christmas. We're learning about what God did.

Where He showed up. Where He showed up. Listen, God was not on a mission to try and attract people to Himself when He came.

He was on a mission to save people from their sin. All right, so mark down Nazareth as part of the circumstances that God was working in on the first Christmas. And note what Nazareth represents.

Insignificance. Smallness. Nothing that appealed to the pride of man or his heart.

He came to a girl, verse 27, never having been married, and a virgin engaged to be married to a man whose name was Joseph. And he came to her and said, Hail, O favored one. The grace, the Lord is with you.

Blessed are you before all other women or among all women. And when she saw him, she was greatly troubled and disturbed and confused at what he said and kept revolving in her mind what such a greeting might mean. The angel said to her, Don't be afraid, Mary, for you have found grace with God.

And listen, you will become pregnant and will give birth to a son and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his forefather David and he will reign over the house of Jacob throughout the ages and of his reign there will be no end. And Mary said to the angel, How can this be, since I have no intimacy with any man as a husband? How can this be? Then the angel said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

And so the holy, pure, sinless offspring which shall be born of you will be called the Son of God. And listen, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived the Son and this is now the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing is ever impossible and no word from God shall be without power or impossible to fulfill.

Then Mary said, Behold, I am the handmaiden of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to what you have said. And the angel left her.

So there's some more circumstances about what the first Christmas was all about. God appearing to a little virgin girl and finding in her a response that was so wonderful, that was so heavenly. And basically the response he found in her was, Lord, I am your servant.

I am just a peasant girl. Whatever you say, whatever you want, whatever the cost it will be to me, whatever the pain it will be to me, whatever misunderstanding will come, and Lord, You know that me being pregnant and Joseph not being the father, but the Holy Spirit being the one who conceived this, Lord, You know the horrible pain that's going to come to me. This is why if you go in the Gospels when Jesus was having a discourse with the Jewish leaders.

Now this is when He was all grown up and it was a little while before He was going to be crucified. What did they call Him when they got angry at Him? We are not like you, a bastard, an illegitimate child. We're

not like you.

We know who our Father is. Our Father is Abraham. You know what they were doing? They were slapping Him right in the face, Robert.

And they were saying, We're not a bastard. We're not illegitimate. We know who our Father is.

Who's yours? Oh, we've heard the rumors, Jesus. That's why they called Him that. A reproach that was never lifted.

A pain that was never healed. Okay. Let's go to the shepherds.

Where's the shepherds? Luke 2. Now notice, brothers and sisters, what are we doing right now? What are we doing? All we're doing is going to the Word of God and looking and pondering and contemplating. The Holy Spirit works with His Word. And this is how we can come to understand God's heart regarding this time of the year.

And I tell you, Kris Kringle might mention these things, but he mentions them with wrong application. But the Holy Spirit will take this and show us and put together the first Christmas. And every year when this time of the year comes and the Holy Spirit is bringing us to the Word of God, our lives can be reaffirmed and restrengthened in our resolve to what it really means to follow the Christ.

I love the shepherd story. This is again, what is God doing during the Christmas season? Let's begin in verse 1. In those days, Luke 2, it occurred that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole Roman Empire should be registered. This was the first enrollment and it was made when Quirinus was governor of Syria.

And all the people were going to be registered, each to his own city or town. And the town also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the town of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was about to become a mother. And while they were there, their time came for delivery.

And she gave birth to her son, her firstborn. And she wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. So, we're learning here.

We're learning what's going on. There was no room for the Christ child in the inn. So where did God have His Son born? In a manger.

Out of the limelight. Humbling. Smelly.

Think about it. Think about it. Think about it.

Which one of you ladies would like to go to some manger? And the manger is what? It's a feeding trough. Exactly. You ever see a feeding trough? It's a place where the horses and cows eat.

Think about your baby. How would you like your baby to be birthed there and laid in a feeding trough? It's not really what you had in mind for a bassinet, is it? This is where our Lord was though. Why? Why? Because Isaiah said He was a man despised and rejected.

Even at His birth, He was despised and rejected. A man of sorrows couldn't even be born in the inn because He didn't come to the world in order to be loved by the proud and embraced by the rich and worshipped by the pomp of this world. He didn't come for that.

So even as a little baby, He set the record straight. I'm coming in a manger. And she gave birth, verse 7, to her firstborn and she wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger because there was no room in the inn.

And in that vicinity, there were shepherds living out under the open sky. Now, if you want to do study on this, you can get an impact, but I'll just give you the information I've learned through study. And shepherds back then were comparable to maybe garbage men today.

Yeah. Street sweepers. That's right.

They were very uninteresting men. You didn't look at a shepherd and covet his job. Okay? You didn't look at a shepherd and covet his position.

They were humble, meek nobodies. But where did the angels go? Right there. So the Christmas message is coming together.

God is moving and He's finding lowly places to put His Son and to reveal Himself to. Lowly places. Broken places.

Humble places. Alright? Now watch. Behold, the angel of the Lord stood by these shepherds.

Verse 9 And the glory of the Lord flashed and shone all about them, and they were terribly frightened. And the angel said to them, Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all people. For to you is born this day in the town of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be a sign for you by which you will recognize Him. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Then suddenly there appeared with the angel an army of troops of heaven, a heavenly knighthood.

Another translation says, a heavenly knighthood, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom He is well pleased. When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing. Now, brothers and sisters, you know as well as I do we're running out of time.

We only have two or three more minutes. But listen. I'm challenging you in the Lord Jesus to finish this on your own as a family.

Finish it on your own. Go through the Scriptures. Gather together all the Scriptures, all the Scriptures in the Bible that pertain to the first Christmas and see what's going on.

See what God was doing. What did Herod do when he heard about the star? He was in a rage. Listen, let me say this.

Herod would not have been in a rage if Kris Kringle came and gave him his message. Herod probably would have had Kris Kringle over for dinner and said, Hey, I like your message. Let's somehow work together.

I think it would be mutually beneficial. That's what Kris Kringle would say. I want to challenge you because I want to stop so we have time to go there because I know this is a special day for the kids.

Go through the Christmas message together as a family. Just like this. Read it and contemplate and consider what was going on.

And then I want to simply challenge everyone here to pray that you will be empowered by the Spirit of God to embrace the Christ of the Scriptures and the first Christmas message and be very careful not to be seduced and beguiled by Kris Kringle because he does not bear the message from heaven. The Word of God does and the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Word, not to the tinsel, the fluff of what's going on in the world. And we must be guarded.

I'm trying to say this as gently as possible but yet being faithful to the Holy Spirit's concern that is in his heart. Be careful. Don't forget.

It's all about Christ. And if God has shown you, family, don't let Christ be eclipsed by Kris this year. Let's bow our hearts before the Lord.

Father, thank You for the Word of God which is so precious to us. Lord, we're amazed at the Christ of Christmas. We want to love Him more and more.

We do pray that He will come and make Himself known to our hearts. Help us to celebrate this Christ, Lord. Lead us in Your Word, Lord, to truth that sets us free.

And now we pray for our children, Lord, as they sing about the Christ of Christmas. May their words be quickened by the Holy Spirit and minister to us. And may each child who sings of Christ one day embrace this Christ and truly be a follower and lover of the Christ that they are singing about today.

We commit the rest of our day into Your hands and all the fellowship afterwards. Lord, may You be glorified. We pray for Jesus' sake, amen and amen.

Amen.

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