



Meaning of Christmas

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Good evening everyone, it's an honour and a pleasure to be with you all this evening, and I get the pleasure and the honour of sharing with you the meaning of Christmas. I have three minutes to talk about a two-thousand-year-old tradition. I will take one millennium per minute and in the third minute I shall exhale.

Christmas really doesn't come down to just giving gifts and decorating trees, it really comes down to understanding what we are celebrating and why.

The reason we anticipate and celebrate the advent or the arrival of Jesus is because, in the Christian tradition, it is the arrival of God into human history, into a time of strife and conflict and sorrow. God comes in and reconciles people to himself and then therefore to each other.

The incarnation of God and Christ is all about setting aside majesty for humility.

Why would God do such a thing? It was not about just being humble, it was about setting aside his majesty while maintaining his divinity, in order to be a servant to pay a debt that we all owe.

The Bible teaches that each one of us is made in God's image, but we have moved far from that image through our own misdeeds. In order to reconcile us, in order to mend the relationship, a debt has to be paid. We cannot pay our own debts but someone, who does not have his own debts to pay, can afford to pay those debts for us, which is what the incarnation is all about.

We celebrate the advent of Christ into human history, not just because he is an example for us to follow about how to have reconciliation, but because he is the reconciliation. He accomplished the reconciliation in himself.

Many of us know that in a world full of conflict three things arise:

- there is sorrow because of loss;
- there is a cry for justice, because those people did something to us;
- and there is the wonder about love. Does God really love us? Are we in fact loved by the community around us as we suffer?

Sorrow, justice and love; all three of these things find their fulfillment in the cross of Christ. Where it was Christ himself, the incarnation, who felt the sorrow we are supposed to feel on the cross, to satisfy the divine justice, that God has as a wrath towards sin, so that we can experience God's unmitigated love.

And so we have that vertical reconciliation now with God, so that we can have horizontal reconciliation amongst ourselves, because we no longer see ourselves as enemies to be vanquished, or foes in a battle, we see ourselves as sinners who have been saved by the one who loves the entire world.

Why talk about an Eastery kind of message at Christmas time? Why talk about these images of Easter where Jesus dies and rises from the dead? It is simply because of this, Christmas is what makes Easter possible. And Easter is what make Christmas meaningful. We don't just celebrate the birth of a baby boy. We celebrate the birth of the one who Ephesians 2 verse 14 says, he is the one, not who gives us a way towards peace, but he is the one who *"is our peace."*

Thank you so much.