

**Christmas is a Celebration**  
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What is the biggest celebration in the world? Some people think it's Mardi Gras in New Orleans or the Carnival in Rio. Some think of New Year's Eve at Times Square. But none of those even come close.

The biggest celebration in the world is Christmas. How do I know that? First of all, Christmas is celebrated all over the world – not just in one place. And, not only is Christmas celebrated all over the world, it is celebrated for a whole month – not just for one day.

During the Christmas season billions of people shut down work, go to church services, have parties, decorate their home, send out cards, buy gifts, sing Christmas songs and travel long distances to gather with family and friends to celebrate Christmas.

When Christmas comes, you can't miss it. It's celebrated everywhere. That's why I'm preaching today on Christmas is a Celebration.

What makes Christmas so special? After all, it's celebrating an event that happened two thousand years ago, in the Middle East, in a little town, with no fanfare. But today, two thousand years later, it can still stop traffic. How is that? What's so special about Christmas?

The fact is the birth of Jesus Christ is the most significant event in the history of mankind. In fact, history is measured by this event. History is divided into B.C. – Before Christ - and A.D. – which stands for Anno Domini – in the year of the Lord.

Every other event in history is dated by the life of Christ.

Every time you write a date – Jesus Christ is the focus.

Even your birthday is dated by His birthday.

In fact, even the poor atheist who doesn't believe in Jesus – even their birthday is dated by Jesus Christ.

God coming to earth as a baby is the biggest miracle and biggest event in history. That's why Christmas is the biggest celebration in the world.

The first Christmas started with a celebration. Luke 2:8-14 says:

*Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of*

*David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"*

At the very first Christmas, when an angel announced the birth of Jesus, there was a celebration in heaven.

And today, when we celebrate the birth of Christ, it's a celebration on earth! Christmas is a celebration of good news. Not just news, but good news. Christmas is a time for great joy. Not just joy, but great joy. Christmas is a time for people. Not just some people, but all people. Christmas is about good news of great joy for all people!

The Greek word translated "great" here is "mega" which means "big, huge, exceedingly great." Jesus came to earth to give us mega joy! I would venture to say that most of us would not say our lives are characterized by mega joy.

Christmas is a time to put joy and celebration back into our lives. Christmas is a party. Actually, it's a birthday party.

At Christmas, we have more parties than any other time of the year. Yet, it's ironic that often, the guest of honor is totally left out of the party. This Christmas I want you to celebrate with friends and family – but don't forget that Christmas is a birthday party for Jesus.

I don't want to shock you, but God really likes parties. In fact, the Bible says that the angels in heaven hold a party every time a single person trusts in Christ.

Christmas is a time to celebrate, but sometimes we're so busy preparing, getting ready, buying presents, planning, we don't have time to celebrate. We lose the joy of what the moment is all about.

Christmas is a celebration. Why do we celebrate? The angel said, *"I bring you good news of great joy, and it's for everybody."*

The good news of Christmas is for all people. It doesn't matter who you are, where you're from, where you've been or what you've done – Christmas is good news of great joy for you!

Yet for many people Christmas is a time for pressure, not pleasure. Many people feel stressed and depressed, but not blessed.

I understand that, but it shows you how far we've come from what Christmas should be. We must get back to the place where we celebrate Christmas regardless of our circumstances or problems.

You see, whoever you are, the good news is that God loves you.  
Wherever you are, God sent His only Son for you.  
Whatever you're going through, Jesus can get you through.  
However you feel, Christmas is a time to rejoice in the Lord.

That's another word for celebrate: rejoice. The Hebrew word for rejoice in the Bible refers to extreme joy expressed in a visible manner – most often music, singing and dancing. This emotion arises at events like festivals, wedding feasts, harvest feasts, or the overthrow of one's enemies.

By the way – I did some research on celebration in the Bible. I found 60 references to celebration in the NIV. We miss them in the KJV because it says things like this in Exodus 23:14 - *Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year.*

But if you look up the Hebrew words for “keep a feast” - the Bible dictionary defines that as “to observe a festival, to hold a holiday, to dance, to celebrate, and literally, to be giddy.”

Now I know some of us cringe when we think about parties because there were times we were not living for the Lord and parties involved ungodly people doing ungodly things in an ungodly way.

But don't throw out the baby with the bath. We can get back to having godly celebrations with godly people doing godly things in a godly way.

The Bible teaches us to celebrate. Leviticus 23 lists seven feasts which Israel was commanded to celebrate!

Passover celebrates the salvation of the nation of Israel from bondage in Egypt where they had been slaves for generations.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was a 7-day period when Israel avoided eating any food containing leaven or yeast. This points to the fact that they did not have time to put leaven in their bread because of their hasty departure from Egypt.

Biblically, leaven represents sin and evil. During this feast, people go through their whole house looking for leaven. This speaks of how God wants to remove all sin from our lives.

The Feast of Firstfruits celebrated the harvest, when a sheaf of wheat was waved before the Lord thanking Him for the coming harvest.

The fourth feast – Pentecost – occurs 50 days after First Fruits at the beginning of summer. Pentecost is a Greek word meaning 50. Pentecost celebrated the day God gave Moses the Law on Mt. Sinai 50 days after they crossed the Red Sea.

And 50 days after the resurrection of Christ – which occurred on First Fruits - the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost.

Prophetically, the first four feasts have already been fulfilled by Christ. The other three feasts are prophetic signposts to future events.

Historically, The Feast of Trumpets was a High Sabbath where the people were to blow the shofar, rejoice and do no work. We know that in the last days a trumpet will sound before the return of Christ.

The Day of Atonement is a day of fasting and repentance. On that day, the high Priest would go behind the veil into the Holy of Holies. He would atone for the sins of the nation by sprinkling blood on the Mercy Seat – which was the cover of the Ark of the Covenant. Everything about that points to Christ.

The Feast of Tabernacles gets its name from when the Children of Israel were living in tents while wandering in the wilderness. So, to commemorate that, during this feast, for seven days people lived in booths they made from branches of trees. This feast is a time of rejoicing that looks forward to the time when we will live with the Lord in heaven.

That's a brief overview of the feasts the Israel celebrated. And guess what? We should celebrate the same things!

- Jesus is our Passover so we should celebrate the fact that we are born again through faith in the shed blood of Jesus.
- Unleavened Bread shows that we need to celebrate our sanctification.
- Firstfruits show we need to celebrate our resurrection life in Christ.
- Pentecost shows we need to celebrate the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- Trumpets shows we need to celebrate our rest and rejoice in the Lord.
- Atonement shows we need celebrate the forgiveness we have through the blood of Jesus.
- Tabernacles shows we need to celebrate the presence of God.

The Bible is full of celebrations! And Jesus celebrated all those feasts!

Jesus also attended parties. He did His first miracle at a wedding party where He turned water into wine. Jesus celebrated and Jesus taught us to celebrate!

In the story of the prodigal son, the father represents God and this story shows us what happens in God's house when a sinner comes back home. God throws a party! Luke 15:23-32 says:

*Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.*

Then the older brother gets an attitude, but the Father tells him:

*My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.*

You will find celebrations all the way to the end of the Bible in Revelation 19 where there is a joyous celebration called the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

The Bible teaches us to celebrate. So, what are you celebrating this Christmas?

If you ask people, “What are you going to be celebrating this Christmas?” They say things like this:

“With the way the economy is, I don’t have a lot to celebrate this Christmas.”

“I don’t celebrate anything at Christmas; I just try to get through it.”

“I just celebrate the Christmas spirit.” (Whatever that is.)

“I celebrate the blessings our family had this year.”

Only a few would say: “I’m celebrating the birth of Christ.” So, a lot of people celebrate nothing at Christmas or they celebrate the wrong things at Christmas.

I want to tell you three things you can celebrate this Christmas. When God sent Jesus Christ to Earth, He was saying three things. One, God loves us. Two, God is with us. Three, God is for us. And no matter what you are going through, you can celebrate those three things: God loves you, God is with you and God is for you!

First, we celebrate Christmas because God *loves* us. The most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16, says:

*God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

That’s the good news. God so loved the world. That’s why He sent Jesus. I’m here to bring you good news of great joy today: Christmas is God saying to you, “I love you.”

The Bible says God is love. It doesn’t say He has love. It says He *is* love. It is His nature. *God is love.* And God created the entire universe, just so He could create this planet, just so He could create the human race, just so He could create your family, just so He could create you, just so He could love you.

The reason you are alive is you were created to be loved by God. If God didn’t want to love you, you wouldn’t be existing right now. God made you to love you. And the good news is that God’s love for you is unchanging. He loves you on your good days as much as your bad days. He loves you when you feel it, and He loves you when you don’t feel it. He loves you when you think you deserve it, and He loves you when you think you don’t deserve it.

You can't make God love you any more than He already does and you can't make Him love you any less than He already does. *God is love.*

The Bible makes it very, very clear – God loves you. To make it even clearer, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ to earth as a human. This is called the Incarnation. God became flesh.

Sometimes when you have something important to communicate – you can't send a representative. You must communicate it personally. That's what God did at Christmas! God did not send an angel or a prophet or a politician or an ambassador – He sent His Son.

So, this Christmas, celebrate the fact that God loves you.

Not only does God love you, but He's *with* you. Many people feel alone at Christmas. I'm here to bring you good news of great joy today: God will never ever abandon you.

Hebrews 13:5 says: *He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

You may not feel it, but it has nothing to do with feelings. One of Jesus' names is Emmanuel, which means "God with us." God is with you all the time.

You are not alone! God loves you and God is with you. He always has time for you.

In 1924, Jack Sundine was a young boy who had the opportunity to meet the President of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, in the White House. As he waited in the long line with his father, Jack noticed the President was saying something to every person as he shook their hands.

Jack was excited about thought of having the President of the United States speak some profound words of wisdom to him. Finally, the thrilling moment arrived, and as young Jack shook hands with the president, Coolidge bent over and said three words Jack never forgot. He said, "Move along quickly."

What a disappointment! He got the impression the President didn't even care he was there.

Aren't you glad that when we come to God, He doesn't tell us to move along. No, He is personally involved in our lives and desires to be with us.

Also, the Bible says God is *for* you. You see, it's one thing to know God is with you. It's even greater to know God is for you. He's on your side. He wants you to succeed.

Many people are afraid of God. They think He's out to get them. But God is for you. That's why Jesus died for you. That's why Jeremiah 29:11 says

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

God is for you, Jesus died for you, God has good plans for you and Romans 8:31 says *If God is for us, who can be against us?*  
No one is more "for you" than God.

Many people think God is angry and condemning.

But John 3:17 says – *God did not send His Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it.*

That is the good news of Christmas. God does not want you to be afraid of Him. That's why the angel's first words to the shepherds were "Fear not."

Jesus came to save us, not to scare us. God is not mad at you, He's mad about you. When we make mistakes, God doesn't rub it in, He rubs it out!

He came to erase all our sins, mistakes, failures and regrets. This is reason to celebrate.

Christmas is good news of great joy, and it's for everybody. It's good news if you're Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Mormon, Hindu, Buddhist, Baptist or nothing. It's good news of great joy for all people. God says, "I love you, I'm with you, I'm for you."

Let's fulfill the purpose of Christmas by celebrating!

Celebrate the fact that God loves you!

Celebrate because God is with you!

Celebrate because God is for you!

Celebrate because God is above you and beneath you holding you up!

Celebrate because God is before you leading the way and behind you watching your back!

Celebrate because every good and perfect thing comes from Him!

Celebrate the fact that He takes your sin from you and gives His righteousness to you!

Celebrate the fact that Jesus came down to earth so He could take you up to heaven!

Celebrate because His power, wisdom and His Holy Spirit dwell in you!

And because of that, celebrate the great things He will do through you!

You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you!