

The Christmas Story

John 3:16-18

INTRODUCTION:

I asked the youth group Thursday night the following question.

What is the most important message that we should hear during our lifetime on earth?

Well, first we must know that there is a God who created us and everything around us. We see it in the world around us. When we look at the world around us we instinctively **know** that there is way too much detail and order for it to have happened by accident.

Secondly, we must realize that because of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden we are all born under the curse of sin and have been separated from God due to our sinful nature.

Third, that God sent Christ to earth to be born of man, to teach us righteousness, and provide a way of salvation for us.

THAT was the message that Christ came to earth to tell us! It is called the **Gospel** (the Good News of Jesus Christ).

All Stand and Read Scripture

John 3:16-18 (NASB)

¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Let's bow in a word of prayer.

Prayer

What was the message that Jesus just taught us?

Matthew 6:33 (NASB)

³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

The first thing we should seek for is His kingdom and His righteousness. I read this verse a few years back and I remember thinking to myself, "If Christ put so much emphasis on His kingdom, if we are to seek it first in our Christian walk with God, then maybe I should know a whole lot more about it.

I am sure that many of you remember Paul Harvey. Paul was an American radio broadcaster for the ABC Radio Networks. He broadcast *News and Comment* on weekday mornings and mid-days, and at noon on Saturdays, as well as his famous *The Rest of the Story* segments from 1952 through 2008. Paul died on Feb. 28, 2009 at the age of 90.

If Paul were here right now, he would say "You **know** what the news is...in a minute you are going to hear...the **rest** of the story."

Following is a story recorded in 1965 during one of Paul Harvey's broadcasts. He considered it a modern day parable as well as his annual "Christmas Story". The message expands way beyond Christ's birth. He entitled this story "The Man and the Birds".

ILLUSTRATION:

The Man and the Birds (Paul Harvey 1965)

The man to whom I'm going to introduce you was not a scrooge, he was a kind decent, mostly good man. Generous to his family, upright in his dealings with other men. But it was that he just couldn't swallow the Jesus Story. The story of God coming to Earth as a man. It just didn't make sense, and he was too honest to pretend otherwise.

"I'm truly sorry to distress you," he told his wife, "but I'm not going with you to church. He said he'd feel like a hypocrite. That he'd much rather just stay at home, but that he would wait up for them. And so he stayed and they went to the church service.

Shortly after the family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window to watch the flurries getting heavier and heavier and then went back to his fireside chair and began to read his newspaper. Minutes later he was startled by a thudding sound...Then another, and then another. Sort of a thump or a thud...At first he thought someone must be throwing snowballs against his living room window. But when he went to the front door to investigate he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow. They'd been caught in the storm and, in a desperate search for shelter, had tried to fly through his large landscape window.

Well, he couldn't let the poor creatures lie there and freeze, so he remembered the barn where his children stabled their pony. That would provide a warm shelter, if he could direct the birds to it.

Quickly he put on a coat, galoshes, tramped through the deepening snow to the barn. He opened the doors wide and turned on a light, but the birds did not come in. He figured food would entice them in. So he hurried back to the house, fetched bread crumbs, sprinkled them on the snow, making a trail to the yellow-lighted wide open doorway of the stable. But to his dismay, the birds ignored the bread crumbs, and continued to flap around helplessly in the snow. He tried catching them...He tried shooing them into the barn by walking around them waving his arms...Instead, they scattered in every direction, except into the warm, lighted barn.

And then, he realized that they were afraid of him. To them, he reasoned, I am a strange and terrifying creature. If only I could think of some way to let them know that they can trust me...That I am not trying to hurt them, but to help them. But how? Because any move he made tended to frighten them, confuse them. They just would not follow. They would not be led or shooed because they feared him.

"If only I could be a bird," he thought to himself, "and mingle with them and speak their language. Then I could tell them not to be afraid. Then I could show them the way to safety....(I could tell them about) the safe warm barn. But I would have to be one of them so they could **see, and hear and understand.**"

At that moment the church bells began to ring. The sound reached his ears above the sounds of the wind. And (as) he stood there listening to the bells he realized that what he was wanting to do for those frightened birds was exactly what Christ had done for him...and he sank to his knees in the snow.

The man in the story thought to himself. "If only I could turn into a bird and walk among them, then I could speak to them in "Birdeeze" and they would understand". But, of course, he could not transform into a bird, nor could he speak "Birdeeze".

Unlike the man in the story, God **was** able to transform Himself into a man through His only begotten Son Jesus Christ! He walked among men and taught us how we should live. He told us about HIS warm and safe barn (His kingdom) and encouraged us to seek for it and His righteousness.

BODY:

I. IMMINENT DANGER!

The first thing we should know about the kingdom of Heaven is that we need to be in it. God wanted everyone to know about the kingdom of Heaven. It is a place that shields us from the deadly spiritual storms of this earthly kingdom.

The man in Paul Harvey's story saw the birds outside his window. He knew that they were unprepared for the extreme cold weather that was coming upon them. He saw their imminent danger and just wanted to bring them to warmth and safety in his barn. But the birds did not understand their plight and they could not understand the concern of the man. He was only frightening to them. So they avoided the man and they went about living their life, as they knew it, in the storm. They had no clue that safety and warmth was just a very short flight away through the open doors of the barn.

Man is in the same plight. We live in an earthly kingdom that is saturated in sin. Many live in this earthly kingdom not realizing that they are in imminent danger of dying in their sins. They have heard the gospel message, but refuse to be led by it.

II. WARMTH AND SAFETY.

God knew that mankind needed a way to escape this curse of sin and be sheltered in his "barn", the kingdom of heaven.

Although the man in our story was unable to transform himself into a bird and speak "Birdeeze", God was able to transform Himself, through His Son, and made Him man. He lived and walked among men. He spoke to us in "humaneeze" (in our language).

This is amazing! Jesus left His splendor in heaven and came to this world to become a man. **This was God in our presence!** He walked with us and taught us not to be afraid of Him, but to let Him remove us from this "cold miserable snowstorm" that He called **the curse of sin** and lead us into the shelter of His barn that He called the **Kingdom of Heaven**.

What we must realize is that our life is not over when we die. We are eternal beings. How we respond to the Gospel (the Good News of God) will determine how we will spend **eternity**. Either it will be in the presence of God in His glory in heaven or it will be eternally separated from God in the lake of fire with Satan and his fallen angels.

CONCLUSION:

What does the Gospel teach us? That Christ's death on the cross was the **most important event** that has or will ever happen in the history of mankind. Because of His death, mankind was given the opportunity to be forgiven of our sins, that we are all guilty of, and be made righteous.

That was followed three days later with the **greatest miracle** that has or will ever happen when Christ victoriously arose from the grave. God allowed this miracle to happen in order to confirm that what Jesus had taught and claimed during his time on earth was true. It was God's stamp of approval on all Christ had done.

Are you still walking in the cold, miserable, snowstorm of life? **Do you understand the imminent danger that you are in?** Now...you know that there is a safe warm barn that you can turn to!

One of the last words Jesus told His disciples before He ascended into heaven is found in...

Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB)

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

How you respond to the gospel now is going to determine where you spend your eternity. **Consider how short this lifetime is in comparison to eternity!** Do you understand the great value of God's gift of salvation? Christ made it possible for us to be found righteous before God in judgment and to life with Him for eternity.

And that is why we celebrate Christmas day!

John 3:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, **but have eternal life.**”

NOW...you know...the REST of the story!

He is Lord!