

Christmas Eve 2022

Welcome! Merry Christmas. Thank you for starting your holidays with us. If this is your first time at Sherwood Oaks, my name is Shawn, I'm one of the ministers here, and on behalf of our entire church, I just want to say welcome.

For many of us, Christmas Eve at Sherwood Oaks is as much of a tradition as gathering with family and eating too many sweets! It's just kinda baked into your holiday routine. And actually, I think that's one of my favorite parts about this time of year. It's the traditions.

Growing up, my family had several Christmas traditions and one of them is, each year, my mom would get me and my brother an ornament for our Christmas tree. And so, every year, putting up our Christmas tree was kind of like taking a trip down memory lane. And, as I've gotten older, I've noticed some trends in the ornaments my mom would get me.

I was born in 1980, and for the first part of the decade, most of my ornaments involved mice. Like, a lot of mice. I have a mouse dressed as a fireman. A mouse carrying an ornament. Two mice taking a bath?

This one, though, is my girl's favorite. It's a mouse dressed as Santa from 1982. But, that's not why they like it. Turn it over [\(show picture 1\)](#) to see what's in Santa's bag. Zoom in and get a closer look [\(show picture 2\)](#). That is one creepy doll! I had never seen that before until Norah noticed it just a few years ago. Like, that thing is giving off some serious [\(show comparison picture\)](#) *Nightmare Before Christmas* vibes right there!

Well then, somewhere around the mid-80's it went from mice to teddy bears. Got a few of those. And then we hit the 90's and it became whatever I was most into that year. And so, I have a soccer Santa, a musical note from when I played trombone in Middle School. I have one of Santa playing all the sports. I even had a Santa wearing like a full body speedo and goggles, but for some reason, we can't find that one anywhere. Amber promises that she's looked everywhere for it, but...I don't know? It's just gone missing.

I love these ornaments. They definitely took on new meaning after my mom passed away a few years ago.

Have you ever wondered why we put up a Christmas tree? The story goes that, in the 16th Century, Martin Luther was taking a walk one December night writing his Christmas sermon in his head. He looked up and was struck by the beauty of the night sky. The stars twinkling and the moon lighting up the snow covered evergreens. Right there, in the coldest, darkest part of the year, light was shining and life was flourishing. A perfect illustration of Jesus.

So, the next day, he cut down one of the trees, took it inside, put some candles and decorations on it, and used it to teach his 6 children the meaning of advent. The arrival of love, joy, hope, and peace in Jesus.

And so, the Christmas tree is a symbol of life in the dead of winter and light shining in the darkness. It represents the Gospel message of the life and light that Jesus brings to us. Brings to our life that can sometimes feel like the darkness in the dead of winter.

Hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah wrote...(READ Is. 9:2, 6)

Centuries later, Jesus was born. Emmanuel, God with us. And the Apostle John opens his Gospel with these words...(READ John 1:4-5)

Tonight, we have come to celebrate the arrival of the light of the World. And, to help us remember the Global nature of the Gospel, throughout the night, we're going to hear parts of the Christmas story read in 4 different languages from around the world. English, Spanish, Chinese, and Swahili.

And so, wherever you are tonight and whatever you're going through, may our time together be a reminder of the life and light that is found in Jesus, our newborn King.