

And they would share their stories. Now, you think women are bad at the beauty shop. Men are just as bad when they get together and start sharing those stories.

And I remember just listening to one story after the next. And they would talk about politics and fishing and weather and religion and sports.

And, of course, their favorite topic was grandchildren, right? And I would just hear them share those stories. And there was one topic that came up one morning that caused my grandfather to have a totally different expression come across his face.

The tone in his voice was different than when he was talking about anything else. It was the topic of war. You see, my grandfather served in World War II on a naval battleship and was wounded when a gun exploded near him.

[6 : 17] My grandfather loved his country. He served his country. And in that little diner, in that little cafe, I remember seeing an entirely different expression come over him when the topic of war was mentioned.

Later on, I thought about that situation. I thought about that moment, that experience in my life. And it hit me that when I thought about the issue of freedom, my grandfather viewed it in a very different way than I did.

If you were to ask me about freedom, I would initially think of things like a flag flying. I would think of like an eagle soaring.

I would think of picnics in July, things like that. But when my grandfather thought of freedom, he thought of things like explosions, blood, war.

And what occurred to me was that I viewed freedom from the perspective of the receiver. But he viewed freedom from the perspective of a provider, of someone who actually knew what it was like on the other side.

[7 : 41] Some of you know that experience as well. Now, listen to me, faith family and those of you listening online. Could it be that you and I do the same thing when it comes to Christmas?

If I asked you about Christmas, you talk about Christmas lights. Or you may talk about the Christmas gifts that you're going to receive or give away.

You might talk about a Christmas meal with your family gathered around the table. You talk about Christmas trees and how they're decorated in your home. And of course, as Christians, you would even mention the reason for the season that salvation came to mankind.

But let's be honest, that's only Christmas from the perspective of the receiver. It's not wrong and it's not bad. In fact, it's even expected.

But it's not the whole picture of Christmas. And what I want to do tonight in just these few moments is I want to pull back the curtain of Christmas and help us see a different perspective, namely Christmas from the perspective of Jesus.

[8 : 54] Because Jesus views Christmas as one of a provider, not a receiver. So think about this. And this is exactly what John is talking about here in 1 John 3 verse 8.

Look at the verse again. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. Now notice this phrase. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

Now maybe you're wondering like where are you getting the idea of Christmas from this verse?

Well, you notice the phrase the Son of God appeared. John here is clearly talking about the incarnation.

He's not just talking about Jesus kind of made a guest appearance, but that the Word became flesh. We see this in a parallel passage.

For instance, Hebrews chapter 2 verse 14. Since, therefore, the children share in what? Flesh and blood.

[9 : 57] So we're talking about humanity. He likewise partook of the same things. That is, Jesus became a man. That through death, He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.

So both passages, 1 John 3 verse 8 and Hebrews 2 verse 14, are talking about Christmas, the incarnation of Jesus coming into the world.

Why? Because, specifically, of evil. In other words, and I know some of you are not going to like this message, but before you can really enjoy and experience Christmas light, you have to realize there was a Christmas darkness.

That in order for us to fully understand the Christmas story, it's not just about happy times, but real evil in the world.

That it's not just about a mythical figure that we act like is real on Christmas morning. It's actually about a real figure we treat in a mythical way almost every day.

[11 : 05] Christmas, according to the Apostle John, was about Satan. This is not the Christmas message you usually hear. In fact, some of you are quite uncomfortable with the fact that I'm talking about Satan on the Saturday before Christmas.

It makes it awkward. In fact, try this. How many of you got kids at home? Okay, you're going to do presents here in a few days. Before you let them open presents, here's what I want you to do. I want you to say, kids, before we open gifts, I need to talk to you about something.

I'd like to talk to you about Satan. Okay? And just see what their response will be. No! How about we not talk about Satan? That seems so awkward on Christmas.

And that's because we tend to view Christmas through American sentimentalism and not the gospel. Because according to the scripture, Satan has everything to do with why Christmas.

And I know it's not popular, but yet it is true. We tend to want to discount Satan. Deepak Chopra said this, quote, The devil is an invention of psychologically unhealthy people who do not want to deal with the fact that there is good and evil in each of us.

[12 : 21] We tend to want to deny the reality of Satan. But the Bible doesn't. In fact, the Bible talks about Satan frequently. And those of you that are nervous right now, don't worry.

I'm not going to stay here all the whole sermon. But the Bible talks about Satan as a very real figure that has a very real influence. He is a fallen angelic being opposed to the things of God.

He is a murderer from the beginning. He has nothing to do with truth because he is the father of lies. He walks around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

He is the God of this world, small g, 2 Corinthians 4, 4. He's the prince of the power of the air, Ephesians 2. He has real influence in the world.

Let me give you some scriptures to back this up. Acts chapter 26 and verse 18. To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light.

[13 : 21] From the power of, I'm going to make you say it, Satan, right? To God that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Revelation chapter 12 verse 9. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.

1 John chapter 5 verse 18. We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him. And the evil one does not touch him.

We know that we are from God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. My point, faith family, is clear.

The scripture speaks of Satan as a real powerful being that has real influence in the world. And you say, but he doesn't have any influence over my life.

[14 : 21] And that's because we tend to think of someone being influenced by Satan as having 666 tattoos and sacrificing chickens in their basement. Okay, but that is not how the Bible talks about Satanism.

The Bible talks about Satanism as pride. Because what made Satan fall was he wanted to be God. That was the very temptation in the garden, was it not?

You know, you don't have to serve God. You don't have to submit to God. You could actually be God. Eat. That's what real Satanism is.

Here is actually a quote from a self-identified Satanist. He says, Satanism is the world's first carnal religion. It doesn't have anything to do with a real devil, though I would disagree with that.

He says, Satanists aren't devil worshippers. This is so good. We simply see Satan as a symbol of pride, liberty, and individualism.

[15 : 23] This is why when Jesus looked at the Pharisees and said, You are of your father, the devil, what he's addressing is pride in their life.

You don't submit to God. You want to be God. You've exalted yourself above God. And that reality still exists in all of us.

Nobody here, I trust, is being tempted to sacrifice chickens in your basement. Anybody here got a 666 tattoo? Show it. Nobody. Okay.

How many of you deal with pride and exalting yourself in life? His influence is alive and well more than we often realize.

And what John is saying is this world is broken and the effects of sin and evil are all around us. And listen, this is why Jesus appeared.

[16:24] This is why Jesus entered in. This is why we celebrate Christmas. So this is the reality in the world. It's the world in which Jesus came into.

And why did he come into the world? Look at 1 John chapter 3 verse 5. You know that he appeared, that is he came, to take away sins.

And in him there is no sin. Read verse 8 again, or at least the last phrase. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. Look at Hebrews 2.14 again.

Hebrews 2.14. So in other words, Jesus came, Christmas exists because Jesus came to put an end to the works of the devil.

To put an end to sin. He partook of flesh and blood. He became human that he might destroy the one who has power over death.

[17:35] In other words, listen, at Christmas, Jesus came to destroy something. Jesus came to set something free.

And you say, well, I thought Christmas was about peace on earth, goodwill toward men. I mean, isn't that what we sing about? And isn't that on our Christmas cards? Yes, but before there could ever be peace in your life, a war would have to be fought.

And that's why Jesus came. He came with the mission to destroy the power of Satan. And inside the womb of a frightened teenage girl, God declared war.

As Mary endured labor pains and Joseph wondered, how in the world am I going to manage this situation? Evil is stirring in the air. And we saw this, did we not, in our Revelation study?

Do you remember that verse in Revelation chapter 12, verse 4? And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth so that when she bore her child, he might devour it.

[18:41] That's the imagery of Christmas. The Bible gives us the imagery of Satan waiting for this child to be born so that he can devour it.

Because Satan knew that ever since Genesis chapter 3, there was a child coming. And that child was coming with a mission. And that mission was to crush his head.

And to this point in redemptive history, the evil one has been able to say, you're not it. And you're not it. And you're not it. And then one night in Bethlehem, he was born.

Jesus, the Son of God, appeared. And all of a sudden, war broke out. There was a declaration of war inside that womb.

And Satan does everything he can at that point to get the victory. And in fact, if you don't like viewing Jesus' coming this way, listen to how Jesus described his coming and why he appeared.

[19:48] Look at Luke chapter 11, verse 20. If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, Satan, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe.

But when one stronger than he, Jesus, attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.

But what is Jesus saying? Satan is strong. Satan is a strong man. He has influence and power in the world. But I am stronger. I, by casting a demon out, by showing my power over the demonic powers, I am revealing to you that I am the one that am able to bring victory in the war against the evil one.

So as they say, you do these works of Satan, that's what they accuse Jesus of. Jesus is able to turn that around and say, no, my doing this work shows you I have victory over Satan.

He is a strong man, but there is a stronger man who has appeared. That's exactly how Jesus describes his own ministry. So faith family, the military metaphor may seem out of place among the yuletide images of snowflakes and tinsel, but it shouldn't.

[21:21] If this is odd to you, it's because you're caught up more in commercialism than the gospel. It's because this hasn't been taught enough in our churches at Christmastime.

Because like the 1811 earthquake that caused the Mississippi River to run backwards, the moment the virgin-born child breathed his first breath, the course of humanity started to change direction and hell shuddered at the thought.

Satan tried on that Christmas to get Herod to kill babies. He tried to bribe wise men. He tried to get Judas to sell out for a few coins.

He tried to turn disciples like Peter from contenders to cowards. He even tried three nails and a cross, but hell could not prevail.

And that's why Jesus appeared. Amen? Am I the only one here, right? This is why John says the Son of God came.

[22 : 27] And you say, well, what does this mean for us? Jesus approached Christmas as the provider so that you could enjoy Christmas as the receiver.

Jesus came into the darkness so that you could celebrate light. In the same way that I could sit there in that cafe and celebrate hamburgers and hot dogs on the 4th of July because men and women like my grandfather knew what it was like to hear the bombs.

They went through that so that we could experience what we celebrate today. Notice what John says in chapter 3, verse 9.

No one is born of God makes a practice of sinning for God's seed abides in him. He cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

Now look at Hebrews chapter 2, 14 and 15. What does this mean for us?

[23 : 46] What's the good news of the gospel in this? Notice that John speaks here of new birth. Jesus came into an evil world.

And Jesus fought a dark demonic war so you could have new life. So that you could experience freedom in Christ.

Is that not what the angel told Joseph in Matthew chapter 1? This child will what? Save his people from their sins.

In other words, this child came to set his people free. Which means, notice it on the screen, Christmas is not only about the birth of Jesus, but Christmas is about your birth.

It's about your life. It's about the fact that you have been given a new life in Christ because of what Jesus did.

[24 : 52] This is why we started our worship singing out with Hark the Herald Angel Sing. Here's the lyrics that we just sing. Mild he lays his glory by.

Born that man no more may die. To end the slavery of death. That we can have eternal life. Born to raise the sons of earth.

Born to give them what? Second birth. Hark. What does hark mean? Listen. Listen. The Herald Angel Sing.

Glory to the newborn king. He is victorious. He won the war. So you don't have to die. You get a second birth.

Come on. With the angels. Rejoice. That's what you're singing. When you sing Hark the Herald Angel Sing. Is that our Jesus came into a sinful world.

[25 : 56] Fought a demonic war. Won. So that we could experience Christmas as the receiver. Faith family. If you want to understand the real meaning of Christmas.

You have got to see it. Not through the eyes of American sentimentalism. But through the eyes of the gospel. And here is how you view Christmas rightly.

Through the eyes of the gospel. In the Garden of Eden. A war was lost. Temporarily. Humanity. Humanity. Became prisoners of war.

And Jesus came. That is he appeared. The way John uses that language. In order to win you back. And set spiritual captives free.

To bring you out of darkness. And into light. To take us from dead in our sins. To risen to walk in newness of life. Hark. Sing. Glory to the newborn king.

[26 : 57] He won. He reigns. He reigns. We are free. And that makes Christmas worth celebrating. If all you do is go as deep on Christmas as lights and Christmas trees.

And maybe giving a nod to a nativity scene. You my friend haven't gone deep enough. You don't have a clue as to what was really going on.

On that night in Bethlehem. When Jesus our Savior appeared. Oh there was a lot going on. In the powers and principalities that night.

And many nights thereafter. Until one day a stone rolled away. And death no longer had the victory anymore.

The true Adam had come. And overturned what the first Adam did. He won the victory humanity had lost. And what this means is for us to think rightly about Christmas.

[28 : 02] Or at least holistically. That just as we associate Abraham Lincoln. With the freeing of slaves. Just as we see the crumbling of the Berlin Wall.

As a symbol of freedom. The statue of Saddam Hussein. Coming down as the overthrow of an evil dictator. We've got to start seeing the manger.

As more than just a nativity piece. But the beginning of the greatest victory. The world has ever known.

Christmas. That first Christmas was violent. But had it not been. Tonight you wouldn't have peace with God. That first Christmas was dark.

But without that. You wouldn't celebrate the light of Jesus. That first Christmas was a baby born to die. So that you would have eternal life with God.

[29 : 05] That's what was going on at Christmas. So I ask you three questions tonight. Number one. Whose side are you on? Whose side are you on?

Because in war there is no neutrality. And John who loves his extremes. Who loves saying there's no gray. There's no middle ground. You're either on the side of the devil.

Or you're on the side of God. You're on the side of Christ. So I ask you tonight. Whose side are you on? Number two. Have you experienced the new birth?

Have you turned from your sin? And put your faith in Jesus Christ. Then you would have a Christmas worth celebrating. Then you would experience Christmas from the perspective of the receiver of eternal life.

And number three. Are you experiencing the freedom of the new birth? Are you living in that freedom? Living not as a slave. Living in your new identity.

[30 : 07] Believing and living in the victory that is yours in Christ. And my prayer for you is that you will live that this Christmas. And that you will truly celebrate and know that you are victorious in Christ.

Well faith family. Regardless of what the old Christmas hymn says. It was anything but a silent night in Bethlehem. Anything but. When the Son of God appeared in the flesh.

In that moment God was invading enemy territory. Unlike the war that my grandfather fought. We don't call it D-Day. We call it Christmas Day.

Because Jesus came to end the reign of sin. And on that night. If you to listen closely. To the sounds of the stable.

Somewhere in Bethlehem. You would have heard the screaming of a teenager in labor. You would have heard the pacing of a nervous carpenter. You would have heard the rumblings of animal noises.

[31 : 15] But behind all of those sounds. If you to listen closely. You would have heard another sound. The sound of a serpent's head.

That was about to be crushed. And that sound.

That crushing sound. Was Jesus declaring to the powers and principalities. Merry Christmas.

And all God's people said. Amen. Let's pray together. God thank you for verses like this in 1 John 3.8. That we tend to jump over at Christmas time.

We run to all the lights and the glitter and the warm fuzzies. And the things that are very sentimental. And there's some reason for that. There's in no way being negative to that.

[32 : 16] But there is a different side of Christmas we don't often think about. A different perspective. And yet if we're going to celebrate the good news of the gospel. If we are really going tonight to celebrate all that we have in Christ.

We must see that side as well. This world is under the influence of an evil one. And it has been for quite some time.

And so God you so loved the world. That you sent your only son into this world. And you declared war. For you would win your people back.

Through the sacrifice of your only son. Help us this Christmas to see Christmas through the eyes of Jesus. Through the perspective of a provider.

And may that give us more reason to celebrate Christmas from the perspective of a receiver. He has given us so much. I pray that we would live in that and experience the freedom that is ours in Christ.

[33 : 27] Hark the herald angels sing. Glory to the newborn king. We pray it in his name. Amen.
Amen.