

Why Did Jesus Come

Various Scriptures

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, December 24, 2017

Thank you so much for all the work you've done. It's not easy to do this, and so thank you to our church. It kind of leads me to talk about what this is all about. Christmas, as you know, is a time where we talk about Jesus Christ. It's actually the time of the year when we talk about Jesus more than any other time, through music, movies, TV, through plays like this. People everywhere seem to be interested in Jesus during the holidays, Christians and non-Christians alike. You know, the other day, I was getting my car fixed, and people kept coming into the car dealership and saying, "Merry Christmas" to the people working at the desk. I don't think they were believers. I can kind of gauge that by if you tell someone that you're a pastor and they get really quiet and look scared, like you're going to ... I didn't think they were believers. And it was interesting to me that you kept hearing the word "Christ" (Christmas, right) over and over again. People love to talk about Jesus at this time of the year.

What I want to do for just a few moments here (it won't be very long) is I want to talk to you about why we do this. Why is Jesus' birth so special to us? If you think about it, we celebrate about seven billion birthdays every year. There are seven billion people on the planet. That means there are seven billion birthdays. I didn't average that out per day, but it sounds like a lot. Why do we make such a big deal of the birth of Jesus Christ? Let me just give you a few reasons. Again, we'll be brief this morning, but this is what I want to focus on in our few moments today. A couple of reasons why Jesus came, why this is so important.

The first one is this: Jesus came to fulfill the Law. If you have a Bible with you, turn with me to Matthew chapter 5, verses 17 through 18. Turn to Matthew 5, verses 17 through 18. Jesus came to fulfill the Law. A lot of people today have a misunderstanding about Jesus and His mission. They think He came to rebel against authority, they think He came to break the Law, but it's actually to the contrary. Jesus came to fulfill the Law. Jesus was the most Law-abiding person who ever lived.

If you want to find someone who perfectly fulfilled every ounce of the Law, you can look to Jesus. And He says it this way in Matthew 5, verses 17 through 18, if you look there, right in the front part of the chapter, the Lord says this. He says, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law until all is accomplished." And you could even put in parentheses there "by Me."

The word "fulfill" here in Greek is actually the word *pleroo*, which means to complete something or finish it. It means to fill it to the top. If you were going to fulfill a glass of water, you would fill it to the top. Jesus says, "I came to fulfill the Law to the top. I came to complete every bit of it." Which is interesting to mention this, because Jesus lived at a time of rebellion. Some historians say there were something like ten false messiahs who lived around the time of the first century, and a lot of people thought Jesus was just another one of them. He came to buck up against Rome, He came to fight the foreign invaders in Israel.

You know, to give an example of one rebel in Jesus' day, in the second century BC, about 200 years before the Lord came, Antiochus Epiphanes, the Roman ruler over Israel, decided he wanted to do away with everything Jewish in Palestine. And so what he did was he outlawed the Sabbath, he outlawed the circumcision of the children, he outlawed the Torah, the Old Testament. He even forced the Jews to eat pig. If you know anything about the Jews, that was very insulting to them, but he made them sacrifice pig in the temple at the point of the sword. And as a result, the Jews had a rebellion. A priest named Mattathias was commanded to sacrifice a pig in the temple, and he refused. And when another Jewish priest offered to do it for him, Mattathias killed the priest, and he killed the Roman soldier who issued the command. And for the next several decades in Israel, there was absolute rebellion. The Jews kicked the Romans out.

As a matter of fact, one of Mattathias's son became a national hero in Israel. His name was Judas Maccabeus, which means "Judas the Hammer". How would you like having that as a nickname? Your nickname is "the Hammer," because you smash the enemies. A couple years after the rebellion, in AD 164, the Jews entered the temple. They cleansed it, they got rid of all the pig carcasses, they got rid of all the false priests, they actually tore down a statue of Zeus that the Romans had put in the temple, they reinstated the Sabbath, and they re-lit the candles in the temple. And today, the Jews remember this with a holiday. Do you know what it's called? It's Hanukkah. They celebrate it every year around Christmastime.

But a lot of people in Jesus' day, at the time Matthew 5 was written, thought He came to do this too, He came to rebel. And He said, "No, I didn't. I came to fulfill the Law." He said, "If you want to know what a Law-abiding, Old Testament-abiding person looks like," Jesus said, "I'm it." As a matter of fact, 30 years after Jesus' sermon in Matthew 5, the Jews would rebel against Rome again. And this time, the Romans would literally tear down their temple brick by brick until nothing was left. You can actually go to Israel today and see the stones at the bottom of the Temple Mount that were thrown from the top by the Romans when they tore it down. And Jesus says here, "I'm not going to have a part in that rebellion. I came to submit to the Law." In doing so, Jesus would make Himself the ultimate sacrifice for sin. His perfect life would allow others to go to God through Him. He would become the Lamb of God, but that's why He came; that's the first reason why He came.

Let me give you another reason why He came, and these all kind of play off of each other. The next one is this: Jesus came to call sinners. He came to fulfill the Law, and He came to call sinners. You could say He came to call those who broke the Law. If you want to see this in Matthew chapter 9, just a few chapters over, we could look there. In Matthew 9, just the background of this, Jesus heals a paralytic. And afterwards, He has a meal with a group of sinners. Verse 11 calls them "tax collectors and sinners," and we'll talk about tax collectors in a minute. But as He's eating with these sinners, these lawbreakers, someone asks Him, "Why are you doing this? Why are you eating with these evil people?" And if you look in Matthew 9, verses 12 through 13, this is Jesus' answer. "But when Jesus heard this, He said, 'It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,'" for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

The word "call" here means to invite or summon someone to your house, so in verse 13, Jesus is saying, "I did not come to invite the righteous to my house; I came to invite sinners." I can't remember if I've ever read this quote to our church family before, but Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a British pastor in the 1900s, said in one of his books that "if you think you deserve heaven, take it from me, you are not a Christian." That's a shocking quote, isn't it? Can you just kind of let that sink in for a second? Let me read that again to you. He said, "If you think you deserve heaven, take it from me, you're not a Christian." But he said this, "But any man who thinks he deserves hell, there's hope."

My friends, this is what Jesus is saying here. If you think you deserve heaven, there is no hope for you, because Jesus didn't come for you. He came to call sinners. He came to call the lost. If you know you broke the Law, Jesus came to invite you into His house. You can tie this into what I said earlier about fulfilling the Law. You and I cannot fulfill the Law. It's impossible, no matter how hard you try. The Law says don't lie, and what do you do? You tell a lie, right? The Law says don't covet, and what do we do? We covet; we want things that don't belong to us. We are sinners, and the Bible says there's a high price to pay for that. We deserve to go to hell, to the lake of fire. But Jesus came so we wouldn't have to. That's the good news this morning. Jesus came to spare you from that awful place. But you have to acknowledge you're a sinner. That's the conditions for it. You have to admit you've done something wrong. Because Jesus says, "It's not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick."

That leads us to the next reason Jesus came. He came to fulfill the Law, He came to call sinners; let me give you another reason. He came to seek and to save what was lost. That was the point of His mission. He came to seek and to save what was lost, a lost world, a world in need of help. If you want to look in Luke chapter 19 ... I just have two more of these, so thank you for hanging in here with me. Let me give you this one and one more. In Luke chapter 19, when we talk of breaking the Law and going to hell, it's a very scary message. But Jesus didn't come to just scare us. He came to give us hope. And you see this in Luke 19 with a man named Zacchaeus. You guys remember the song, "Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and a wee little man was he"? Did you guys sing that in Canada? Okay, good, good. I didn't want anybody looking at me like I was crazy.

He was a man of ... He was an interesting man. He was a tax collector, he collected taxes for Rome. Specifically, he collected taxes from his fellow Jews. He would actually travel around with a Roman guard, demand payment from his Jews, and to keep the guards happy, Zacchaeus (and men like him) would skim some off the top. So if the government demanded \$100, he would demand \$200, and give money to the guards for kickback. And because of this, Zacchaeus, Matthew, (he was a tax collector; the Gospel of Matthew), these guys were hated. They were despised in Israel. Scholars call them "the walking dead." They couldn't go to the temple. They couldn't go to someone's house. They couldn't eat or talk to or socialize with a decent Jew. They were actually ... Tax collectors were on the social level of a prostitute in Israel.

And yet, in Luke 19, again, we see Jesus eating at a tax collector's house. Now, let that sink in for a moment. If that talk about hell and damnation concerns you, let me tell you something: Jesus ate at the house of people that were going to hell. That's why He came. And in verses 9 through 10, it says this about this encounter with Zacchaeus. He tells you why He was eating at a

tax collector's house in verse 9 of Luke 19. "And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.'"

I don't know if you've ever been lost before. I'm new to Chilliwack, so I get lost all the time. That GPS thing is wonderful; it's beautiful. But I get turned around, don't know where I'm going. I don't know if you ever feel lost spiritually; that's what this is talking about. A man like Zacchaeus was lost in every sense of the word. He didn't fit in anywhere. He wasn't Roman, he wasn't Jewish, and he couldn't worship God. And Jesus says here, "I came to save men like this." He actually says in the verse, if you notice, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham." "Son of Abraham" is another way of saying "a Jew." Because he trusted in Jesus, Zacchaeus could be Jewish again on the inside, and not just on the outside. The idea is, he could go to heaven. He could be saved because he trusted in Christ.

And this leads to one more reason why Jesus came, and we're going to tie it off with this one. He came to fulfill the Law, He came to call sinners, He came to seek and to save men like Zacchaeus. One more is this: Jesus came to give life. It all boils down to this. He came to give life. This is one more passage I want you to look at. If you look in John chapter 10, Jesus talks about sheep. I don't know if you know much about sheep. I hear they're very sweet animals. But it's interesting, because I only hear that from people that don't farm them and raise them. I hear they can be kind of ornery creatures. But they are gentle, and if you look in John 10, verses 7 through 10 says,

So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they can have life, and have it abundantly."

We said a little bit about sheep on Sunday mornings here at Grace Fellowship. But sheep are not stupid animals; they're just helpless. They have no sense of direction, so they get lost all the time. If you ever see a sheep leading another sheep, it's going to end bad. They don't have natural defenses. So if you ever see a sheep in a fight with another sheep, that won't end well either. And they're unaware of their surroundings. So it's been said when they're drinking from a stream or a river on a hillside, if their wool is heavy enough, they can actually tip over into the water and drown.

And because of this, with this in mind, Jesus says, "I am the door of the sheep." In other words, "I'm the one who will protect them. I will lead them into greener pastures." And the idea here is Jesus is saying, "I am the door to heaven." For those of you that are lost and don't know where you're going, and turned around by life, Jesus is saying, "I came to provide something better for you." And to make this quick, the way He did this was ... For those of you familiar with Christianity, you know Christians don't celebrate Christmas just because Jesus was born. We celebrate it because He was born to die. His death, if you believe it, is just as important as His birth, maybe even more so, because at His death, Jesus exchanged His life for ours; His perfect

righteousness for our sin. And three days later, He rose from the grave to show that death had no hold on Him. But He did it all, this passage says, to be a door for us to heaven.

If you know when you die you go to another world, your soul leaves your body like a hand leaves a glove. And it goes to a place to live forever, either heaven or hell. And Jesus said, "I came to be a door for you, so you could go to heaven." God does not accept sin. He does not accept unholiness and those who break the Law. And Jesus said, "To get to God, you can come through My perfect record with the Father." And the question you have to answer this morning is, what are you going to do with that, with this one who is called Jesus Christ? He came to save the world. Will you let Him save you? He came to rescue the lost. Will you let Him rescue you?

All this stuff with the children was beautiful and wonderful. But to be real serious this morning, there is a grave message today. And that is, with Christ, you can go to heaven, but without Him, you will not. So what will you do with Him? Several years ago, a man and his wife were found frozen to death in their car. A blizzard swept through their area and buried their vehicle in snow. But the saddest part of the story is that six feet away from them was a bus where passengers remained warm throughout the night. But they couldn't see them because of the blizzard. Friends, let me tell you something: You can see Christ this morning. He's right here in the Scriptures. You don't have to worry about wondering, "How do I get to heaven?" This is how you get there. It's through the Son of God, who was offered to save you from eternal death. Will you do that this morning? Will you give Him your life?

Now, there are a lot of great presents we give this time of year, but I think this is the greatest present of all. As a matter of fact, I see these children up here singing, and I see my son up here, and I think, you know, what's the world going to be like when they're older, right? I mean, how many parents ask that question? How many worry about that? We all do; it keeps us up at night. Let me tell you something. The same Jesus who came to save you and me is the same Jesus that can save our children. Amen? And the same Jesus that can save our children is the same Jesus that can save our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren. The Devil can't make a world bad enough that Jesus can't save. Amen? And that's our hope this morning.

I directed this message toward some of you that may not believe this or know this. Maybe this is the first time for you. Let me encourage you, whatever you've done, whatever sins you've committed, Christ came for sinners, and He came to offer you salvation. And let me pray for you this morning, that this message would reach your heart. And let's thank the Lord for the gift of His Son.

Heavenly Father, we do thank you, Lord, for Jesus. There's not a one of us today who could go to heaven without Him, and what He has done, but we must believe. And so, Lord, I do pray for any here who have not trusted in Christ yet, that this talk about why Jesus came may be new to them, Lord. I pray it would be an encouragement to them to trust in Him. Jesus did not come to judge and condemn the world. The Scriptures say He came to offer salvation. So, Lord, I pray that if there's any here this morning who don't know your Son, they would be saved and trust in Him. Father, thank you for the time we've had to worship Jesus and to focus our attention on Him today. We pray that He would be glorified through all this time. And as we celebrate the

Christmas season, may we remember His birth, and what all it means for us and for our world. We pray this in His glorious name, amen.