

Jesus Is The Reason

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By Roger Miller

Christmas can be a complex season to navigate. There is shopping to get done. All the busyness, the running around. There are office parties, and after office parties are family gatherings, and after family gatherings are therapist appointments ... Then you add our current economic uncertainty, and I wonder: What would it take for this year to be the best Christmas ever? How would we know? What is the standard?

I want to take us to Scripture and the story of Christmas. I want us to see what was behind Christmas in the Bible, because here is the secret to what made the first Christmas great and what can make it great again. No matter what happens, circumstantially or emotionally, what could make it the best? One word.

These are the first words that tell of the love that would launch Christmas: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Here is why that verse is so central. What made that first Christmas great to God is what God got to do: "God so loved the world that he *gave* ..." Giving is what love does. Giving is how love expresses itself. Giving is the heart of love; and therefore, giving is the heart of God. Giving is what God is into. One thing people do not understand about God is that God is not a taker; God is a giver. This is the Good News from the Bible.

God's generosity isn't just lavish, not just creative; it is continual. It is ceaseless. It is unstoppable. This is from the Book of Lamentations, "Your mercies are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness." Every morning, God is saying: *Did you like that sunrise yesterday? Here's another one. Here is food for your body. Here is air for your lungs. Here is beauty for your eyes. Here is music for your ears. Here is strength for your needs. Here are friends for your heart. Here is a purpose for your day. Here are thoughts for your mind.* All the time, God is giving, giving, giving. That is what he does all day long. And what made the first Christmas the best is that God finally got to give his best gift of all. It is like he had

been giving and giving and giving from the beginning of creation, but he had this one gift he had been saving up all these years. It is like when he gave Jesus, God out-gave himself. It is like he set a new record for compassion and generosity. It is like he was so excited about this gift, he couldn't keep quiet about it. Have you ever given or received a Christmas Gift and you just could not stop talking about it?

So when Jesus was born, it was like the Father was so excited, like he had been anticipating this moment year after year, century after century, and millennium after millennium. It was like he couldn't contain himself. So he sent a whole sky full of angels: *Hey Earth, I can't tell you what you're getting, because it is a secret, but it is a Savior.* Because God is a giver, not a taker.

And what made the first Christmas so great was he got to give the best gift of all. He got to give the gift of a Savior to people who needed it the most—sinners. Do you know who those people are? That is the person sitting next to you right now, and the person sitting next to that person.

So here is what I was thinking will make this the best Christmas ever. Not how pretty the church looks on Christmas Eve, not how great the music is, not the stuff we get, not the food we eat, not the moments we create, not the feelings we experience. What if we were to get so filled up with the love of God that we were to become conduits of God's blessing to other people around us, people who are under-resourced, who are hurting, who don't have much hope? What if we were to get so filled up with the love of God that we were to see and then pray for and then help and listen to and stop and be with and give to people who have a need? What if we were to express record levels of compassion in actual, concrete, tangible, real, personal, sometimes costly ways? What if we were to so love the world around us that we were to give to it the best we have ever given to the people who need it the most? Well then, it would be the best Christmas ever.