



Message **Transcript**

Christmas Eve: Personal Christmas Reminders

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Pastor Jeff:

Our Father in Heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are. We celebrate you this Christmas because Christmas is about Christ. Christmas is about you. And Lord, I pray that as we open up your word today, that you would speak directly to each one of our hearts. Lord, what makes preaching so incredible is that you know every single person here, you know everything that they need to hear, and you're willing to speak into their heart specifically about those things. So as we gather here today, we believe that every time your word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed that you speak. So our prayer is "Speak, Lord, for we are ready to hear." And now for all who have gathered who desire to hear Jesus speak directly to you, who will believe what he tells you and who will by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word amen?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Amen. The Christmas story starts out by saying there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flocks by night, and an angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified, but the angel said, "Do not fear, for I bring you good news of great joy for all the people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a savior who is Christ the Lord, and this will be a sign to you. You'll find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes in line in a

manger." And suddenly there appeared with that angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, many angels praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest and peace among men with whom his favor rests."

If you grew up in the church, you've heard that before. If you were here on time for our church and weren't fighting for a parking space, you heard that before, right? But what does it mean? What's the personal significance it has? Because for so many people on Christmas and on Easter, we gather, we go to church, we think it's the right thing to do, but how does that story have any significance to us today? You got an unwed teenage couple having a child out of wedlock, supposing that the baby inside the woman Mary is the savior of the world, is the Lord God himself in incarnate flesh. And if that's true, it makes all the difference in the world. If that's true, everything in your life changes as a result of this story. And I want to tell you, that story is true, and God wants you to personally understand that story before you leave here today.

I've entitled today "Personal Christmas Reminders". And here's why, because I know on December 24th, there's some of you that have set reminders for yourself. Make sure you get to the store this afternoon to buy that gift because you haven't done a good job. Make sure to get that wrapped. Make sure to get dinner prepared. Hey, make sure to put on your best family face tomorrow when everybody comes to the house. There's little personal reminders you set for yourself, but having been a believer in Jesus Christ for over 30 years and having sat in many Christmas services and having heard people preach at Christmas services and doing it myself, I think there's things that get left out, so you don't know how to personally appropriate the story to your life.

And I do not want you to walk away here today not understanding the purpose of the Christmas story.

I want to share with you four personal Christmas reminders that you can know that you can take with you, that you can understand what the birth of Jesus Christ is all about. And to do that today, I'm going to be in the Book of 1 John, it's near the back of your Bible. We're going to be in chapter one. I'm going to read verses five through 10, and then I'll give you those four truths that you need to take with you today. The Book of 1 John was written by the Apostle John, inspired by the Holy Spirit. This is God's word. It says God's speaking to us, and John tells us that they've looked at Jesus, they've witnessed Jesus, they've touched Jesus, and this is the message that I'm going to proclaim to you about who this Jesus is, and he tells us he's going to tell us that message so that your joy may be complete.

If you understand what I'm going to tell you today, your joy will be completed. If you're looking for more joy in your life, more peace in your life, more hope in your life, this message is for you. And here's what he says. He says, "This is the message we have heard from him and announced to you, that God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar,

and his word is not in us."

And here, as John is reflecting on who this Messiah is who came and died and rose again, he's giving us some reminders as to who he is and how important the birth of Christ was so that we could respond appropriately. You see, everything in the Old Testament is really about Jesus coming and the Messiah coming, and everything in the New Testament is really a commentary on what his coming was all about and what he signified. So I'm going to highlight these four for you today. If you can take away these four personal Christmas reminders, I promise you this, they'll be true for you today, tomorrow, and every day for all eternity, because the word of God is true.

And the first is this: the birth of Jesus Christ reminds you to reverence God's perfection and uniqueness. The birth of Jesus Christ reminds you to reverence God's perfection and uniqueness. Notice what he says. He says, "This is the message. This is what we're proclaiming that we have heard from him and announced to you, that God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all." He's using a metaphor here. He's saying God is light. There's no darkness in God. What he's trying to say is God is perfect in every single way. In his nature and in his actions, everything God is and everything God does is perfection. There's no darkness in God. God's nature is loving, and all he knows how to do is love. God's nature is mercy, and all he knows how to do is dispense mercy. God's nature is holiness, and all he knows how to do is live holy. God's nature is righteousness and all he does is righteous deeds.

That's who our God is. And when we see the birth of Christ, this is what we have

to know. You say, "Well, what does that have to do with anything that we're talking about?" Because here's the claim made in the New Testament: that that baby in the manger is God incarnate, God in flesh. The way the Bible describes the Godhead is Trinity. Trinity is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons making up one true God. The Father is not the son of the Spirit. The Son is not the father of the spirit, and the Spirit is not the father and the Son. Three distinct persons making up one Godhead, one complete essence. And here's what you need to know about God. God has always existed from eternity past, and will always exist to eternity future. What you're seeing in the manger is the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, who's always existed, who became flesh.

John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning." When you read Genesis 1 and you see that God spoke and created everything out of nothing, the world that we live in, the earth that we live in, all of the atmosphere and everything else, who was doing the speaking? That's Jesus. The creator of all things out of nothing, that's Jesus. The one who sent the flood, that was Jesus. The one who reigned fire down from Heaven as a result of Elijah's prayer, that was Jesus. That's Jesus, who is now incarnate flesh who has come into the world. And how did he come? Came through the Virgin Mary.

And the reason he had to come through a virgin is a couple of different reasons. Do you know in the Bible that there are over 300 prophecies about Jesus Christ that were personally fulfilled in and through his life and ministry? Just exactly as it said in Micah 5:2, it said that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Guess where Jesus

Christ was born? In Bethlehem. Even though it was prophesied hundreds of years earlier, that's exactly what happened. And we see prophecy upon prophecy upon prophecy. In the book of Isaiah, it said, "Behold, the virgin will conceive and bear a son. You should call his name Emmanuel, 'God with us', and he will save his people from their sins."

Now, I want to tell you something. In the history of the world, from the beginning of time until now and forevermore, there has only been one and will only be one person who was born of a virgin. It doesn't happen. Mary says, "How's this going to happen?" Said, "The Holy Spirit will conceive the child in you." Joseph, who was her betrothed, her fiance, was a righteous man. When she told Joseph, "Hey, news, I'm pregnant, but it's okay. I've never been with a man. God put the baby there, number one. Number two, that baby is actually God, and he's going to save the world from their sins." And Joseph, being a righteous man, said, "I love Mary, but this is too crazy for me. I'm going to set her aside and divorce her quietly." So an angel had to appear to Joseph, said, "No, Mary's telling you the truth. The baby inside her is Jesus. You'll call him Jesus, take her to be your wife."

So guess what? This teenage couple that's not married has to go from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Why do they have to go to Bethlehem? Well, because God prophesied it hundreds of years earlier. But why else? Because when Carinus was governor of Syria and Caesar Augustus was the leader of the Roman Empire, he decided all the world should be taxed, and so they had to go from Nazareth to Bethlehem. And guess what happened? They couldn't find a place to stay. Not only was there no room in the inn,

but why were they looking in an inn? Why were they going to find a motel or a hotel? It's because every single one of their relatives, even knowing that hospitality was the number one virtue, didn't want anything to do with them.

Why? Because you got an unmarried teenage couple claiming that the baby inside the woman is God. Nothing to do with him. So Jesus comes into the most humble place. He couldn't even find a place, had to be born in a barn and placed in a feeding trough called a manger. And when the angels dispatch, they don't go to the most important people in the world, they go to shepherds, the most common people in the world, people that nobody would really ever listen to, to announce "It's good news of great joy for all people," and it's such good news a host of angels show up. Isn't it interesting that when just one angel leaves the throne of God, just one, and gets dispatched and is seen by a human, they have to say these words, "Do not fear"? "Don't freak out." I mean, that's how powerful angels are. This is what's going on.

The story is, God became a man. Now you study religions the world over. There's no story like this in any other religion. There's no other story like this in any other form of the gospel, because there's no story that ever shows God coming to earth. There's no story that says God became man. So Jesus has always been fully God, and he became fully man. And now he's fully God and fully man, and he lived his life fully as God and man. He died on a cross for all your sins as God and man, and he rose from the dead as God and man, and I got good news for you. He's coming back again as the God man in all of his glory. That's who he is.

So when we see this story, we're called to reverence God, because the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Jesus said he is. In John 8:12, "I am the light of the world." God tells us in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give praise to your Father in Heaven." When we see the Christ child, when we remember what happened nearly 2000 years ago, here's what we're seeing. If you ever want to know who God is or what's God like or how would God respond or what would God think of our planet, look no further than Jesus and study his life, because in that man you are seeing God in flesh. That's who he is.

You say, "Well, why'd he have to be born of a virgin?" I'm so glad you ask. I'm so glad you asked, because our first parents, Adam and Eve, were given instructions in this world. They were instructed they could eat off any tree they wanted. They were told they could do whatever they wanted. God gave them ultimate freedom except one thing they couldn't do. They couldn't eat off the knowledge of the tree of good and evil, but in that day that they did, they would certainly die. And what do we see? Eve was tempted by the evil one. Adam was standing right there. They both ate the fruit, and sin entered into the world. And here's the challenge. The challenge is this. Challenge is this. When we reproduce offspring from the time of Adam and Eve onward, we reproduce sinlings, because sin entered the world, and you are born dead and you have a nature of sin.

And because you have a nature of sin, you've been practicing it from the moment you came out of your mother's womb. That's why Jesus had to be born of a virgin. He

couldn't be born of two sinless people. There were no sinless people to choose. That's why the Holy Spirit had to conceive Jesus in Mary's womb, because why? Because sin would enter Jesus, and Jesus Christ is sinless. You're not. So when we see the Christmas story, here's what we see. We see how God loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten son so that whoever believed in him would not perish but have eternal life. Say "Not perish?" Yeah, because all sinners die, a hundred percent of the time. You're closer to death than you've ever been before, right now, right? You know you're dying.

Now, you can use ointments and creams and you can work out and you can do whatever you want to do, but that doesn't put off the inevitable. Your number is coming, your day is coming. There's no way around it. That's what sin does. And so when we see the birth of Christ, it reminds us to reverence God's perfection and his uniqueness. I'm telling you, study any religion that you want the world over, nobody will make the claim that God came to man. It's all made-up, human understanding of what you need to do to get right with whatever version of God you've made up. The Bible says just the opposite. You can't get right with God. There's nothing you can do to get to God, so God came for you. That's what we're celebrating. The birth of Jesus Christ reminds you to reverence God's perfection and uniqueness.

Number two is this: The birth of Jesus Christ reminds you that relationship with God results from Christ's provision and not your talk. It results from Christ's provision and not your talk. Notice what he says. In verse six, he says, "If we say we have

fellowship with him..." What's that mean? If we say we have fellowship with God, if we say "I have a relationship with God," if we say "God and I, we're doing good." And most of the people that you talk to in our culture, if you went out to ask them, like if you went to Park Meadows Mall here, you went up to Colorado Mills Mall or you were down in the springs at Manitou Springs getting ready to go up, and you just kind of pulled a group of people and asked them, "Hey, do you believe in God? Do you have a good relationship with God?" Majority of people would say, "Yeah, pretty good," no matter who they are, because everybody falsely thinks that they're doing pretty good.

Here's what the Bible says. If you say you have fellowship with God, if you say, "I'm in a relationship with God," if you say "God and I are doing well," here's what it says. "If we say we have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." In other words, God is light. There's no darkness in God. God doesn't have despicable deeds. God doesn't sin. If you say "I love God" and you're continuing in your sin, you do not have a good relationship with God. Let me say it again, because you didn't hear me. I'm saying you can say whatever you want, but if you're living a lifestyle that is not reflected in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, you don't have a relationship with God. You say, "What gives you the authority to say that?" Jesus does.

In John 14:6, here's what Jesus said. "I am the way, I am the truth and I am the life, and no one comes to the Father except through me." The only way to have a relationship with God is through Jesus. Jesus is saying, "If you're walking in darkness, you don't have a relationship with me, you're lying to yourself." That's what he says.

That's really important for us to understand here today. Because sometimes at Christmas, because Jesus came into the world for all people, we falsely think that just by breathing, we have a great relationship with God, that "I've always been with God and God is always for me." But it's not your talk. It's not what you say. 1 Corinthians 4:20 says, "The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power." If you don't have God on the inside, you do not have life with God, period.

And Christianity is not about a bunch of dos and don'ts to get right with God. Christianity is about this: that you are dead in your transgressions and sins. Spiritually you were born dead, spiritually you were born blind, and spiritually, you do not have a relationship with God. That's how all of us are born, and there's a punishment for that called hell for people that continue on that path. Why? Because God's holy, righteous, and good. Now wait a second, wait a second, because I know what some of you are going to ask. "Hey Pastor Jeff, how could a loving God send people that he created to hell? I would never send somebody to hell. That would make me more loving than God."

Do you know the Bible never answers that question? Here's the question the Bible is trying to say, and the question the Bible's trying to answer. How could a perfect, holy, righteous, awesome, incredible God that created human beings in his image, that completely rebelled against him in every way, how could a God like that ever let even one person into his presence? And the answer is through his Son. And that's what every Old Testament prophet and that's what every New Testament apostle is trying to communicate to you, that there's one way to God, and it's through

the person of Jesus.

And if you look in your life because of your heredity of sin and because of your practice in sin, you can call yourself whatever you want. You can walk around, falsely say, "Well, I'm a Christian. I know I'll go to Heaven." If you ask people, "Are you going to go to Heaven?" most people would say yes. You ask them why and they're going to give you a non-biblical answer about 95% of the time. So let me give you some non-biblical answers in case you're here today saying, "I thought I was going to Heaven before I came to BRAVE. Now I don't even know if I like this church and I'm sorry I came to this service." So let's talk about that.

I love you enough to tell you this. See, there's about five different ways, and I lived in all of these before I came to Christ, and the first one is this, it's the cultural Christian. When you ask people are they going to Heaven and they say, "Yeah." And I say, "Well, why?" "Well, I've kind of always been a Christian. I always have believed, I kind of grew up going to church. I mean, there's never really been a time in my life I didn't believe the facts. I mean, I'm just kind of there. I've kind of always believed." That's not what the Bible says.

The Bible says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The Bible says there is no one good, no, not one. There is not one who seeks after God, and the Bible doesn't say that you're a good person who's trying to find God, the Bible says you're a dead person that can't find him and you're blind. I mean, dead would be enough, but dead and blind, I don't know. I mean, you're not looking for God. There's

no one that comes out of the womb and says, "I kind of have a spiritual gene. I'm looking for God." Everyone comes out of the womb and says, "This world's about me and I'm going to make it about me. And if you don't make it about me, I don't like you either." That's everybody. And some of us have practiced sin in a way that's socially acceptable and some of us have practiced sin in a way that's not, but most of us believe, "Well, I'm going to Heaven because I've kind of always believed."

Here's what Jesus would say. "Even the demons believe in me and shudder." You should be terrified if you think that you're going to Heaven just because you think you've always believed, because you're wrong. You haven't always believed. As a matter of fact, if that's your version of Christianity now, I'm here to tell you you don't believe, you're actually a hater of God and you're a lover of yourself. Then some people say, "Well, that's not me. He's not talking to me yet, because I work hard." You're going to do works, and works look like this. In your mind, one of two things happen. You're either better than most people that you know, which, by the way, is not a high bar, or number two, your good works outweigh your bad.

And you falsely believe that when you get to Heaven and you meet Jesus Christ in all of his glory, here's what you're going to say. "Yeah, well, I'm better than most people I know." Or "Hey Jesus, I know my good works outweighed my bad." And here's the problem, you're comparing yourself to the wrong one. It's not comparing yourself to other people, it's comparing yourself to the God man Jesus, and he's perfect. And you're not. You're dead and you're blind and you've been practicing sin from the moment that you came out of your mother's womb, so you got to a big

problem there. Works aren't going to get you there. Being a good person is not going to get you to Heaven, right?

What about religion? If you were to meet Jesus and he was saying, "Well, why should I let you in my kingdom?" and you start talking about your denominational preference, you're in big trouble. Why should I let you in? "Well, I'm Methodist. I'm Lutheran, I'm Protestant, I'm Catholic. I've attended mass this many times. I joined a small group. Hey, I went to BRAVE." I'm glad you go to BRAVE. There's no free passes at BRAVE, all right? And just because you're religious doesn't get you in. But some would say, "I'm glad you haven't touched me, yet, Pastor Jeff, because I don't think about any of those things. I don't even think about sin. I don't think about culture. I don't think about works. I don't think about religion. I'm spiritual. I'm just a spiritual person. I'm not into all that religious stuff. I'm just spiritual."

Here's your problem. When you meet Jesus Christ in all of his glory and the only way you're ever going to be let in is that his blood paid for sin, who's going to pay for your sin when there's nobody there to pay for it? And what's the Father going to say when you say, he says, "I sent my Son for you to pay for all your sin and you decided to be spiritual rather than repent of your sin and trust in Jesus?" Spirituality doesn't get you to Heaven. A lot of good spiritual people out there. By the way, there are good people in every single one of these categories. They just happen to be dead and blind and insensitive to the truth.

But I know what some of you're going to say because I said this too. "Pastor Jeff, no worries. I'm an American." You know what the problem with that is? I mean,

I'm as patriotic as the next guy. I think I told our congregation a while back that my great-grandfather nine generations ago signed not only the Declaration of Independence but the Constitution. And I'm a patriot and I love our country to death, but here's the problem with going to Heaven without your sins paid for and saying, "I'm an American." Jesus is Jewish. Do you know that?

I mean, no matter what we come up with on this side that we think we're going to do, culturally, works, religion, spiritual, American, whatever you want to add, it doesn't work. And by the way, you can't be grandfathered in. I love God with all my whole heart. I've repented and trusted Jesus. I'm banking my entire eternity on the fact that Jesus Christ of Nazareth died on the cross for my sin, took away the wrath of God and saved my life, which had nothing to do with me and had everything to do with him. And my wife, who's the most godly woman I know, believes the exact same thing, but do you know what? I can't grandfather my kids in there, because they too have to come to a place individually where they repent and believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord.

That's just the facts, right? So just because you say, "Well, don't worry, I'm covered, my grandfather was a pastor, my dad was a pastor," that won't get you in either. I mean, at some point in time we have to come to the realization that our relationship with Christ results from his provision, Christ's provision, and not your talk. Notice what he says. If we're walking in the darkness, you're just lying to yourself. There's a lot of people out there that say, "Well, I love God, but I do some things." You know what Jesus said about loving him? In John 14:23 he says, "If you love me, you

will obey my word. If you do not love me, you will not obey my word." When somebody says they love God, just say this. "Hey, do you obey everything in here?" "No, I don't even like..." Then you don't love God. You're lying to yourself.

If you love God, you want to grow in this, not perfectly, but increasingly. And notice what he says in verse seven. "But if we walk in the light, as he himself is in the light," which means I'm aware of my bad deeds, I'm aware that they've been exposed, and I'm willing to come to Jesus and all the light and let all my deeds be exposed, and I don't care who knows, and I don't care who sees, because I want Christ's forgiveness. If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. That's with me and God. We have fellowship. God and I have fellowship when we walk in the light. We have fellowship with one another, and guess what it says? "And the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."

There's only one payment for sin. It's the blood of Jesus. You say, "Why are you reminding me of that on Christmas?" Because the one that came in a manger grew up as a boy, became a man, lived the perfect life, fulfilled the law, and did what you couldn't do, and then in your place took your punishment. You say, "What punishment do I deserve?" Well, you offended an eternal holy God. You're rebelling against him by living in your deeds. You're saying "All this stuff is wrong and I want to do it my way," and you're going to give an account for your life.

That's why Jesus came, because Jesus Christ came to seek and save that which was lost. He didn't come to punish people. He came to rescue people. He came so that you wouldn't have to face the punishment. He came to take it all for you, because

all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. So we reverence God's perfection and uniqueness. When we look in the manger, we realize that relationship with God results from Christ's provision and not just our talk. Not just our talk. Can I just be really straightforward with you? I'm going to be anyway, so you might as well say yes.

All of us are thinking like, "Well, my deeds are pretty good," so let me just hang out on the deeds thing just a little bit. 1 Corinthians 6:9 says, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" Have you not heard this? Only righteous people inherit the kingdom of God. He says this: "Do not be deceived." That means don't think falsely that unrighteous people go to Heaven. Unrighteous people never go to Heaven. There's a literal place called Heaven and there's a literal place called hell, and people go there every day. Now, I've officiated a lot of funerals. I've been at a lot of funerals. I've never heard somebody stand up in a funeral and say, "Oh yeah, yesterday at 3:00 Joe went to hell. We all know that." Nobody talks like that at a funeral.

And the reason we don't talk like that is that every life has significance, and God created every life, so even the most miserable lives have significance that God did through them. We believe that. But for someone who hasn't repented and trusted Christ, that's exactly where they go. We just don't have to think about that. We falsely believe that every single one of our ancestors and every single person we love and every single person in our family and every unrighteous person, they're pretty much all going to Heaven. Unless you're like Hitler or Stalin, then you might not make it in. But

everybody else, it's a free pass. It's not what the Bible says. The Bible says, "No unrighteous person will enter the kingdom of God." Unrighteous means I'm not walking in the truth. Unrighteous means I still have sin in my life.

Do not be deceived. I'm just going to read you the Bible. "Neither fornicators..." If you're not married and you're practicing immorality, you're not entering. "I'm a Christian, I just have some..." No, you're not. Not if you're unrepentant. Not if you think you can carry that with you into Heaven, not according to the Bible. You don't get to sleep around and do whatever you want and call yourself a Christian. You can, but God won't call you that. Or what about idolaters? You're practicing idolatry. It means I have a practice in my life where I put something ahead of Jesus. "I mean, Jesus is okay, but you know what? Money's my thing. Jesus is okay, but sports is my thing. Jesus is okay, but hedonism is my thing. Jesus is okay, but travel's my thing. Jesus is okay, but friendships are my thing, and Jesus is subject to that."

Don't be deceived. People that live like that, they're not entering the kingdom of Heaven. Then it says, "Nor adulterers." You're married and you're engaging in immorality outside your marriage. "I'm a Christian, I just..." Mm-mm. Not unrepentant adulterers. By the way, God forgive all these sins, just so you know. What about this, the effeminate or homosexuals? "Pastor Jeff, you're not going to go there are you?" I'm not. Jesus did. Jesus did. You can't practice a same-sex lifestyle and think you're going to Heaven. There's no such thing as a gay unrepentant Christian. They don't exist. Don't be deceived. I'm here to tell you because I love you. I love you. The one

you're going to answer to is going to use these words. I'm just preparing you. "Nor thieves." That means you steal. If you're practicing stealing or covetous, people that are looking at other people's stuff and say, "I wish I had what they had. I wish I what they had. That's my god."

"Or drunkards." "Pastor Jeff, I don't drink. I just get buzzed." You decide. I don't think the Bible teaches abstinence, but let's be real here for a minute. There's a lot of people that drink in such a way that say "I'm just buzzed" when it's a habit in their life. Don't be deceived. Nor what else? "Nor swindlers nor revilers, abusive people or people that cause division." They're not going to inherit the kingdom of God. I don't care what people say. This is what Jesus is saying. I just have the courage to tell you what Jesus is saying.

Do you know why? Because one day I'm going to stand before him, and I don't want him to say, "Hey, you had this crowd of people at Christmas. Why didn't you tell him about me?" And I say, "Well, just because I wanted them to feel all warm and fuzzy inside." I'm telling you this because if you don't believe what I'm telling you, your blood's on your own head. I love you enough to tell you, don't be deceived in thinking you can live immorally and unrighteously and enter the kingdom of God, because it never happens and it never will, according to the Bible, if Jesus is telling the truth.

There's a lot of people that go to church that call themselves Christians that are not going to enter the kingdom of God because they don't love Jesus. They love their sin. And we need to realize our relationship with God results from Christ's provision for our sin and not just our talk about what we think we are. Let me give you number

three. So then the birth of Jesus Christ reminds us not only to reverence God's perfection and uniqueness and that our relationship results from Christ's provision and not your talk, but number three, it tells us this: the birth of Jesus Christ reminds you to repent of your sins and trust Christ alone to forgive you. Repent of your sins. Repent means "I'm not going to keep playing with this sin. I can't change it."

And by the way, do you know sin is like fly paper? Sin is like fly paper. If you're immoral and you say, "I'll work on it," if you have anger problems, you say, "I'll work on it," if you're an idolater and you say you'll work on it, the more you work on it, the more tangled you get. Sin is sticky. You can't get out of it. That's why Jesus Christ came. Jesus Christ came not so you would fix your sin. Jesus Christ came so you would repent of your sin, turn away from your sin and turn to him, and the blood of Jesus will wash you as white as snow. There's no sin that I read this morning Jesus Christ won't forgive. And even if your sin wasn't read this morning, there's no sin he won't forgive. The Bible that we read this morning says he forgives all sin. Anyone who would turn from their sin and turn to Christ is forgiven.

The reason Jesus Christ had to die on the cross is because of this, because God demanded a perfect sacrifice and there was only one who was perfect enough to take it, and that was the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Not only does the Bible say that you're dead in Ephesians 2, but it says that you're under the wrath of God. All of us are under the wrath of God. God has a wrath he's going to pour out on, not just sin, he's going to pour it out on sinners. And if you knew about the wrath of God that was coming, you would repent of your sin right now and you would fly to Jesus, because in Christ, all of

it's forgiven.

It doesn't mean that when people come to Christ, they're perfect people, because if you know any Christians, you know they're not perfect people. What it means is when you come to Christ, you have a group of people that are saying, "I'm turning from this. I don't want this, and I want Christ." And here's the gospel. Here's the good news of the gospel. The gospel is not about you being a good person from here on out. The gospel is about "I need Christ," and he'll come inside of you and in dwell you because Jesus Christ is still as alive today as he's ever been, because he rose from the dead. He'll live in you and he will guide you walking all your way. Question is, do you want him? Amen. That's the good news.

That's the good news. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made him who knew no sin to become sin for us so that in him we could become the righteousness of God." Now, why is this so hard? Because we're dead in our transgressions and sins, Ephesians 2:1 tells us. Because we're blind, that 2 Corinthians 4:4 tells us, we don't see it. And so when people point this out, like if you're here today and you're angry, I'm just here to tell you, you're not angry at me. You think you are, but you're not. I'm just a messenger telling you exactly what Jesus is telling you. And the reason you're angry is that the enemy of your soul is lying to you saying, "Okay, yeah, if you do this now you're going to have to do all these good things and you're not going to be able to do the stuff you're doing right now, and you really enjoy that."

Here's the problem. The stuff that you're doing right now is not fulfilling or you

wouldn't have to keep doing it over and over again. Why do you have to keep engaging in it over and over and get crazier over and over? Because it's not fulfilling, it's actually killing you and you don't even realize it. It's like the Inuit people, the Eskimos, the way I heard that they catch their prey or their game, because it's so cold outside to go hunting, is that sometimes they'll take raw meat and they'll put it over a really, really sharp blade, and they'll stick the blade in the ice and put all the meat over it. And when the animal comes and starts eating the meat, the animal thinks it's getting a great meal, but it doesn't realize it's lacerating its tongue the whole time. And then after it eats the meat, it just kind of follows them away and follows the trail of blood until they find their prey dead.

That's what sin does. "It's not bothering me. It's not hurting me. I can get away with it. I'm not like you guys. I can get away with it. I can get away with it. I can get..." Here's what you can be sure about according to the Bible. Your sin will find you out. And even if you say, "Not me, I'm taking that to the grave," guess who the first one you're going to see is when you die? The one who's holding you accountable to all the sin that you've sinned. So even if nobody else on the world knows about it, Jesus does, and that's who you're going to answer to. And you're going to hear one or two things when you meet Jesus, because every single one of you can hear my voice, and even those that don't hear my voice, this is what's going to happen when you die.

You're going to meet Jesus and you're going to hear one or two things. You're going to hear either this, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You repented of your sins, you trusted in me. You believe that I paid for all of it. Enter my kingdom." Or

you're going to hear this. "Depart from me, you worker of iniquity. I never knew you. You lived for yourself and you didn't receive the providence of my blood." One of those two things. It happens every single day to every single person that dies. And you can't make a decision when you die. You can't make a decision when Jesus Christ comes. It's not like he's going to come floating from the sky and be like, "Ooh, wonder what I'm going to think. Maybe I should get right." It's over. And you don't know when your time is up. And what difference does it make now? Because the life I'm telling you about is the life that you've been looking for.

The reason you don't have hope, peace, joy, the reason you keep fighting, the reason you keep going after the things you keep going after is because they're not satisfying. They'll never satisfy. You need to repent of your sins and trust Jesus Christ alone. I know what some of you are thinking. "This is crazy. This is fundamentalist, bigoted, small-minded stuff. Haven't you ever been around the world, Pastor Jeff? Haven't you ever seen any other face? Haven't you been around? Have you ever even been to Denver before? Have you ever seen some of the people that believe?" Yeah, I've been all over the world and I proclaim this message in a lot of different nations all over the world. I proclaimed it in Asia, I proclaimed it in Europe, I proclaim it here. I don't change the message because the message is true for all people everywhere, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and Christmas is about Christ coming because of our great need and poverty for him.

So let me give you a final point, and then we'll close. So if we're to reverence his perfection and uniqueness and we're to realize relationship is not about our talk and

what we say about God, it's what Christ has done, and we realize we need to repent of our sins, we need to turn from them and turn to Christ, then let me give you a final one. I pray this one stays with you the longest. You need to realize that the birth of Jesus Christ reminds you that rejecting these truths that I've just been telling you about will cost you an eternity in hell. Rejecting the truths I just told you about will cost you an eternity in hell.

You can leave here today and say, "I want to do nothing with this." That's that's your choice. But I'm saying, you don't deal with this on this side of Heaven, it will cost you an eternity in hell. Why? Because the God, I'm telling you about, that baby in the manger, the one that came humble as a baby, the one that had to nurse from his mom, the one that had to grow into a man, that humble Jesus that came so that shepherds could see him, he's coming back as king of kings and Lord of lords, and he is the conquering king that will set up his kingdom over the whole universe. And it's a monarchy. It's not a democracy. He's coming. He's coming.

So here's the question. Are you ready for him? Romans 2:10 says, "There's no one good. No, not one. There is no one that seeks God." That's you. You have never sought God. Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." That's you. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death." That's why you're going to die, because of that. However, Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And Romans 10:9 says that if we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Now, why is this so important? I believe

that BRAVE church is a light in the darkness. I believe that the message that you're hearing today is a light in the darkness.

I'm telling you, you haven't been looking for religion. I know that. I never was looking for religion. Here's what you've been looking for. You've been looking for the person of Jesus Christ to save you from your sin. You've wanted to know that the God of the universe wants to come in and dwell you and forgive all your sins. You want to know that when you die, it's all taken care of because of who Jesus is. And I'm telling you right now, I wouldn't be a good pastor if I didn't give you an opportunity to respond. See, some people think that Christianity is kind of automatic, like "I've kind of done..." Listen, nothing in life is automatic. I wear a ring on my finger because a number of years ago, I married my wife. I went public and I said, in front of a group of people, "I'm going to forsake all other women and pursue only her till death do us part."

And I like it when people see the ring on my finger. And I like when people ask me about my wife, because it's her and her alone, and we went through something public. I wasn't embarrassed by it. I wanted everybody to know. And even those of you that elope, you still come out and say it once you get it done, like, "Hey, Mom and Dad, look," because you're excited about it. There's no such thing as a private Christian. Everybody Jesus called he called publicly. Because if you won't stand for Jesus in a place with a bunch of people that love Jesus, I'm telling you, you won't stand for him anywhere. And I wouldn't be doing this message justice if I didn't give you a chance to respond.

So in a minute, I'm going to ask those of you who have heard God's message today, from the top balcony all the way across, all the way in the back, wherever you're sitting, in a minute, that if you heard God and you realize today "I've been playing games, I'm either a cultural Christian, I'm religious, I've been coming to BRAVE, I'm in a cadre, I'm doing the things, but I don't know that there's ever been a time in my life where I've turned from my sin and turned to Christ, where I've really wanted him to come in and be the Lord of my life. I've just been playing games. I'm walking in the darkness. I'm living immorally, but I call myself a Christian even though I'm not." I'm giving you the opportunity to receive the gift.

We have a family tradition. We give gifts in our house at Christmastime. Tomorrow morning, they'll all be opened up. None of them to my children will come with an invoice. "Enjoy this, but you owe us." Not one, because they've all been paid for. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, he said these words in John 19:30: "It is finished," to tell us, "I paid in full. You don't owe me anything for this. I just want your life. I paid for it all. I just want to offer you the gift." And here's when the gift becomes yours, when you take it, when you open it, when you receive it. To those who received him, he gave a right to be called children of God. Do you want to be a child of God or do you just want to play games?

The Bible also says this: there's more rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner that repents than over 99 that don't need to. If you were the only one of the thousands here and the other campuses, because I know on all of our campuses today from Colorado Springs to Westminster to Inglewood, and I haven't heard online yet, we've had people

responding to this message because every time this message is preached, it's true. Even in your soul, if you're fighting it, you're mad because it's true. So I want to give you an opportunity to respond.

Because I know standing doesn't make you a Christian, but I want this date, December 24th, 2023, to be a date that lives in your memory that was the day you stood for Jesus and you sealed it. "He was speaking to me and I heard him." So if you're here today, you're on any of our campuses today, and you want to respond to Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life, to save you from all your sins, would you just stand up right now and we'll give God praise for what He's done in your heart today? Just go ahead and stand. Amen. Amen. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

By the way, this is a great way to celebrate Christmas, just so you know. You guys can be seated. Let me tell you this. The Bible calls what you just experienced new birth. It doesn't mean like, "Okay, I did that, now I'm done." It's for those who have really said, "I want to turn from my sin and turn to Jesus." And if you go to BRAVE, we want to help you take the next steps you have. If you don't have a church, we would love to help you take the next steps that you can. If you do have a church, go back to that church and tell your pastor, "I just gave my life to Christ and I want to take next steps." And if they don't know how to do that, call us, we'll put you in touch with some good people. Because I think it's important that you continue to walk out your faith all the way until you see Jesus Christ face-to-face. Amen?

He came so you could experience his peace. He came so you could experience his joy. He came so you could experience his hope. That's why he came. And for those of you here today, I got really good news for you, especially for those of you that are really mad right now, that can't wait to get out of here. I have really good news for you. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment, which means everything you heard will never leave your heart. He will pester you until you repent, because he loves you that much.

So while you're driving home or taking a shower or getting ready for work or whatever, you realize that word is true. You can stop what you're doing and tell Jesus, "I want to turn from my sin. I want you to be my Lord." He will come into your life right then, because he loves you. He loves you. He came because he loves you. He wants to be in relationship with you. That's who he is. And there's nothing more satisfying than having a relationship with Christ. Amen? Amen. Let's give God some praise for all that he's done.

So at this point in our service, in a minute, I'm going to have you stand. But before I do, I'm just going to give you a little bit of instruction. We're going to finish, and we're doing this on all three campuses today. So we're going to be leading worship in Colorado Springs from Inglewood, and in Westminster from Inglewood, and online, of course, from Inglewood. But we're going to light candles. And this light is symbolic of the light of Christ. Not only is Christ the light of the world, he came to light you up with the gospel so that you too could be the light of the world. So as our worship team comes forward, our ushers are coming forward, I'm going to pray for us, and then

we're going to light candles together.

And a couple of things that you need to know. What we're lighting, we have battery operated ones for the kids, but this is actually called fire. And it can singe, I hear. I don't have as much of a problem as some of you with longer hair, but once your candle gets lit, if you would just turn it to the person next to you, let them turn their candle. You keep yours upright. Keep it close to you. For those of you in the balcony, we're coming. Wait for the light of Christ. It's coming, I promise you. And we're going to sing Silent Night, Holy Night, and I want you to reflect on the fact that when Jesus came, he came because our hearts were dark. He came to be the light of the world, and he came to put his light in you.

Would you all stand with me now as we pray? And then we'll sing this song together. Our Father in Heaven, we give you glory, honor and praise for who you are, and Lord, for all that you're doing in our church. God, I pray that symbolically as we light these candles, Lord, that you would remind us of the light of Christ, that you would remind us that it's not what we do for you, it's what you've done for us. Father, as we sing this song, rekindle our hearts afresh with the gospel and the glory of Christ. We thank you for coming. We thank you for the forgiveness of sins, and we trust you to do a work. We give you all the praise and glory and honor in Jesus' name. Amen.