

## Choir Presentation Comments – Dec 8 2019

What do you think of when you hear the word Christmas? For many of us, Christmas means presents. It's the biggest shopping season of the year. We go out looking for presents to give to others. We look forward to hopefully getting some presents from others. Or Christmas may bring to mind programs, plays or presentations. Maybe your family has a program or movie you like to watch together every Christmas. Or you go to the kid's school concerts. Or you come to special Christmas presentations like this one.

Or maybe Christmas brings to mind keeping up some traditions. Maybe your family always goes to Grandmas at Christmas or meets up the lake or gathers at someone's house on Christmas Day. Or maybe you make sure you play that special game or make those certain cookies or hang those decorations. Or maybe, the most important part of Christmas for is the time you get to spend with family or special people in your life that matters most. It doesn't matter to you what everyone does or where it happens or what happens as long as you're together. Gifts, programs, traditions and family can all be part of good memories at Christmas.

But for some people here, this Christmas might not be so good. Maybe it brings up memories that used to bring joy but now stir up sorrow. Some of you go into your first Christmas without a loved one who passed away this year. Some go into your first Christmas after a family break up. You don't know what to expect or how to navigate your newly fractured family. For some, the Christmas season intensifies some hard stuff you're going through. Maybe it heightens the loneliness we feel; the difficulty we face; the illness that dominates the family or the despair we feel – especially when we're kind of expected to be happy this most wonderful time of the year.

But did you know that there is someone who can bring deeper meaning to all that we treasure at Christmas? Did you know that there's a person who brings comfort and hope to all who find this Christmas difficult? They named Christmas after Him.

His name or title is Christ. The title Christ means anointed one. This title was given to a man named Jesus 2000 years ago. So when you hear the phrase "Jesus Christ," you're actually hearing a name and a title. It's kind of like Queen Elizabeth. She has a title and a name. So Christ Jesus is a title and a name. Christmas is about the Christ whose coming this festival originally remembered.

But what does Christ or anointed one mean? Well in ancient times among the Jewish people, whenever they got a new king or a new high priest they anointed them with oil. They poured oil onto that person's head to mark this person as king or high priest. But they also looked forward to the coming of a supreme king or high priest some day. The hope for this future deliverer king reached a kind of fever pitch 2000 years ago in ancient Israel. They suffered under a military occupation by the Roman army. Even their own rulers oppressed them. They longed for deliverance.

Then Jesus is born. The only people who hear about it are a few shepherds in a field and some residents in the town of Bethlehem. And there were some Wiseman from the east who came to see the child which caused quite a stir in Jerusalem at the time. Not much happened after that for about 30 years.

Then Jesus came out publicly. He began to minister, teach, heal and bring complete change to the lives of ordinary people wherever he went. The authorities didn't pay much attention to Him until He became a threat. People started talking about Him as possibly the Christ – the deliverer – the anointed one. Well people who have power don't often like giving it up. So they clamped down on Jesus and eventually arrested Him. They tried Him and sentenced Him to death. They got the Romans to kill Him by crucifixion or death on a cross.

It seemed like He failed. He certainly didn't bring political deliverance for the Jews of that time. But He brought about a deliverance that was actually much deeper. His death, on the cross, purchased a deliverance for people from guilt before God for all they had done wrong. And Jesus didn't just die and become a martyr symbol. On the Sunday after His crucifixion, His tomb was empty. People have come up with a variety of explanations for this historical reality. But as Christians, we believe that the empty tomb is best explained by the resurrection of Jesus. He rose again to life.

I know that sounds totally weird and foreign to our every day lives. But if we're talking about God who has this power and ability that's way beyond any human, then resurrection becomes a real possibility. That means that this Christ Jesus is living today.

That means it is possible for us today to connect with the actual Christ of Christmas. Yes, Christmas is about the coming of Christ. But if at Christmas we only Jesus' birth, we can respectfully nod in recognition and then just go on with all the other parts of Christmas.

But Christ did not come so you and I could have a festival during cold days and the dark winter solstice season. Christmas is about Christ coming to make a profound difference in our lives. When we keep Christ at the core of our

Christmas, everything else takes on a deeper meaning. The joy of forgiveness can fill our family celebrations. Our programs are not just a production but contain an eternal message to deliver with potentially eternal impact. Our traditions can help us celebrate and appreciate the gift God has given to us in Christ. Even the gifts can remind us that the greatest gift we ever will receive is Christ Himself.

If this Christmas is a difficult one for you, I want you to know that Christ Jesus is alive today. He knows about your life circumstances intimately. He can be a great comfort to you. He has been walking with people through dark valleys for centuries. He has been spiritually present with people going through despair and loneliness. Maybe today you sensed something in your soul. I would put forward to you that this came from Christ Jesus touching you with His presence and love.

So I wonder if you would be willing to open up yourself more to Him? Maybe you have been seeking for something for a while. Today, you have heard about it in our time together. Jesus invites you to put the trust of your life onto Him. If you are interested in talking about that more, you can talk to the person who invited you to come or you can contact our church through the website with your question or talk to someone in the choir before you leave. You can visit the table by the front doors on the way out. There is a CD there you are welcome to pick for free that talks more about the anticipation of this Christ coming and how Jesus fulfilled it. Please feel free to take what you would like. I pray you would receive this greatest gift this Christmas season.

If you already have received Christ Jesus into your life, will you cherish Him as the greatest gift you have ever received through the remainder of this Christmas season? Then as you prepare to enter the New Year, ask Him what He has you to do with the New Year he presents to you as a gift.

**Let's pray.**

**Joy to the World (Choir)**

**Closing** – We hope that you can join us again this Christmas season to hear more about the Christ of Christmas. We have Sunday worship services focusing on this the next two Sundays starting at 1045 AM.

Then on Christmas Eve, we hope you can join us for one of our two Christmas Eve Services. At 430 or 630, we will have a time of singing Christmas carols, candle lighting, a special story for kids and gift bags for the kids to take home with them. Refreshments in the foyer will follow each service. We hope you will stay to enjoy. So please come again.

Now, let's all stand together as we close with "We wish you a Merry Christmas."

**We Wish You a Merry Christmas (Everyone)**

