

Sermon Notes of Rev.Dr.I.J.W.Oakley (19-12-1993 Guisborough Evangelical Church)

Luke 2 v 8-20

Introduction

What is Christmas all about? To some – having a “good time” – even though empty purses, sore heads and great deal of unhappiness often follows the “good time”. To some – all about making money, getting as much as you can in as short a time as you can. To others – a sad time because think of days gone by, people who used to be here and used to sit around the family table.

But none of these things is really what Christmas is about. What is its core and heart and true meaning? Only Bible has got answer to that.

The Christmas Message is a Message for Everybody

How often do you see things advertised that hold no interest to you? A mountain bike? A Butlin’s holiday? The answer to beautiful hair? But Christmas is for everybody. **Good tidings of great joy for all people** (Luke 2:10). At the manger on the first Christmas, there were humble shepherds and dignified wise men, Jews and Gentiles, poor and rich, unlearned and educated.

Greatest text in the Bible **God so loved the world** - regardless of country they live in, colour of skin, kind of house, age or century. Message is for all of us, though we differ in many ways – likes and dislikes, money in the bank, houses we live in. But we all need this message.

The Christmas Message is very suitable for Everybody

To you this day is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord. Called “Jesus” because He shall save. What do we need to be saved from? Trouble? Bad luck? Fate? Accident? Unexpected bereavement? There is no guarantee in Christian Gospel that we can ever be free from trouble and tragedy. But we are offered Salvation from something far more terrible. It is an incurable disease, bondage, the cause of all trouble and misery in this world. Affects every one of us in different ways. The Bible calls it sin. We may say we know nothing of this – we don’t murder, we don’t commit adultery, we are as honest as the day is long.

If we think like this, the problem is we do not understand what sin really is. Sin is “I” in the centre. Thieves, murderers and adulterers put “I” in the centre, but so do we all. If I live to please myself, seek to run my own life, if I don’t want anybody else telling me what to do, if I am at the centre of my thinking and conversation, if I draw attention to myself – how wise, clever, good and kind I am - then “I” am at the centre, instead of God. How rarely we think of Him, do His will, live to please Him, bring glory to His name. We lie constantly, daily, deliberately and carelessly. Cause of this world’s trouble – “I” in the centre, and not God. Try as we like, cannot change ourselves.

Sin spoils our relationship with God and with others. Cuts us off from Him. Keeps us out of heaven. We urgently need a Saviour to bring us forgiveness, clear our debts, wipe our slate clear, and work in life to change and remake us. This is why He died and rose again.

The shepherds were told the Good News **A Saviour has been born**, and we are called to hear the same Good News. He came to seek and save the lost. If we are pleased with ourselves, happy with ourselves, think we are all right, the Christmas message will mean nothing. But if we know we are lost, aware of sin, urgently in need of forgiveness and a new start, then the Christmas Message is wonderful good news. A message which fills us with joy. **Good tidings of great joy** according to the angels. It made the wise men rejoice with exceedingly great joy.

Joyful news indeed – slave released from slavery, condemned man set free, cure for deadly illness discovered. The only people who have any right to be happy are those who know their need and danger, and have found the answer. The world should be mourning, its fate has been sealed.

The Christmas Message is one which demands a verdict

Message for all, all need it, provision made of a Saviour. What are we going to do about it? Not just a fact of history or sound doctrine. God offers us a gift, free pardon awaits us, He offers to heal, save and change us. But the gift has to be received, hand stretched out to take hold of it. **God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life** (John 3:16). To take hold of the gift – must believe in Him, not just *about* Him. Put trust in Him, lean whole weight on Him, give whole self to Him.

Like having an operation – not enough to just believe the surgeon can heal the problem – have to allow self to go into hospital, be prepared for operation, be put to sleep, and to actually trust the surgeon, place life in his hands. Otherwise no healing.

Result of believing in Him and trusting life to Him – everlasting life and not perishing. Alternative – perish and not have eternal life. Must take action. Not be spectator. Must come into contact with Him.

The Christmas Message is a message worth passing on

The shepherds went to Bethlehem, visited the manger, saw the baby, found Christ for themselves, discovered what the angel said to be true. Then **they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child**. They went on their way **glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen**. Anxious that others might know. It was a day of glad tidings and they could not hold their peace, could not keep it to themselves.

The Christmas Message is the best thing we could tell someone else. Of all the things we talk about – homes, selves, jobs, children, weather – the best of all topics of conversation is that a Saviour has been born, Christ the Lord. We have found Him for ourselves, He has met our need, given us forgiveness, new heart and new life. What

He has done for us He can do for others. Someone once described evangelism as one beggar telling another beggar where he can find bread.

Conclusion

The Christmas message is for everybody. No one can say it doesn't apply to him. It has everything to do with us, and is suitable for everybody. It tells us a Saviour has been born – born to deal with the problem of world, society and selves – sin.

A Saviour has been born – this is the Christmas Message. It's not about showing a bit more goodwill than usual, or about being more generous than usual, or putting hand deeper into pocket. It is a message that demands a verdict. In Pilate's words "What then shall I do with Jesus?"