

“Unless you become like children....”

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Matt 18:1-5

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, 3 and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 "And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;

At Christmas time, unless we become like children, we will miss out on the wonder of it all. Every year, at the end of our year, we get to go back to the beginning, to Christmas, where, once again, all things are new.

/That's the essence of being a child, after all: all things are NEW. \ A child experiences things for the first time. There's wonder in that.

That first time for everything: first lost tooth; first day of school; first broken bone!

The great thing about Christmas is that every year, if we come to it like a little child would, everything about that baby, Jesus Christ, is once again new.

/His birth was something new, wasn't it?! \

Oh I don't simply mean a new baby, although that certainly comes with its own wonder... I wonder if his eyes will stay blue; I wonder what he or she will grow up to become; I wonder when the terrible twos will hit!

But the birth of Jesus was completely new. It was unprecedented. One of a kind.

/A virgin gave birth to Him, after all.\ He was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

/He was named Jesus, because He would save people from their sins.\

/He was proclaimed by angels as the Holy child - the Son of the Most High! The Son of God! \ Imagine that! How wonderful.

And He will receive the throne of His father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end. That's the stuff of childhood.

And the angels appeared to the shepherds declaring good news of great joy:

Luke 2:8-20

8 In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; 11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

12 "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

*14 "Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."*

15 When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. 17 When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. / Jesus : the Savior of the world, Christ: the King of Israel, and Yahweh – God!

/For the first time, and uniquely, forever, one person was both God and man.

John 1:14

14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

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/Col 2:9

*9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, *

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Christmas is a time for children. Songs urge us to see Christmas through their eyes.

And we should, and it will give you a fresh sense of wonder when you do.

/But don't stop with His birth. Look at everything about Jesus with this same sense of wonder!\

I encourage you to see the whole Bible through the eyes of a child. To approach every passage with the simple faith of a child.

At root, the story of the Bible is simple and wondrous.

In the beginning God created everything. His crowning creation He made in His own image and likeness. But that creation rebelled, and so began a long road of sin and evil and death. Yet the Lord provided a narrow path of hope and redemption.

And then, in the fullness of time, He sent His Son to be the savior of the world.
It wondrous and simple. It only takes the faith of a child to see it that way!

Humility. Simplicity. Faith.

/Matthew 18:4 "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

We are studying the gospel of John. Go and read it from the beginning. Read it like it's the first time. See it all through the eyes of a child. Experience wonder and joy.

/John is a book full of images a child can understand.

*/God is a Father, and Jesus is His Son. *

When Jesus left His disciples, He sent a Helper in His place.

And He promised to return, and then He would never leave them again.

A little child can totally relate.

/Jesus called Himself the good shepherd. \

John 10:11

11 "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

/A little child would want to know why the shepherd had to die. \

John 14:15

15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

A 7-year old who loves his mom and dad would say:of course you try your best to obey them. And when his older brother disobeys his parents ,that 7 year old has that feeling in the pit of his stomach that says, this is bad. This is not right.

/Why did our shepherd have to die? \

It's because of who we are, who His sheep are. We are all bad. / None of us is righteous. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.\

A little child has those moments when he is so angry and frustrated, and all he wants to do is cry and scream and hurt somebody.

And whether he says it in words or not, he knows he's bad.
And he knows that you get punished for being bad.

/And the human race isn't just bad: it's really really really bad . Desperately wicked.\ We all ought to be in jail. We outta be on death row.

Now at this point you might be saying: I'm not THAT bad. Here's what CS Lewis wrote about that:

/"No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good."\
/

If you don't think you're bad, why, you're just not trying hard enough to be good!

The apostle Paul found out how bad he was:

Rom 7:18-21

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. 19 For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. 20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.

And he knew it wasn't just him. It's all of us. There are none righteous, not one. Well, when you're this bad, you only have one hope left.

/It turns out that being incurably bad makes you eligible for a savior. Who is Christ the Lord.\

10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; 11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

And you see, a little child gets this. If he gets in bad trouble and there's no way he can escape the wrath of the principal, he has one hope left:

Dad will get me out of this. He'll send my older brother to take the fall for me. In my dreams anyway. Crazy, right?

Well, shockingly, that's exactly what God the Father did for us. He sent Jesus:

Isa 53:5-6

5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,

He was crushed for our iniquities;

The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,

And by His scourging we are healed.

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,

Each of us has turned to his own way;

But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all

To fall on Him.

So here's the truth:

We're all rotten. And there's nothing we can do about that.

But God loved us so much that He gave us His uniquely born Son, so that whosoever believes – like a little child – in God's Son Jesus, will never perish but have eternal life. God's wrath fell on Jesus bearing our sins, so it wouldn't fall on us.

2 Cor 5:21

21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Once a year we get to be like little children, coming to the baby, with the angels and the shepherds and the magi and that star,

Whoever you are, no matter your age, no matter what you may have done or how many times you ignored or rejected Him in the past. He came for you.

/He came to seek and save the lost. He died for the ungodly. He came for you.\

So hear the angels' voices, proclaiming good news of great joy: today, in the city of David, there is born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

/I beg you on behalf of that child, believe that Jesus, God's Son, died for your sins, that he was buried, and was raised on the third day. \

John 3:16

16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

/Simply believe. Be reconciled to God. \

/God and sinners reconciled. That's what Christmas is all about. \

Little children instinctively root for happy endings. This is the happiest ending of all.

Merry Christmas everybody.