

“What About the Baby?”

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given” (Isaiah 9:6a).

One of the things I love most about this time of year is all the Christmas songs on the radio. I have the *SiriusXm* app on my iPad and phone, which means I can listen to all my favorites in the office each day on channels like *Holiday Traditions, Acoustic Christmas, Holiday Soul, Country Christmas, Jazz Holidays, and even Rock-in Xmas*. Songs like *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, Frosty the Snowman, White Christmas, and Jingle Bells* play frequently, to say the least. A couple of days ago I switched to the view where you can see all the songs playing on your favorite channels at once, and *Santa Claus is Coming to Town* was playing on three stations at the same time! All these holiday classics about Reindeer, snow, and Santa. I mean nothing captures the essence of Christmas like a red-nose reindeer, a talking snowman, a ride in a horse-drawn sleigh, or a song warning *that you better watch out, you better not cry, you better not shout, I'm telling you why*. I hope you catch my sarcasm, because I'm laying it on pretty thick.

But I do like all of these songs, and I would guess that all of you do too. Most of them make us smile. They generally put us in a good mood because they're festive and fun. But what about the baby? Christmas contains one word that I hope is obvious. It's not Rudolph, Frosty, Snow, or even Santa. The word is what? CHRIST. **C-H-R-I-S-T**. Christ, God in the flesh, who came into a broken world, not to condemn the world, but to save it! Christmas is about God not letting us live in darkness, fear, or even death, which means Christmas is about God seeking out the lost, reaching out to those who rebel, giving people life and life eternal. And it all started with a baby. *“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.”*

But even in this world full of people who God chose to save, not everyone sees it that way, do they? For a lot of people out there, maybe even some of you, Christmas is about what the secular songs and movies tell us that it is. *It's the hap-happiest season of all. With those holiday greetings and gay happy meetings when friends come to call...* the song goes. Or like one popular movie tells us near the end, *"Christmas means something different to everyone. Now I know what it means to me."* The suggestion is that all we have to do is insert whatever good thing that is happening in our lives at that very moment, and suddenly we have the true meaning of Christmas. But again, what about the baby?

I guess if you truly don't believe that God's grace and mercy in Christ calls all sinners to a celebration, then *Frosty* might just be enough. If you truly just want to put up your decorations, buy your gifts, and act like you have absolutely no need for true hope and true peace, then *"Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow."* If you shun the notion that a day as big and as widely celebrated as Christmas is at the very core about a baby who grew up to be known as Jesus of Nazareth, but from the very beginning was the Word and the Word was God, and it is God in the flesh who pursues every broken and spiritually bankrupt sinner like you and me, then keep *Rock-in Around the Christmas Tree*.

But the baby will still be there. *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.* A gift of divine grace to sinners. A child...a son... a baby. This was the promise Isaiah gave so long ago to the people of Israel, who just like today, were desperately trying to write their own stories, while still seeking the heavenly rewards. But through Isaiah, God basically told them to stop making stuff up. No matter what scheme or excuse they came up with, they could not do for themselves what only God would do in Christ. And it happened. It's a historical fact and a historical truth. He, Jesus, the Son of the Most High who the Lord God gave the throne of David—He reigns over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

This is the reason why Christmas is a time for loving and sharing. This is the reason why Christmas is a time for giving and receiving. We are celebrating the

birth of the Savior—the Savior who’s been working for us from the start. The Savior who comes, fully God and fully man, to seek the the lost and the last. The Savior who says, whatever story you make up to try and take my place, I will **still** seek you out to be mine forever.

So in the hustle and bustle of the season, how can we remember this? How can we keep the baby at the center of the celebration? Well, one way is to listen to songs that tell the story. Do you have a favorite Christmas carol, hymn, or song? Is there one, that for you, really captures the essence of who Christ is and what he came to do? If not, I encourage you to expand your listening choices beyond the secular. Those songs are catchy and certainly a part of most of our celebrations. But what about the most important part of Christmas? What about the baby? Is it time to let him in? Is it time that he gets his place on your playlist?

By a show of hands, how many of you have been to the Christmas Eve service here at Hope that begins at 11:00PM? It’s my favorite service. I love it because it begins on Christmas Eve and ends on Christmas Day. I love the readings, the proclamation of the Gospel in the sermon, the celebration of Holy Communion, and I love the candle lighting at the end. I’m telling you, when the lights go out, and all I see are the candles lighting the darkness, I get chills. But it doesn’t end there. When we start to sing *Silent Night*, I actually get tears in my eyes thinking our just how much God loves us. If you’ve been in that service, you’ve probably experienced the same. I am especially moved at the very end when we sing *Silent Night* and end with the word *Christ the Savior is born*.

This is only one example. But the good news is that we don’t have to be in church on Christmas Eve to hear songs about the Baby. We can be in the car, in the office, and of course, at home. *Joy to world the Lord is come!* Sing it with me. *Let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare Him room. And heaven and nature sing. And heaven and nature sing. And heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.* Or, *“Oh come all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant. Oh come ye, oh come ye to Bethlehem. Come and behold him Born the King of angels. Oh, come*

let us adore him, Oh come let us adore him. Oh come let us adore him. Christ the Lord.

In closing tonight, I want to be clear about something. This sermon was not about bashing the familiar songs we all enjoy this time of year, or the traditions we all have. Neither was this sermon one of those, “You better put Christ back in Christmas or else.” The good news for us all is that Christ put himself in Christmas. And because He did, through faith in Him, God will not hold your sins against you. Because He did, death will not be the end. *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.* This sermon, this Christmas, this gift of God’s grace, this life, is all about Him... Christ the Lord. **Amen.**