

GETTING TO THE REAL MEANING OF CHRISTMAS
By Robert J. Tamasy

Ready or not, the calendar year is rapidly coming to a close. This means it is time once again to celebrate two holidays many of us find very meaningful – Christmas and New Year’s Day. This week we will focus on the annual Christmas observance; next week we will look at what the start of a new year can mean.

For many businesses, what stands out about Christmas is not that it is a religious holiday. It is often the determining factor for whether the fiscal year can be regarded as a good one or not. Retail sales typically soar, not only with the purchasing of Christmas gifts but also for any merchandise that relates in some way to holiday festivities. The profitability of the Christmas season greatly affects whether a company’s bottom line looks black or red; whether year-end bonuses can be awarded; and whether the business is positioned for growth or budget tightening at the start of the new year.

For a lot of us, Christmas also means a variety of things on a personal level: What gifts we should buy (and for whom); parties and other special events to attend; the gathering of family and friends for festive meals, and what charitable contributions to make during “the season for giving,” to name a few.

All of these are valid concerns. However, for followers of Jesus Christ, none is more important than making certain to take time to recognize and celebrate “the real reason for the season” – the birth of Jesus, the Son of God. Or as Matthew 1:23 tells us, “Immanuel – which means, ‘God with us.’” Without Jesus Christ, there would be no need for Christmas. The Scriptures show that clearly:

God took on human form. In the person of Jesus Christ, we find the Creator of the world becoming an active participant in the world He created. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:1-3).

Jesus came to dispel the darkness. Our world seems to be increasingly dark, evil manifesting itself in many forms. The 21st century marketplace is no exception. One of the reasons Jesus came to earth was to cast the darkness aside, to show people the way from darkness and desperation to light and hope. “In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it” (John 1:4-5). “When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life’” (John 8:12).

Jesus came to pay a price we could not pay. The Bible teaches the penalty for our sinfulness, our conscious rebellion against God, is a greater price than anything we could ever pay. So, in His mercy and grace, Jesus went to the cross to pay that price on our behalf. “But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans

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5:8). “God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus came to offer us new life. We justify our human failings, saying, “I’m only human.” Jesus, who not only died but also was raised from the dead, offers us new life spiritually, freeing us from what the Bible calls bondage to sin. “The death He died, He died to sin once for all, but the life He lives, He lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:10-11).

© 2023. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC’s Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship*; *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today’s Workplace*; *Pursuing Life With a Shepherd’s Heart*, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and *The Heart of Mentoring*, coauthored with David A. Stoddard.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What does Christmas mean to you? What does it mean for your business or organization?
2. At Christmastime, do you have any special traditions that you and your family observe? If so, what are they – and why are they important to you?
3. Many claim the true meaning of Christmas has become diluted, if not dismissed altogether. Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. When you consider Christmas within the context of Jesus Christ, not only His birth but also His life, what thoughts come to your mind?

CHALLENGE

It is easy to become caught up in the holiday atmosphere of Christmas and the many activities of this season. But it’s important to take time to reflect upon its true meaning – Jesus Christ and His life-changing, world-changing life and mission. Plan to set aside some time within the next several days to consider this with family members or a close friend. Consider: How would the world be different if Christ had never come?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages: Luke 1:26-38, 2:1-20; Romans 3:23, 6:1-4,23; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20

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