

Christmas in Crisis

by Ralph Sexton

Christmas is in crisis because the church of the living God is in a crisis, and the light is going out at the house of God.

Duration: 44:08

Scripture: Luke 2:1

Topics: "Christmas Celebration", "Faith In Action"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the significance of the birth of Jesus Christ and the hope that it brings to a hopeless world. He expresses concern about the attack on Christmas in our culture and society, seeing it as a struggle between good and evil. The preacher encourages Christians to take action by praying, displaying nativity scenes, sending Christmas cards, having a Christmas tree, speaking out, and wishing people Merry Christmas. He believes that the crisis of Christmas is a reflection of the crisis in the church, and that Christians need to prioritize their faith and stand up for the celebration of Christmas as a reminder of God's existence and the coming of Jesus to earth.

Transcript

Take your Bible and turn with me in the New Testament to Luke chapter 2. A few days ago, I had the privilege of reading this passage in Israel, in Shepherds Field, right outside of the little town of Bethlehem. And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenus was governor of Syria.

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. A powerful passage of Scripture. It introduces to us in Luke's Gospel the fact that God's only Son came to this earth.

Wrapped in flesh, he invaded this sin-sick world that we might have hope in a hopeless situation. That we might have help when no one else can help us. Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and man.

There is hope today because Jesus is alive forevermore. I submit to you this morning that there are some facts in our world that need to be reviewed. I've written some of those facts down so that we might look at them together.

Fact number one is this. God is God and always will be God. No negotiations, no compromise, no politically correct makeovers.

Our human approval is not a condition of his eternal being and unlimited power. God is God. Fact number two.

God had a Son who took upon himself the flesh of humankind and for thirty-three and a half years lived on this earth. And John 3.16 declares, For God so loved this world that he did give that only begotten Son. Third fact.

Jesus is the sinless Son of God. He's not half God and not half man. But he is all God and all man.

And because of that, he is a mystery to the world and he is a very present help for me and for you in our time of need. Jesus has identified with the problems of our life. He's identified with the days that don't go very well.

He's identified with human suffering and sickness. He's identified with loneliness and heartache and despair. And because of that, I have hope today.

Jesus is aware of my condition and my location and my situation. He's a God that cares. He's visited this earth.

Fact number four. Jesus was born on this earth and he did have a date that he was born. Now, Brother Paul, I can't tell you that it was December the 25th because I don't know.

But I can tell you this much, that Jesus was born. How do you know that, Brother Ralph? I just read it to you, Luke chapter 2. I don't have to have any other proof other than the inerrant, infallible Word of God. And Galatians chapter 4 and verse number 4 says, In the fullness of time was Jesus Christ brought to this earth.

Fact number five. His birth date probably was not December the 25th. As the gentleman, Mr. Bassam, wrote earlier in his article, he said we probably hijacked that from the pagans 2,000 years ago.

December the 25th. If we find shepherds in the field keeping watch over their flock in the Middle East, it was probably in the springtime or in the fall. Not in the winter much.

December the 25th, however, could have been a date of conception. And one theorist has written, if Jesus was conceived on December the 25th, this would make his birth nine months later. And that would correlate with some of the wonderful festivals of Israel in the month of September.

And the feast and the sacrifices and the offering of the first fruits that would fulfill biblical foreshadows and types. Fact number six. The date of celebration is not our concern.

It doesn't matter to me if it was July the 4th Jesus was born. I'm just rejoicing in the fact that he was born. The date is not what we're worshipping.

We're worshipping the Son of God who came to this earth to provide eternal life for each and every one of us. The fact that Christmas is in crisis is a testimony to the fact of a sin-sick society. The very fact that all of a sudden the world has turned on the Christmas celebration is a testimony of the fact that we do not want to be associated with anything to do with God or His Son.

It's a testimony of a society and a culture that's trying to move away from any God-consciousness, any God-knowledge, any... And does it not remind you of the book of Romans where it talks about they didn't even want to have God in their thought process? I wonder if we're not talking Christmas in crisis, that we're talking of a greater problem and a greater battle than we ever even imagined. The secular humanists and the pagans and the uneducated, unaware, politically correct crowd are pushing an agenda to take Christmas and Jesus away from our society. And once again, we're seeing the power of a vocal minority in leading a silent majority into cultural change.

In the past few weeks, the Christian Law Association has been handling calls from concerned Christians all across the country. A high school teacher in Pennsylvania was told by the school principal and also by the school district superintendent that he could not include any religious music in the Christmas concert. Now, let me make sure I'm following this story.

We're going to have a Christmas concert and we're going to be celebrating a Christmas holiday, which is recognized as a federal holiday in the United States of America. And if we're having a Christmas holiday and a Christmas break and a Christmas concert, and yet, but when we get to the concert, we cannot sing any Christmas carols because they may mention the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then we have a great big problem in our society.

Because what we're doing is we're saying we don't want Jesus in any part of our life. The teacher was almost fired for standing up and saying that it was not legally correct for the principal or the superintendent to block them from singing Christmas carols. Several weeks of CLA negotiations, the teacher was then allowed to present some religious songs as a part of the concert.

In South Carolina, an office called CLA to see if they could play Christmas carols at the office Christmas party. We're going to have a Christmas party, but we can't have a Christmas carol at the Christmas party because his name is in the song. In Florida, police officers were told they could not use religious decorations at the police station.

Many city, state, and county governments do not realize that the Supreme Court has ruled that public displays have just to mix with them a secular display and any nativity scene is allowed, any picture of Mary and Joseph and baby Jesus is allowed. All they have to do is to mix in with it a secular celebration for the side of Christmas, which would include Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. And the Grinch that stole Christmas.

The absurdity of where we are is almost unbelievable. Some want to blame this struggle over Christmas on the loony left or on a liberal plot to ban Christmas. I view the struggle as more than a political agenda.

It is a spiritual battle that has gone on for decades and centuries. It's the classic struggle that began in the Garden of Eden on light and darkness, on truth and a lie. And in this hour, right before our Lord comes back, the devil would love to take away from children and teens and young adults any semblance, any reminder that somewhere in time there was a Savior born that can take away the sins of mankind.

It's a struggle over righteousness. Christmas is in crisis, but the reason Christmas is in crisis is because the church of the living God is in a crisis. The light is going out at the house of God.

We are reducing the house of God to religious entertainment. And we're taking our church services and substituting success by saying, if we have a crowd, we're having church. But a crowd doesn't make church.

We're substituting the fact that if we are blessed materially with property and real estate and buildings, that that is the approval of God. But ladies and gentlemen, that does not mean God's approval. We desperately need to see revival and a renewing of the heart in the local church and getting back to biblical holiness on the people of God.

And if there was revival in the church, then Christmas would not be in a crisis in America because people would be letting their light shine before men. Only because our salt has lost its edge and our lights are smothered by the materialistic things of this world is the reason that Christmas is in crisis. We have bowed our hearts, we have bowed our homes, and we've bowed our houses of worship to the gods of materialism in America.

Instead of serving the true and living God, our kids know more about video games than they do the God of this universe. With each passing day, we wander farther and farther away from our spiritual roots and we find America's moral fiber, it lies torn to shreds with the pleasure attitude of this day. I want it.

I'm going to do it. But it's against the Word of God. It doesn't matter.

It makes me happy. It makes me feel good. Well, it shouldn't happen this way.

I don't care. I'm going to do it. And that pleasure attitude, my way is more important than God's way, has caused us to see even in evangelical circles, even in fundamental Bible-believing churches, we've seen the departing of the power of God.

Off our singing, off the preaching, off the teaching, and off the living of God's people, even at the house of God. The crisis in Christmas is only symptomatic of the crisis that's in the local church in America. Even Christians in a church each week don't want any discomfort that would come with taking a social stand.

Or, God forbid, that we would stand up for righteousness and have to suffer a spiritual warfare or a spiritual battle for doing what was right. Let someone else pray. Let someone else go on visitation.

Let someone else be a teacher or an assistant teacher in a class. Let someone else go to choir practice and sacrifice personal time to fill a chair in the choir loft. I'm maxed out.

I've got all I can do. I've just got to take care of me. Ladies and gentlemen, we've pushed ourselves to the comfort zone while the cause of Christ goes begging.

Christmas, yes, is being attacked, but I'm afraid many of the attitude of Christian people across our country is, oh, yeah, I heard about that. That's just too bad. Maybe someone should call the pastor, or maybe someone should call a Christian radio station or TV station.

I heard about that Christmas being banned in a lot of places, but you know what? I'm really covered up this week. I wish I could help, but you know what? I'm so busy I can't even get back to church on Sunday night or Wednesday night, let alone be concerned that Christmas is being eradicated. I told the kids, I told

them last night, make sure you pray before you go to sleep.

I don't have time to come in there and pray with you or read the Word of God, but you kids do that. Make sure you take care of yourself spiritually. That's bad, you know, Pastor.

I heard Christians are allowing Christmas to be taken away. The problem we're facing, church, is that Christians are in crisis. We have a form of godliness, but we deny the power thereof in our everyday lives.

And if we were living as close to the Lord as we should, and if we were being sought in light to the community like we should, there wouldn't be a Christmas in crisis today because the world would know where we stand and what we're facing as a society. John Gibson of Fox News has just written a book. It is called *The War on Christmas*, and he says that it's worse than a crisis.

He said it's an all-out war to get rid of Christmas, that Christmas would disappear from our culture. Some observers state that the attack on Christmas is part of a secular progressive agenda that wants to remove any religious reminders so that if we get rid of Christmas and we remove other spiritual reminders in our society, they have a four-point agenda as secular progressives that they could then accomplish on American society. Number one, that narcotics would be legalized, that we would be like several countries in Europe where there is no narcotic restriction, that we would be a nation of drug users constantly seeking a higher high, constantly trying to go a little further than the last smoke of marijuana or the last line of cocaine or the last puff on the crackpot or the last experimental mix of meth and Phenobine, that we could just become a nation where any drug that we want to do to make ourselves in a drunken stupor would be okay.

That would be number one. Number two, that we would go into a culture and a society that euthanasia would be accepted. We've got a big problem.

We don't have enough workers to pay for Social Security. You see, 15 years ago, we started aborting the workers that would be producing today. 20 years ago, we started killing the workers that would be working today.

And we've averaged killing a million, 500,000 workers every year in this country for decades. Now, all of a sudden, we don't have enough money to take care of the old people, to take care of the Medicare and the Medicaid and the nursing home and the doctor bills. What are we going to do? Oh, I'll tell you what we can do.

We can put the old people to sleep. We can eradicate the medical bills. If you're no longer able to be productive, if you can no longer hold down a job, if you can no longer take care of yourself, why don't we just give you a shot and put you to sleep? After all, we've been practicing this for decades.

We've been killing babies a long time. And if we can get rid of any God consciousness on this culture and society, then it won't be such a problem to put your grandmother or your daddy to sleep when he can't be productive anymore. And then we can balance the budget, and we can solve the Medicaid problem, and we can solve the Social Security problem because we're killing off the nonproductive members, the mentally and emotionally and physically handicapped and the aging.

We can put them all to sleep and get them out of our partying ways. Number three, the next agenda of the secular progressive is they want gay marriages and the reporting of such unions between two men and two women to become commonplace and accepted in the community. That it's not a big deal.

Two men are getting married. Two women are getting married. And according to the secular progressive agenda, this would be a step in the right direction.

The fourth part of that agenda was that abortions could be performed at will, at any time, regardless of the age of the baby, from conception to right up the day before the child was to be born. I tell you, Christmas is in crisis, but it has a lot more to do with the condition of the local church all across America. We've got a generation of children that know nothing about the things of God or the power of God.

We desperately need a revival at God's house. On December the 13th, 2002, in Sacramento, California, a first-grade teacher with 24 years' experience along with two other teachers were told that the use of the word Christmas in the classroom or in written materials was now prohibited. The teacher, who had for over 20 years been presenting during the month of December a program in her first-grade classroom entitled Christmas Around the World.

That year, that teacher and two others were instructed that not only can you not have a Christmas party or a Christmas carol, but you can't even say the word Christmas. The word Christmas is banned in the classroom. And in any written material.

On January the 14th, 2003, in Westfield High School in Westfield, Massachusetts, some students had to file suit against the school officials claiming their constitutional right to free speech was violated when the principal stopped the teenagers from passing out candy canes at school that had a Christmas message that included a plan of salvation. That the Christmas cane, the candy cane, was a great tool for telling about the love of Jesus Christ. The website Grinchlist.com states that they see a growing intolerance for the term Christmas in American culture.

Christmas is an endangered holiday in public spaces. Scripps Howard News Service and the University of Ohio conducted a survey recently of 1,001 people. Listen to their results.

45% of those responded said they knew someone who does not believe in God. They interviewed 1,001 people and 45% of those interviewed said I know someone that does not believe in God, but they still celebrate Christmas. 11% said that they believe most people focus on the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas.

Out of 1,001 people, only 11%, a little over one-tenth of all the people said the meaning of Christmas was the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. What about the rest of that survey group? 87% said the holiday was less religious than it used to be. I submit to you this morning, ladies and gentlemen, that Christmas is in crisis.

But the reason is that the churches across America have gone out of business. We've substituted a social gospel for saving grace. And we're not educating the children and the teenagers of America on even the very basic Bible truths that we grew up with.

I didn't think I would ever say it as an adult in my own country, but there's truly a famine for the preached Word of God in America. It's embarrassing. We've got other countries sending missionaries to America because we have gotten so far from God.

A Christmas CD produced for the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh, Scotland. The hospital banned the CD from distribution because one of the songs mentions baby Jesus. The decision was reached by the hospital board because it fears it could offend people who belong to a faith other than Christianity.

If it went to every child in the hospital, it could offend those who are not Christian, said a spokeswoman for the hospital. You say, well, that was Edinburgh, Scotland, and they banned the CD because it said baby Jesus. Well, what about Target and Walmart in America? The biggest retailers we have in our country who said this year they will not use Christmas in any of their advertising.

They'll only use Happy Holidays. No Merry Christmas because they don't want to offend someone with the word Christmas. What about Coca-Cola Bottling Company who for 74 years has had Santa Claus on a Coke bottle or on a carton advertising Christmas time? But all of a sudden, ladies and gentlemen, there's such an outcry for Christmas that now we're banning Christmas trees and poor old Santa Claus is getting banned right along with baby Jesus because he makes people think about Christmas, the spirit of giving, and God gave His only begotten Son.

You see, in our winter fest this year, Coca-Cola will now use the polar bears instead of Santa Claus. Simple, minor changes, but the culture is being altered right in front of us. You see, the Christmas party is now the holiday party and the Christmas tree is now the community tree and the Christmas lights are now the winter lights and the Merry Christmas, well, that's been changed to Happy Holidays.

According to Gallup Poll, 84% of the United States of America, the citizens of our country, 84% of this population claims to be Christian. 84%. I just want to ask one question.

Who is Christmas offending? Would it not be a greater offense to ban Christmas when 84% of the population celebrates that religious holiday? Are we not a Christian nation that was founded on Bible principles? Is that not the basis of our founding fathers? Did we not establish this is a Christian nation in its very first days of being born, first months and first years? Is there not a myth concerning separation of church and state that Thomas Jefferson, when he was writing his letter, it was not in the Constitution of the United States, but he was writing a letter explaining to the Danbury Baptist Association he was actually quoting back part of the pastor's message so he could connect to the people. But by the time the secular media gets through with it, there's a great wall of separation of church and state. Our founding fathers never intended for God to be out of the government.

They intended for the government to be out of the local church. That's what they intended. They never one time meant to throw God out of America's life.

And while we're asleep at the helm on our watch for this generation, we're throwing the baby out with the bathwater because trying to be politically correct, we're damaging our very nation, its culture, and I believe its survival as a Christian nation. Christmas is not in a crisis. If 84% of our nation are professed Christians, then I submit to you the crisis is in the Christian community.

This morning, I would like to give you a homework assignment. I believe that we should still celebrate Christmas. And I'm going to the printer tomorrow to have a new round of bumper stickers printed up.

Do you remember those that said we still pray? Well, we're going to get some new ones that say we still celebrate Christmas. I believe that doing nothing contributes to the attempt to remove Christmas from our culture. 84% of Americans say they are Christians.

With Christmas in crisis, I will endeavor to help preserve and restore the celebration of Christmas by the following methods. Here they are. Number one, according to the scriptures, I will pray for our nation and for our leaders on the local, state, and federal level.

God said in His Word for us to pray for those who have authority over us. They're responding to pressures from small groups. They need to respond to the pressure of a holy God when we pray that they'll keep the morals and values of our land.

Number two, I will place, listen to me carefully, I will place, or I will plan to place a nativity scene in my home or and in my yard. God, the last time I checked, you still owned your yard. So stick a nativity scene up in the yard.

Number three, I will purchase Christmas cards with a religious theme, with a picture, or a scripture verse, so that my friends and family know that I understand the real meaning of Christmas. Number four, I will put up a Christmas tree. A Christmas tree.

You say, well, there's a verse in the Bible. Yeah, that grove verse has nothing to do with a Christmas tree. It's when they cut down trees and made them into idols.

A Christmas tree is evergreen. That's life eternal. It's the tree of life.

A Christmas tree has lights on it. Jesus is the light of the world. On top of it is a star, the star of Bethlehem.

You want to guide your family and guide your life, you follow Jesus, the light of the world. Underneath the tree are gifts. The wise men came to the birth of Jesus and they brought gifts, symbols of adoration and worship.

At the end of this month, we take up a birthday offering for Jesus. We say, match your best gift for a human and give a gift for Jesus. We're going to put on paying off the debt of this beautiful new building.

We always do something special because it's symbolic of a gift. But the greatest gift was the gift that God gave when Jesus became the salvation for lost men. And then the gift under the tree, that old rugged tree, when Jesus died on the cross and He said, I'll take your sin debt, I'll take your hell, and I'll take your death so you can have life eternal.

My life I give to you so you can live. That's the gift of the cross. And that's the symbolism of the gift.

You say, well, Brother Ralph, doesn't Christmas have pagan roots? Of course it does. It's been that when the Christian church came along, they tried to come with something that 2,000 years ago to try to change all the symbolism of those that were practicing the witchcraft and stuff in the communities. And they said, one way we'll do that is we'll show the community we've been saved and changed by the power of God and we'll have a different celebration at the same time.

And you know what it amounts to? Is those old things got baptized. Amen? Old things have passed away. All things have become new.

And to prove my point, why is the world even trying to block the celebration of Christmas, even a Christmas tree, unless they know it reminds them of the real meaning of Christmas. Number five. Speak out.

Tell the store manager where you shop. Ask for the address of the home office. Get a phone number, an 800 number.

Go on the website. And with a kind, and I emphasize, kind conversation or kind letter of concern, as a Christian, you are offended that they're not using Christmas in their marketing. Christmas is not allowed in their store.

They don't have up a Christmas tree. They don't even allow the Christmas colors because they're red and green and the red represents the blood of Jesus Christ and green represents life eternal when your sins have been placed under the blood. On the screen, you'll find those stores that have already said this year, 2005, Sears, Target, Kohl's, and Walmart, they will not use the word Christmas in any of their advertising.

I think someone should call them and say, you're worried about offending someone. This is a sacred religious holiday for me and my family. You've offended us.

84% of the population that we are seeing Christmas banned for our children. Number six, call your radio stations, secular and religious, and request that Christmas carols and Christmas songs be played during the month of December. Traditional Christmas programming, call your TV station and say, when you run those little banners up there and you're putting happy holidays, how about putting up Merry Christmas for me? You're leaving me out.

I'm a Christian. Let your TV station know and that you would also like to see traditional Christmas programming. That would be something for our children.

Number seven, wish people a Merry Christmas everywhere you go. When you check out the store, when you pay for your gasoline, you can say, Merry Christmas. There's not a law yet against saying Merry Christmas.

Not Happy Holiday, not Wonderful Winterfest, but Merry Christmas. Let's review our homework. Number one, pray.

Number two, nativity scenes. Number three, Christmas cards. Number four, a Christmas tree.

Number five, speak out. Number six, radio, TV, newspaper. Number seven, wish people Merry Christmas everywhere you go.

Christmas is in crisis, but it's only in crisis because the church is in crisis. And the church is in crisis because Christians have been too busy to be concerned. Thank you so much for spending these few minutes with us today.

Some of you are watching this program on a cable system. Some of you are viewing it on a broadcast network. And some of you are watching in the privacy of your home on a DVD or a VHS tape.

I just want to take a moment and speak to you from my heart and tell you that I am very concerned about what's taking place in our culture and in our society. Christmas is under attack. Christmas is in crisis.

And if good people do nothing, then evil will win. And I believe that it's more than political correctness that we're facing. I believe it is a classic struggle between good and evil, darkness and light, to have Christmas taken away from our children, our grandchildren, our teens, and our young adults.

I believe it's an attempt from the dark side, the evil side, of the religious world to actually remove any remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we do not remember that He was born, then we would forget as a society that there's even a Savior. It would go along with nihilism, that sense of hopelessness that's on

our young people and on our young adults all across America.

It would also go along with the rapid increase we're seeing in violent crime, because there's no right, there's no wrong, and there's no compassion. There's no loving Christ to be a part of their life. I believe we have a problem in the country.

And I believe we have a problem in the community. And yes, I believe there's a problem in the home. And we need to get back to the basics of honoring the Lord.

And one of the goldmine standards for our culture and our society are religious holidays that remind us of the fact there is a God, and there was a Son of God named Jesus who came to this earth. Would you please take time to write down our mailing address? We would like to send you the seven-step action plan on how you can personally, individually, make a difference in your church, your community, your school in helping keep Christmas in our culture. Also, we would like to give you information about how you might have some of the new bumper stickers that say, We Still Celebrate Christmas.

Just write down our web address or the 800 number. Some of you prayerfully support us every month, every week. Thank you so much.

We could not do the research and the programming and the distribution on VHS, DVD, audio tapes, the Internet programming, and then the broadcast programming without your kind love and support. Please remember us when you pray and let's work together by Christmas in a crisis that will make a difference and keep Christmas in our culture.

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