

“Christmas Day ~ 2011”

Merry Christmas!

[We are so honored] to share this special ‘Christmas Celebration’ with all of you!

[Last week] | read about a woman who was experiencing a *very frantic-fast paced Christmas*.

She knew *she had to hurry to get Christmas cards* addressed & in the mail.

So she bought (2) boxes of Christmas cards & *without reading their content*,
SIGNED her name & ADDRESSED them to (49) relatives & close friends.

Finally she dropped them off at the Post Office & returned home & found
that (1) unused card, which she read for the very 1st time.

“*This is just a note to say, a Little Gift is on the way.*” ☺

[By this time] | suspect that most of your gifts have already been unwrapped:

@ our home *the Christmas story was read & gifts were exchanged* early-early this morning ☺

| thought it was appropriate since its Christmas morning to spend some time in God’s word
thinking about the ‘Greatest gift of all = the gift of God’s Son!’

|| **Corinthians 9:15** describes God’s blessed gift of Jesus this way,

“Thank God for this gift **TOO WONDERFUL** for words.”

PRAYER

(R) **Matthew 1: 18 – 23** or p. 733 in pew Bible

[Interesting to note] there were (2) *names given* to the coming Messiah = *Jesus* + *Immanuel*

Jesus' name literally means = '...He will save His people from their sins' (v.21)

The sacred name Immanuel means = '...God is with us.' (v. 23)

[Important to note]

The Creator of the universe did not look down from heaven & see the baby Jesus & say,
'That's a good looking baby boy, I think I will **adopt Him + give Him special powers**
& then let Him die for the sins of the world.'

NO! God 1st looked down from Heaven & saw the plight of humanity & said,
"I will go myself to the world to rescue them."

We don't speak of Christ's adoption ~ instead we speak of His incarnation.
God the Son, the 2nd Person of the Trinity ~ who personally came as a human to visit us.

I. MYSTERY of the INCARNATION

A. **INCARNATION** comes from the Latin meaning = 'becoming flesh'

B. Lofty ~ mysterious, an often confusing idea that surrounds the idea of
the **full divinity & full humanity** of Jesus was wrestled to the ground in **AD 451.**

C. Council of Chal-ce-don wrote the definitive Creed that declares,

"JC is (1) person with (2) natures (**human & divine**) **who is both fully God & fully man.**"

- J.I. Packer defines the incarnation as the '**supreme mystery**' associated w-the gospels;
difficult concept to get our minds around ~ **maybe this analogy will help.**
- **Mystery of Trinity** ~ is closely associated with the **Mystery of 'Becoming One'**
in marriage = (R) **Ephesians 5: 31 - 33** or p. 898 in pew Bible

- **My limited understanding** is that *when Jesus became man: He did not change His identity as God but rather He changed His role.*
- **Literally in His incarnation** = the Creator entered His creation to reveal God to us, identify with us, & **live & die for us** as our humble servant.

The greatest gift of Christmas!

There are (2) very tangible results that occurred for us as *a result of this gift.*

I. **(2) TANGIBLE RESULTS**

A. **1st tangible result** = Jesus took upon Himself the ultimate punishment for our sins:

1. The Bible teaches that **God is *absolutely holy & pure.***

From Genesis-Revelation, God reveals Himself as so holy He can't even look on sin.

2. **(R) Mark 15: 33 – 39 or p. 777 in pew Bible**

3. **[So WHY]** did darkness fall across the whole land?

- Because of you & me = at the cross the darkness of human sin was laid upon Jesus ~ **our sins caused God the Father to turn away in disgust!**
- **In that horrible moment** = Jesus endured the ultimate punishment for our sins: punishment of being banished from the presence of His Father **on our behalf!**

B. **[Danger]** that any extended time in a given context or with a given subject has potential to erode your perspective or healthy observations.

- This slipped up on me recently ~ I had neglected the incredible difference Jesus makes in the lives of people.
- **[God opened up my eyes]** on our recent trip to Panama **thru the tears of my wife!**

C. **Becky writes:** I would not have understood the work of Juan Rodriguez if not for the 1st island. **Discovered only last fall**, the village is still almost completely untouched. A crude dock jutting from a marshy shore to the bay was our only welcome; the (7 or 8) grass huts and a shack of a schoolhouse recently erected by Juan's team was seemingly abandoned. The stench of human waste permeated the air. And then I saw the people – squatting beneath their grass huts, almost completely naked. **But it was their eyes that overwhelmed me. Seemingly vacant and without hope**, the women of the village didn't even show a moment of curiosity strangers were present.

There was absolutely nothing on their faces; void of all emotion – they were completely blank.

I wondered what it must have been like for them. Complete strangers intruding into their small, once undiscovered village. **They must have been terrified.**

The next village was a bit larger, but had the same crude dock welcoming us. We could see the expected grass huts, smoke from a cooking fire, a schoolhouse that was still rough, but had been standing for quite some time. There were even a few small houses that Juan's team had built. **But the biggest difference was the eyes.** Running toward us, small, bare-footed children came to greet us, yelling in their own language, "The pastors are here!"

Here happy people eagerly came to greet us – welcoming us with their words & their eyes. There was a certain life to this village because these people had been taught about the hope of Jesus Christ.

Jesus put light into the faces of these Indians. This was the light that Keith spoke so vividly about last week ~ incredible difference Jesus makes!

It wasn't until we were back in David that I finally realized the significance of what I had seen. *The 2nd village once looked like the 1st*, but the better part of the story is that **w-God's help, the 1st village is going to look like the 2nd.**

They are filled with hope; they have been redeemed.

II. **The 2nd tangible result** = the quality of our world dramatically improved because of God's incredible gift of His only Son!

A. That Babe in the manger of Bethlehem grew up to become our crucified & risen Savior = & the world has never been the same.

1. **If Jesus had not come** ~ this world would indeed be a hopeless world.
2. **If Jesus had not come** ~ this world would be a lost world.
3. **There would be no access to God.**
4. There would be no atonement for sin, there would be no forgiveness!

B. Once again I saw this quality of life change thru the eyes of Dan Crosley in Panama:

My first trip to Panama was 21 years ago. I remember stopping in Quebrada de Loro. There was a pastor beginning a work there with only a couple of believers. We went further up the mountains to an area that was very remote and where there were even fewer believers in Jesus Christ. **I preached that night** using the light from a bottle filled with kerosene and a piece of cloth hanging on the outside that was lit on fire.

Today in that same mountain area, there are thousands of Christians.

In 1997 we built the first clinic near the mouth of one of the rivers in the island area. The village leader told me that two of his children had died of disease, one of them just a month before we built the clinic. I'm told that since the clinic was built

15 years ago, that no children have died in the area. A few years ago I conducted an informal survey of 120 women who were waiting to be seen by a physician. Of the 120 women, there were only 2 who had not had children die. Most of the mothers had lost multiple children to the simple diseases that are present in the area. One mother said she had given birth to 24 children and half of them had died. In the **village of Bahia Grande** a White River team built a clinic next to the cemetery hill where there are more than 300 children buried. Two years before we built that clinic we conducted a mobile medical day of consultation. Two young children about 4 and 5 came to be seen by the doctor. We asked their names but neither of them had been given a name. Their parents had died and a man of the village was feeding them but no one had given them a name. On the medical record we recorded them simply as child A and child B
(boy and girl).

PS - we only have 4 men signed up to do the construction project in Feb (one of them is of not much help - me). If someone signed up by New Years, we could still take them.

"Thank God for this gift ~ Jesus ~ too wonderful for words!" || **Corinthians 9: 15**

C. So, how has God gift of Jesus changed our lives in Central Indiana?

[INSERT] Max Lucado ~ *The Miracle of the Carpenter*

NEXT: Video + **NEXT**: Lead into communion + **NEXT** offer an initiation!