

world without comfort and without joy and without peace, because we live in a world without Jesus. Even if you were to have everything, without Jesus, you really have nothing at all. Without Christ in Christmas, we're left with this Jesus-sized hole in our lives that nothing can fill to give peace and joy in the sin and struggles of life. What could you say to the man who lost his baby on Christmas Eve?

Let him tell you. The next day was Christmas, and this pastor had to stand up on Christmas morning and preach after losing his child. What could he say? He said, "Today I finally understand what Christmas means, when 'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' Sin touches every life, from the smallest baby to the oldest adult. You can't escape it. We need saving. From sin. From death. From this world around us. And 'today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you.'" Jesus never meant more to him than on that Christmas when he lost his child. There was only one thing big enough to fill that hole: Jesus. Can you picture this preacher fighting back tears, "Keep Christ in Christmas!"

I don't know what pain is on your heart this Christmas, but I bet there's one there. Maybe it's the longing for a child. Maybe it's an empty seat where a loved one used to sit. Maybe it's sickness. Maybe it's the guilt of your sin. You need more than a couple days with family. You need more than the latest gifts. You feel it in your heart in every disappointment. What this world offers you isn't enough. You need more! Here is what God offers you: A Savior. Jesus was born to you. To that little baby who got called home to heaven on Christmas Eve. To that pastor in the middle of his loss. To you in Saint Peter, MN. With your longings and your sins. He came for you. To you.

Those shepherds got it! "*The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen...*" They went back praising God. Why? What had really changed? Did they go back and find golden sheep sitting on the hillside? No! Nothing had changed—except they had Jesus. They could now face the troubles of life with a Savior in their hearts. This is the peace Jesus brings. It's not peace between nations. It's not peace in relationships. It's peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. No one can take that away! Jesus' forgiveness and salvation are big enough to fill every hole in your heart, even if nothing else is going right in your life.

I don't think you need that peace only for tonight. If it's worth it to keep Christ in Christmas, it's worth it to keep Christ in your life every single day. There's a hymn that puts it beautifully: "The world may hold her wealth and gold; but you, my heart, keep Christ as your true treasure. To him hold fast until at last a crown is yours and honor in full measure." When the baby never comes. A Savior has been born for you! When the sickness doesn't end. A Savior has been born for you. When the sadness doesn't leave. A Savior has been born for you. When the wars don't stop. A Savior has been born for you. When you're breathing your last breaths. A Savior has been born for you. Jesus plus nothing is everything, because that baby changes everything. Amen.

**Luke 2:8-20**  
**Pastor Nathan Nass**

**Christmas Eve**  
**December 24, 2017**

**<sup>8</sup>And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup>An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup>Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup>Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." <sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." <sup>16</sup>So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.**

### **Keep Christ in Christmas**

They say, "A baby changes everything." It's true. I tested it out! God blessed my wife and me with our third boy just two weeks ago. A baby changes everything! Watching Josiah's birth at Christmas has helped me appreciate Jesus' love: He did that for us! If you've watched a baby being born, it's amazing. A miracle from God! But you also think to yourself, "I'm glad I don't ever have to be born like that again!" But Jesus? He said, "Sign me up!" To give up heaven to be a helpless little baby. Would you do that? Not me! But Jesus did! Isn't that amazing? Jesus must really love us! To have a son born at Christmastime has been a special blessing. A baby changes everything.

But I hesitate to say that, because I know that for some of you, talk of babies brings you lots of pain. There's nothing you want more than exactly that—to have a baby! But whether it's through miscarriage or infertility or singleness, you've got this hole in your life. Many of you know that feeling. To wait and hope for a baby that doesn't come. The disappointment. The longing. The pain. The feeling like something is missing, like there's a hole in your life. Maybe for you it's not a baby, but we all have holes. What is it for you? We're all searching for something more. If you're waiting for a baby, that can feel like the biggest hole ever. When? When will a baby come?

If you've felt that longing, then you can relate to God's people in the Bible. Did you know that the whole Old Testament is the story of waiting for a baby? That's what it's all

about! Adam and Eve sinned against God, and what did God promise? A baby. One of Eve's offspring would save the world. He would crush Satan's head. So the first baby watch began. The longing. When would the baby come? When Eve gave birth to her first child, Cain, she exclaimed, "*With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man*" (Genesis 4:1). It almost sounds like she thought he was the one. The baby! The Savior! Was he? Remember what Cain did? He killed his brother Abel. This sin thing is really bad. You know that! If Eve didn't get it before, she did then: "We need a Savior!"

So God's people waited for that baby—for that Savior from sin—to come. They saw over and over again how sin ruins lives. Sin ruins relationships. Sin robs peace and robs joy. They couldn't wait for the Savior to come and take sin away! But God's timing is not our timing. God's people had to wait a long time! If it's hard to wait two years for a baby, how about two thousand years? Can you imagine that? Every time a baby was born, "Is this the One?" No. "Is this the One?" No. Do you like waiting? No! Neither did God's people. So they got impatient. Little by little they stopped trusting in God's promises. They decided to try to fill in that hole—that longing—with other things. False gods. Sex. Money. Do you think things got better for them? No! Sin only makes it worse!

But we do the same thing. We're all carrying holes in our hearts. Emptiness that you long to fill with something meaningful. Disappointments that you want to forget. Sins that you wish you could undo. So we try to fill in those holes with other things. Maybe alcohol. Maybe pornography. Maybe food. Maybe friends or family. Like a couple longing for a child, can you feel yourself searching? Can you sense that you need something more? Every disappointment in life is a result of trying to find in something else what can only be found in Christ. There's a reason Jesus was called the "*desired of nations*" (Haggai 2:7). When is the *Baby* going to come?

Finally, one night, it was time! An angel suddenly appeared to some shepherds with baby news. But did you notice that the angel gave like the worst baby announcement ever? How much did baby Jesus weigh? He didn't even say! How long was he? How could he miss that? The Bible doesn't tell us anything about that stuff! Because there was something so much more important: "*Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.*" Did you catch that? It was the most important announcement in the history of the world: "*Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.*" After all those years of waiting, the baby had come! The Savior had been born!

But you might have expected these tough, hard-working shepherds to push back a little bit. "A Savior? Who needs that? We're doing just fine on our own!" Let's be honest, there are a lot of people in our world, maybe a lot of people here tonight, who really don't think they need a Savior from anything—certainly not from sin. But no matter who you are, when you stand face to face with an angel, there will be no doubt in your mind that you are sinful. When you stand face to face with God someday, there will be no doubt in your mind that you are sinful. The angel said: "The Savior has come! Who needs him?" And

the shepherds all said: "Me! Me! Me!" They had to see him. They needed him. So they hurried. They ran! "It's time. It's time. He's come. He's finally come!"

They hurried to Bethlehem, and you know what they found: The best Kiwanis lights display ever. It was awesome! With reindeer and an ice skating rink and "Jingle Bell Rock" put to lights. And right next to it, miraculously, was a mall—with everything 40% off! And at the door of the mall were little elves passing out cups of hot chocolate, while the sweet smell of gingerbread and lutefisk wafted through the air. And then right over there in the corner they saw him—Bing Crosby himself—singing, "I'm dreaming of a White Christmas." It was so great! Little snowflakes began to fall from the sky. And the shepherds put on ugly Christmas sweaters and sat down and played Catch Phrase with their loved ones... The perfect Christmas, right? The end.

That wasn't exactly how it went, was it? In fact, if the shepherds had found all that, they would have been terribly disappointed. They needed something more. "*So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.*" That's it. Mary, Joseph, baby, and nothing else. There was really *nothing* there—just Jesus. But when those shepherds saw the Son of God, they realized an amazing truth: When you have nothing, but you have Jesus, you have everything. Nothing in the world could have possibly increased their joy. They had Jesus! They had a Savior! The holes in their lives had been filled with the only One great enough to fill them. Keep Christ in Christmas!

This is what it's all about! "*Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you...*" Life is not about you being good for goodness sake. Because you know the truth? You're not! I'm not either. I'm not good. I'm a sinner. And you are too. Life has nothing to do with our goodness. It has everything to do with God's grace. God loves us so much that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Here's what Christmas is all about: Jesus Christ loves you. Jesus Christ forgives your sins. Jesus Christ gives you hope and life and a future, because today a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord! Keep Christ in Christmas!

You need him. I need him. Let me show you how much. When I found out that our baby was due on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, something immediately popped into my mind. It was the story of what happened to a beloved Seminary professor in his first Christmas as a pastor. After preaching on Christmas Eve, this young pastor came home and walked into his six-month old baby's room just to peak at his little child. But he found that the child wasn't breathing. His baby died that night—Christmas Eve night. Can you imagine that? I've never forgotten hearing that story. And now we've got a baby at Christmas time. It's suddenly real. What if that were me? What would I do?

What would you say? What would you say to that man on Christmas Day? "Happy Holidays!" Really? Would you dress up in a big red suit and cheer him up by saying, "Ho, ho, ho!" You dare not! That's all empty. Meaningless. He needs more! Our world is great at robbing people of their faith in Jesus, but it gives them nothing in his place. We live in a