

What does Christmas mean to me?

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

What does Christmas mean to me?

I found that a surprisingly complex question to answer!

As some of you will know, this is my first year in public ministry, so Christmas this year and from here on in is very different to what it has been in the past. And yet some aspects of Christmas

*Christmas is when God gave his one and only son, Jesus:
...to the whole wide world!
...for the whole wide world!*

stay very much the same.

Last year:

- the Christmas **holidays** meant seven or eight weeks of frenetic activity moving to a new house and getting our old house ready to sell;
- Christmas **day** meant going to church then home to open gifts and spend the day welcoming a procession of family throughout the day and gorge ourselves with a

seemingly endless array of food; but

- Christmas **itself** meant the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This year:

- There **is** no Christmas **break!** Instead I have a trilogy of consecutive services to prepare and take responsibility for;
- Christmas **day** will mean starting the day with leading worship then being part of the procession of family to my sister and brother-in-law's house. And, Yes, there will be another seemingly endless array of food; but to me,
- Christmas **itself** still means the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Because, to me, Christmas is the season of giving and it's easy to lose sight of the fact that Christmas is when we should all stop and thank God for giving us the best gift in the whole wide world.

Christmas is when God gave his one and only son, Jesus:

*Today's Readings:
Luke 2:1-20*

...**to** the whole wide world!
...**for** the whole wide world!

And a gift like that is too good and too huge to keep to yourself – you have to give some away!

Right from the days of Adam and Eve, God wanted to get closer to us again. The very first thing Adam and Eve did after they ate the apple was to sew fig leaves together to cover themselves. Their sin created a barrier between them and God and that very same barrier still separates us from God and cuts through our relationship with him. No matter how clean living we may be; no matter how hard we try or even how successful we might be in living a God-pleasing life; we will never be good enough, clean enough, sinless enough to come into God's righteous and sinless presence.

So God came up with a plan.

He decided to do something for us not one of us could do for ourselves...
...something big!...

...something we could never pay back no matter how hard we tried.

God came to earth, in the flesh, to repair the damage created by Adam and Eve; to give us a way to repair the damage we do to each other every day.

In Jesus, "God emerged in Palestine as a baby who could not speak or eat solid food or control his bladder, who depended on a teenager for shelter, food, and love"

(The Jesus I Never Knew, Philip Yancey, p 36).

Jesus then grew as a reasonably ordinary child doing reasonably ordinary things. As he matured he experienced all the ordinary temptations and distractions. For the first thirty years of his life he lived as a totally ordinary human being.

But then he started doing some really extraordinary things:

- He healed the sick;
- He made the deaf hear;
- He made the blind see;
- He taught rich and powerful people they were no better than the poor and oppressed;
- He taught poor and oppressed people they

were no worse than the rich and powerful;

- He admitted he was the Son of God and he forgave people their sins and he was tortured for it;
- He was hung on a cross yet he prayed, "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do"!
- He died on that cross and was buried yet three days later he rose again, victorious even over death.

In Jesus, God came to earth and ripped off our fig leaves and removed the sin and

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separation between him and us.

That's something pretty big!
That's something we couldn't do for ourselves!
That's something we could never pay back!
But it is something we can share with someone else...

In Jesus, God came to earth and rebuilt the loving and intimate relationship he'd

intended for us since day one.

Now, don't panic; I'm not going to ask you to tear your clothes off, but I am going to ask you to stop and think:

What does Christmas mean **to you?**

What does Christ mean **to you?**

I can tell you what you mean to Christ; Jesus Christ loves you so much he would give **anything** to have you as part of his life.

In fact he's already given everything to have you as part of his life.

He gave his life so you might live with him forever.

So please, this Christmas, stop and ask yourself, "What **does** Christ mean to me?"

And as you pause and ponder your answer, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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