



Empowering People to Change the World

Christmas Eve – Don't Miss Christmas

Steve Holt

Don't Miss Christmas

You want to talk about a guy that really doesn't get it; shooting off some steam during the Christmas season and had to spend Christmas day in jail. Here's what happened:

- He got the Christmas lights out of the garage, and they were all balled up and was so mad at his wife for balling up the lights last year. After hours of work, he finally unraveled the lights and stretched them out across the garage.
- Then his daughter drove into the garage and smashed all the lights.
- So, he told his wife, that he was going to the backyard to blow off some steam.
- While his family is decorating the Christmas tree he went into the backyard and took out his .45 caliber pistol and started shooting it into the ground.
- The police are called, and he is arrested for disturbing the peace...he was already taking anger management classes and thought that by discharging his gun, he would discharge some of his anger.
- **I guess he thought the lyrics, "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire" were "Chestnuts roasting while I open fire."**
- This is a classic example of a guy who is totally missing the point of Christmas.
- We even now have gifts for dogs...cats...hamsters. I heard of a lady who took her dog shopping at Petco to pick out its favorite toy. Folks this is getting crazy.
- But the very one who gave His life to transform our lives is totally forgotten.

It's not about Santa; it's not about gifts, trees, and shopping; it's not about decorations...it's about Him, it's about Jesus.

- It's about the One who gave His life on a cross for our sins.
- It's about the One who invites us to a new life through His resurrection power.
- It's about the birth of Jesus.

Even in Bethlehem, they missed Jesus on that first Christmas also:

Luke 2:1-7

The innkeeper missed that First Christmas.

- There is no room at the inn for Mary.
- How could someone turn away a pregnant woman who is in her ninth month of pregnancy, ready to deliver at any moment?
- No one could find room for this pregnant woman! No room for the Son of God.
- Jesus had to be born in a barn, an animal feeding trough, or a cave.
- We set up our little manger scenes and they look so serene and romantic on our table.
- Little halos around Joseph, Mary, and the baby.
- But the reality is that this scene was anything but romantic:
- It was unsanitary with the smell of animals filling the place.
 - And the animals stunk.
- It was not a hardwood floor, no it was a dirt floor with mud, hay, and animal droppings.
- No halos.
- The innkeeper missed the first Christmas because Mary and Joseph were poor and could not pay for a room.
- **This innkeeper missed Christmas for a buck.**
- **The innkeeper missed Christmas because he was preoccupied with his own life and business.**
- There are people today that miss Christmas in the same way with endless parties, and shopping, and we miss Christmas for a buck too!

- This is also the most depressing time of year, because we have poured all our money and energy into all the wrong things and Christmas itself is a letdown, a disappointment.
- Even though you were hoping for this you get that, and it wasn't what you wanted.
- We have false expectations about what Christmas should be.

Matt 2:1-8

King Herod missed the first Christmas.

- Now King Herod is different from the innkeeper.
- Whereas the innkeeper was ignorant, the King understood what was going on.
- Where the innkeeper's excuse might be ignorance, King Herod's excuse was fear.
- **Look at verse 3**
- These magi were the VIPs of the time who had come into town announcing that the King of the Jews had been born.
- This was the wrong thing to say to Herod...history tells us that Herod was a paranoid tyrant who was always worried about somebody usurping his power.
- In fact, he referred to himself as the "king of the Jews" so to hear that someone else was being called "king of the Jews" was very upsetting to him.
- Whenever Herod was shaken up over something, all of Jerusalem got shaken up, because they knew that Herod could cause big problems for them if he was angry.
- That's why we read in verse 3 that "all Jerusalem" was troubled with Herod.
 - Herod thought that some type of coup was up.
 - History tells us that Herod had his wife and three sons executed because he thought they were trying to steal from him...nice guy.

- History tells us he ordered that the leading men of the city should be arrested and killed when he dies to guarantee there would be mourning on the day of his death.
- This guy was paranoid! Herod was paralyzed by fear!
 - When I traveled to Israel years ago, I went to the Masada, a desert fortress, and this was the summer palace for Herod and it is difficult to get to...it was an impregnable fortress for a paranoid king.
- So, he put out an edict that they might find this Jesus.

And this is the way many people are today. They will not allow anything or anyone to interfere with their career or their lifestyle and so they miss Christmas.

You know some people don't mind commemorating His birth and they like Him to just stay in His little manger, but they don't want Him to leave that manger and grow into a man and Him telling them to turn from their sinful ways...now that's not the Jesus they like.

- Or the Jesus that died on a cross for their sins.
- "I'm OK with Jesus as long as He just stays out of my life and leaves me alone."
- And maybe they even have a bumper sticker, "God is my Co-pilot." Guess what—you shouldn't even be in the cockpit...God doesn't want you as His copilot...He wants to fly the whole plane. He wants total control.
- They want Christ to call on in an emergency.
- They think they are masters of their own destiny, the captain of their own ship.
 - Like Herod would look at us Christians...as just robots, but I'm in control of my own destiny.
- You are not in control of your own life; you are actually under the control of someone else and that someone else is Satan.
 - 2 Timothy 2:26 (NKJV)

"...and *that* they may come to their senses *and* escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will."

- Satan is controlling their lives...and they think *they are doing their own thing*, but have you actually looked at these people... they all do the same thing.
- At some point you have to start thinking for yourself.
- I did at eighteen years old...I took my life into my own hands and handed into the hands of Jesus.
- I said I'm sick of these parties, I'm tired of the backstabbing and hypocrisy...and that sent me on a quest to find authenticity and real love.
- And so, I gave my life to Christ—for the first time I found real love and real joy and real friendships.
- Have you experienced this?
- Herod missed it.

But not just the innkeeper missed it; not only did Herod miss it; the religious leaders missed it too.

Look at verses 4-6

- They knew the answer...Bethlehem is the place! But why weren't they looking? Jerusalem to Bethlehem is just around the corner, less than six miles.
- These men were the theological and biblical experts of their day.
- These were the guardians of truth and here are these foreign dignitaries that have come to town, and they don't even care.
- At least it could be said of the innkeeper that he was just ignorant.
- At least with Herod he was intimidated by the title of the Messiah.
- But what about these men? The religious leaders knew better! They were indifferent.
- The religious leaders missed that first Christmas...they were indifferent.
- These are the men who sent Jesus to His death some thirty-three years later.

- Why? Because He was a threat to their little religious world.
- Pontius Pilot envied His authority; they envied His relationship with God; they envied His power.
- They were looking for a different kind of messiah, one who would cater to their whims and conform to their wishes...not One who died on a cross for their sins.
- They wanted a Jesus who validated their lifestyle and blessed their religious practices.
- And you know there are a lot of people like this today: they want a Jesus they can control; they want a Jesus that will bless all that they do and not make them change. They want heaven but no hell. They want forgiveness but they are unwilling to repent. They want the cross as a piece of jewelry but not Christ on the cross.
- I heard the story of a woman who went into various jewelry stores looking at crucifixes and she said to the jeweler, "Do you have any crosses without the little man on them?" Many today: I want a cross without Christ...I want religion on my terms.
- Religion is a deadly trap...more people will be sent to hell by religion than all the deadly traps of other sins put together.

Pastor Steve, what are you talking about? I thought religion is about what we want. Afterall, it's my religion!

- I don't want to be a religious person! I've never liked rituals and religion!
- Here's what I become interested in:
 - I am very interested in a relationship with God.
 - I'm very interested in truth.
 - I'm very interested in the Bible and what it has to say.
 - I'm very interested in what happens after I die.
 - I'm very interested in finding inner peace.
 - I'm very interested in what is right and wrong.
 - I'm very interested in what Jesus has to say.
- Look what people do in the name of religion...these psychopathic people who boarded the planes on 9/11.
 - Because Allah told them to do it!!

- During the Dark Ages, religious people slaughtered other people of a different religion!
- The Christians being jailed and butchered in China, North Korea, parts of India, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia.
- Religion kills your spirit; religion is man trying to please God by having to do things, rituals, confessions, ceremonies, and practices that have the appearance but are missing the power.
- I don't have time nor any interest in religion! Jesus did not come to make us more *religious*.
- Rather, He said,

John 10:10 (NKJV)

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. *I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*”

- Jesus did not come to give us religion, but a relationship, a personal relationship with Him!
- You say to someone “You need Jesus” and they say, “I’m a Catholic...I’m a Pentecostal...I’m a Baptist...I’m an Episcopal...or I’m an Epistiscopal.” No, you are a deceived religious person.
- Now you can go to any of these churches mentioned and be a Christian.
- But it’s not the brand name on your church, but it’s about who lives in your heart!
- I’m not slamming church...I’m slamming people who put ritual in the place of relationship and religion in the place of Jesus.
- This is what these religious leaders did...they did nothing to meet the living Savior.

The innkeeper missed Christmas because of ignorance.

Herod missed Christmas because of fear.

The religious leaders missed Christmas because of religion.

- People miss Christ, they miss Christmas because of ignorance, fear, or religion.

- Or it may be an idol in your life: it might be money, sex, power, or career.
- What are you passionate about? What gets you fired up? That might be an idol in your life.
- But there is one group in our story that seems to have gotten this thing right...and they are the wise men.

God works in mysterious ways.

- God reveals Himself to those who are truly seeking Him.
- It doesn't matter what your background is or what your practices have been.

The wise men seem to have gotten things right in our story:

- Now I need to give a few details that might mess with your wonderful little manger scenes.

Verses 1-2

- They are seeking for *The Christ*.
- They are seeking *The Christ* based on science and prophecy.

Verse 11

- They fell down and worshipped Jesus!
- We also don't know that there were three kings...we just know that there were three gifts...we don't know how many.
- Who are these wise men? Greek word "magi" where we get the English word magic or magician from.
 - These men were magicians.
 - These men practiced astronomy, astrology, and sorcery.
 - These were the men who were consulted by kings about future events.

- These men were into the occult, astrology, sorcery, but guess what—these men wanted to know the truth! They wanted to know the truth more than the religious leaders of that day.
- **They were Truth Seekers!**
- They wanted to know the truth and God recognized that and He met them where they were at!
- He said, “you guys into stars? I’ll give you a star...follow that star, and it will lead you to the truth”
- God wasn’t condoning what they did, but God came to them where they were at and reached out to them.

God will reach you where you are at!

- He comes to each of us on an individual level and meets us where we are at.

Jeremiah 29:13 (NKJV)

“And you will seek Me and find *Me*, when you search for Me with all your heart.”

I believe that Jesus will reveal himself to anyone who is truly seeking Him.

- And if someone hasn’t found Him, they are not truly seeking Him.

They came to worship Him!

- They gave gifts to Jesus!
- Come to Jesus this Christmas...don’t forget Jesus this Christmas. give your heart to Him that you might worship Him.
- The greatest gift you can give to Christ is yourself!
 - Give everything to Him.
 - Give all your talents to Him.
 - Don’t miss Jesus because of the buck...give him your bucks!
 - Don’t miss Jesus because of fear...give Him your fears.

- Don't miss Jesus because of religion...leave religion and come into a relationship.
- Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart...

Pray with me to receive Christ...

"Let's now light our candles, symbolizing Jesus, the light of the world..."