

Egypt James Shepherd

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[0 : 0 0] no matter what has been going on in our week, whether it's been a good week or a bad week, we can come here to be reminded of God's grace for us, His love for us in His Son, and draw strength from Him.

And so as we hear from His Word this evening, let us pray together once more that God would speak to us and encourage us to keep going and walking faithfully for Him. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You so much for being come here this evening.

We thank You, Lord, that You draw us to Yourself through Your Son. And we just pray, Father, as we are here, that You would be with us, that You would speak to us, that You would challenge us and convict us to change whatever needs to be changed in order that we can continue to live faithfully following You.

And we pray, Lord, in Your Son's name. Amen. Well, it's all over. Christmas is done for another year. I hope you all had a wonderful time at Christmas shared with family and friends.

Christmas is a beautiful time of year. Not just because it's a time we get to spend with family and with friends, but also it's a time we go crazy with decorations. People put up pretty lights and decorations on their houses, going nuts for the festive season.

[1 : 1 0] People spend a whole lot of time putting up their Christmas tree and decorating it and making a big deal out of it, putting up stockings as well. Shopping centers go absolutely wild with carols and trees and decorations all over the place.

And even now, we even decorate our own cars with reindeer antlers being put on them. Has anyone seen those driving around the streets and such? Yes. And is anyone here brave enough to admit that they have reindeer antlers on their cars?

There are some of you who are like, oh dear. So if I was to walk outside right now, I would not see any, right? Is that right? Okay, I believe you. Fair enough. We go wild at Christmas for a whole month.

We transform the way our shops look, the way our houses look, and even now, the way our cars look. All for Christmas. And then on Christmas Day, you might think it's all about the food.

You might think it's all about the presents. You might even think it's all about family. But let me tell you, you'd be wrong. According to Facebook and Instagram, the whole day is about the table.

[2 : 1 5] It's all about the table. And a successful Christmas lunch depends upon how good your table looks, how pretty and original the bonbons are, how neat and organized everything is, how ornate and pretty the whole thing is.

Even the location is important so that the environment around the table can complement the beauty of the Christmas table. Your table game is very important at Christmas time.

At Christmas time, we go that extra mile to make the month and the day look beautiful. We do it because it makes us feel good. We like beautiful things.

And it can make our life, even just for a day, seem perfect and beautiful. We forget everything that might be going wrong for us in our life and focus on the vibe around us, the joy that Christmas time brings.

Christmas in our modern culture is a time to focus on the good things in life. We spend our time celebrating the joy of your friends and family.

[3 : 2 3] We celebrate good food and presents. We celebrate the good times we've had this year and the good times we're looking forward to next year. Christmas is a time of celebration.

And so we don't want to be thinking about the brokenness of our world. We want to have fun. We want to be joyful. And this is why we go to such lengths.

Why we decorate. Why we have so many presents and food. And why we go all out on our dinner tables. We want the day to be entirely filled with joy and excitement.

But the reality is we can't escape the brokenness of our world. No matter what we do, the brokenness of this world will always be ready to stare at us right in the face, even on Christmas Day.

Your kids don't always like the presents you get for them. I'm sure there are some in your family that you struggle to deal with on Christmas. And Christmas time only makes you more aware of this as old wounds and pains resurface once more.

[4 : 34] For some of us, Christmas can be quite a lonely time. And the day only serves to remind us of what we have lost or what we've never had.

Our world is broken. And not even Christmas Day can disguise that well enough. But that's wherein lies the good news.

Christmas Day is not about disguising the ugliness and the brokenness of our world. Indeed, Christmas Day is all about exposing it.

Matthew's account of the first Christmas story is to clearly expose the brokenness of our world. He recounts a very violent account of the Christmas story that honestly leaves us shocked and a little bit confused.

But as we read, we learn of a God who is in control despite all the brokenness going on in our world. We learn of a God who has not overcome or affected by the brokenness of our world, but who has a plan to expose it in order to deal with it.

[5 : 42] Christmas Day is all about exposing our brokenness and dealing with it. Let's read again from verse 13. When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream.

Get up, he said. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him. So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod.

And so it was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet. Out of Egypt I called my son. When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and his vicinity who were two years old and under.

And according to the time he had learned from the Magi. Here we learn firsthand just how broken and sinful the world is. The king of Judea at this time is King Herod and he is quite a character.

As Steve mentioned at our Christmas services, King Herod was a paranoid leader. Always thinking he was about to be betrayed. He had his brother-in-law killed, his wife killed, as well as both of his sons killed.

[6 : 58] All because he thought they were trying to take over him. He was an unforgiving, paranoid tyrant who constantly feared any challenge to his sovereignty.

And so when the Magi came to him and approached him and asked him, where is the one who has been born the king of the Jews, we want to go and worship him, this sends Herod into a frenzy. He is the king of the Jews, not this newborn kid. He orchestrates a plan to find this newborn king and kill him. However, this plan is foiled.

So what does he do? Verse 16, when Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and in its vicinity who were two years old and young and under.

To be crude, he widened his net. If he couldn't locate Jesus exactly, maybe he would manage to kill him in the midst of killing every single other boy, baby boy, in Bethlehem.

[8 : 12] It's sick. It's wicked. It's pure evil. I cannot begin to describe the sheer evil of this act.

This event brings to mind the events in Exodus where Pharaoh ordered the killing of all the boys of the Hebrews in order to cull their population.

And so the fact that Herod would dare to have the audacity to inflict such pain and suffering on his own people again goes to show just how wicked he is and how horribly broken our world is.

Matthew here doesn't introduce a Christmas story that looks glamorous and beautiful like the Christmas stories our world might be used to hearing that are filled with joy, luxury, comfort, food and family, presents and good times.

No, Matthew introduces a story that is violent and terrifying. A story that brings out the brokenness of our world for all of us to see.

[9 : 24] Therefore, as the reader, we are exposed to the sinfulness and brokenness of our world. The story of Christmas is not only confronting because of the horrors that Herod committed, but also because we are reminded that we're a part of the same world as Herod.

We too contribute towards the brokenness of this world. We too are sinful, flawed and broken people.

And Christmas is all about exposing us in such a way. Indeed, Christmas deconstructs our own self-inflated view, the pretty and glamorous idea we might build of ourselves and it plunges us into the reality that we are desperate and in need of a saviour.

The story of Christmas exposes our sinfulness and brokenness but it does not leave us there. It exposes our sin in order to deal with it.

The story of Christmas is one of violence from beginning to end, beginning with the horrific slaughter of children and ending with the violent murder of the Son of God.

[10 : 45] It's barely palatable but that's the story it leaves us feeling sick as we are confronted with the reality of sin in our world and our own brokenness and sinfulness.

But there is hope because Jesus did not merely come to expose our sin, he came to deal with it. What this story shows us is that in his coming, God doesn't merely show that he is able to expose our sinfulness but that he is also sovereign over it.

He's in control and he can deal with it. The world might be in a chaotic mess but he is able to ruin that chaos, achieve his perfect plan and will to save us from our sin.

We see it straight up in our passage in the opening verse. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in the dream. Get up, he said. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.

In the face of conflict and oppression, God divinely intercedes and ensures that the newborn king would be safe and kept away from Herod's attempts to kill him.

[12 : 07] And Joseph is once more warned in verse 22, but when he heard Achelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth.

He shows that in the midst of a broken and violent world, he is still in control, that he will achieve his purpose and plan, that this Jesus will save his people from their sins.

Death pursued Jesus. This was the pattern of his life. But death itself never consumed him. It never caught up to him finally and overtook him.

No, death had no power over Jesus. What happened, as Paul says in Philippians 2, was that Jesus became obedient to death.

Death pursued Jesus until the appointed time where Jesus would become obedient to death in order to save his people from their sins.

[13 : 14] What we see here is the incredible sovereignty of God working through the brokenness of our world in order to redeem it. God turns the brokenness of this world in on its head.

As we saw in the genealogy, God uses broken people, people who we would otherwise look down upon and despise for their sinfulness and their ugliness and their yuckiness.

God uses those people to achieve his good and perfect plan of salvation. In a broken world where death brings destruction and hopelessness for so many people, God in his power and sovereignty uses the death of his son to bring hope and life, to save us from our sins.

He deals with our brokenness, our sinfulness. He lifts up our head and fixes our gaze on him, giving us hope in a broken world.

At Christmas time, our world is so focused on forgetting the brokenness of our world, being distracted instead by the beauty and the joy and the glamour that is engineered on the day itself.

[14 : 28] But the true beauty of Christmas that Matthew is not afraid to portray boldly is that Jesus came to save a broken world. The beauty of Christmas is that it doesn't try to hide our brokenness, it exposes it in order to deal with it.

The joy and the beauty of Christmas is that because Jesus has come, we are now able to face up to our brokenness.

We are able to look at our sinfulness, our wickedness, our brokenness, not with fear but with hope. As we turn our eyes to the one who became sin for us, who carried our sinfulness, the sinfulness of the world upon his shoulders.

When we look at our broken world, when we look at our broken and sinful life, we ought not to be overcome. We ought not to fear.

When our Christmas on Christmas Day doesn't live up to what we had hoped, doesn't look as pretty as we wanted, we ought not to be dismayed.

[15 : 41] Christmas is all about exposing our broken lives and our broken world in order to save it. Christmas is all about giving us hope in the midst of our brokenness.

A hope that sustains us in the world that would otherwise devour us. A hope that gives us strength as we look to Christ who deals with our sinfulness and our brokenness.

That is why Christmas is beautiful. That is why Christmas is joyful. Because it gives us strength through tears, through pain, through suffering, through our brokenness to keep going.

To look at the world in its broken state. To grieve, yes. To feel the pain, yes. But to keep going knowing that God has sent his son to deal with it.

To keep going as we look forward to eternity. So, what do we do with our traditions on Christmas Day and at Christmas time? It might sound like I'm throwing those things under the bus a little bit.

[16 : 53] That Christmas should be more about a private reflection of what God has done for us. And whilst it's very important to remember who we are and how broken we are, I want to say the opposite.

Christmas is a wonderful time. A joyful time. And we should feast. We should celebrate. We should give presents. Not because these things should distract us from our brokenness.

But because we know full well. Full well of our brokenness and that it has been dealt with. We celebrate the day God opened our eyes for the brokenness of our world.

Confronted us with the reality of our sin. Not to put fear in us but to give us hope. That is something worth celebrating. Us broken, sinful people enjoying peace with God.

The Christmas story then is not something that we celebrate or have on our minds only one day of the year. For the Christian it is something on our hearts, on our minds, something that we are celebrating all the time, every single day of the year.

[18 : 04] The Christmas story gives us the capacity to look at our brokenness and not be overcome by it. It informs us that only in Jesus can we be sustained in our brokenness and have hope for the future.

hope in a world full of wickedness, desperation and brokenness. There is a whole world out there who needs the tough love of having their sin exposed.

A world who doesn't know how to deal with their brokenness and sinfulness. They only know how to distract themselves from it. Whether it's by constantly turning to the good things in life, focusing on the events themselves or otherwise.

But we, brothers and sisters, do know how to deal with our brokenness. Indeed, we know the one who has dealt with it. Our world needs us to help them to look towards Jesus to deal with their brokenness.

But the thing is, is that it starts with us. It starts with you. Are you looking to Jesus in the midst of your own brokenness and sinfulness to find hope?

[19 : 26] To find salvation? Or are you allowing yourself to be distracted? Are you willing to be confronted by your own broken life, by your own sinfulness?

Or would you rather just go on with your life and being distracted and not even think about that?

The story of Christmas is all about how much God loves you.

His love for you is so great that he came into our sinful, broken world in order to expose it for what it really is that we might be saved from our sins.

So do not be afraid. Do not despair. Christ has come to save sinners, broken people like you and me.

Facing up to our brokenness is scary. I mean, it's terrifying. To relinquish control of ourselves and to give it over to God.

[20 : 28] To realize that we are not good enough on our own to save ourselves. But in the end, it ends with joy as we trust that God can deal with it.

As he deals with it by giving us himself in his son. That is why we celebrate Christmas. And that's what makes it beautiful.