

## Christmas Day 2011

It is Christmas time, and I trust you've had a *great* time – opening gifts, trying on clothes, playing with toys, and just being together as a family  
I know we have, and it's been a great day already

But that's not all Christmas is, is it? It's not just a *great day*  
Or a holiday, or a family day, or a day to give gifts  
That's how we *celebrate* Christmas, but that's not what Christmas is *about*  
And it's important to keep that distinction in mind – there's a difference between what it is, and how we celebrate it

That's not to say that there's anything *wrong* with how we celebrate it  
Giving and receiving gifts is a *very* good thing – even in the name of Santa Claus; it's ok  
As is spending time together; And resting; And eating; Those are all good things

But it's important to remember the *reason* for the season, while we *celebrate* the season  
Otherwise, what we do, becomes what it's about, and the real reason is lost

So I want to look at the Christmas story this morning from 3 different perspectives, to refresh your memory, and encourage you with some thoughts along the way

The first of which, the first perspective, is that of a child  
Take a look (**Video** – The Christmas Story)

- They had a party – *glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen* the Bible says (Lk 2:20)  
I love the part where one of them says – “They called him Jesus and they loved him”  
There's nothing like looking through the eyes of a child, to regain the wonder of something that's become so common  
Nothing like refreshing your memory with a fresh perspective, to retain the joy of something so familiar

**Don't lose the joy;** When it comes to Christmas, don't lose the joy  
**Phil 4:4** says – *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.*  
And Nehemiah said – *the joy of the Lord is your strength* (Neh 8:10)  
So whether it's life, death, church, or work – don't lose the joy  
Especially so, at Christmas

And if you feel it slipping, change your perspective  
Maybe to something like this (**Video** – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Nativity)

- Times change, feelings remain the same  
I love that video b/c it looks at the nativity, the birth of Christ, from a totally new perspective  
Which is often what's needed when you can recite the Christmas story in your sleep  
Or when you've *lost* the feeling – the feeling that something grand, something amazing, something very special happened at Christmas

Don't lose the joy, and **don't lose the feeling** – the passion for it all

Like Anna, the woman in **Lk 2:37**, who at the age of 84 – [*She*] *did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.*  
Far from a *loss* of feeling, she was fired up about Christmas; Telling anyone who would listen about Jesus and the redemption he brought\*\*\*\*\*  
Don't lose that lovin' feeling; And if you do . . .

- Go back to the Scriptures; As in, *the* perspective; God's perspective  
Yes, Jesus was born over 2000 years ago, but it's recorded in the Bible so we can refresh our perspective, and refresh our memory, over and over and over again

And I would encourage you to do that both individually, and as a family  
Something we've done for over 10 years now, with **The Advent Book**  
And we'd like to share it with you, *as* a family this Christmas (Becky and girls on stage)

The Advent Book (Jack and Kathy Stockman) is a simple compilation of the Christmas story – taken from the gospels . . .  
And divided into 25 pages, with a door and graphic on each page  
And the intent, though we don't really do it this way anymore – is to read one page at a time for 25 days, starting on Dec 1<sup>st</sup>

Now, we normally argue as to who goes first and who goes last, but I think we'll spare you the pain, and I'll just start with the **preface** which says . . .  
(“**Day 1**” . . . **Open** . . . “Read” . . . Pass)  
(Leave Day 25 on screen)

- It never gets old does it?  
That God loves us so much, he became flesh and dwelt among us  
To eventually die in our place, so we could live forever

### Don't miss the point

Don't miss the point of Christmas (**Jn 3:16**)  
That *God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*  
That's the point of Christmas; And that's where the joy and feeling is as well  
So as you *celebrate* Christmas today, don't forget the *reason* for Christmas

Let's pray, and prepare our hearts for some extended worship again

Pray (WT on; Family off) – It's Christmas Lord – and we're having a party  
Worshipping you with all the joy and feeling that comes with your presence within us, and among us  
How thankful we are you came at Christmas, and how thankful we are you came into our lives – to save, and rule, and reign as King  
We've found our peace, so be exalted in our praise . . . (no amen)

Worship – Medley

Close (Family on) – From our family to yours, “**Merry Christmas**”