

LIFE GROUP LESSON

HOME - Week of December 10

Introduction

Christmas decorations can be beautiful. For the past few years, it seems there has been a fad to use giant boxes colorfully wrapped with a big bright bow on top to place under trees in town squares, hotel lobbies, the mall (or church atriums). The gift boxes look the part – lovely, festive – yet, they’re empty. There is absolutely nothing on the inside of the beautifully wrapped box. It is the same with many of us today. Though we are ‘beautifully wrapped’ and appear to be put together on the outside, we are empty on the inside. It seems the more the culture tries to take Christ out of Christmas, the emptier we are. Take Christ out of Christmas and we have nothing! For when the Christ of God left heaven and came to earth, he did not make the journey for us to remain empty. He came to give us life and hope. He is our reason to live.

Background

During the days of Joel, the prophet, the people of God had forgotten the Lord. Because of prolonged unrepentant sin and idolatry, the fields were ruined, all their granaries were empty and there was no gathering of grapes for wine or olives for olive oil. Their fruit trees were dried up. Their barns were empty, all the animals moaned with hunger. There were no pastures for their herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. Why? Because they had left God out of their lives. Though they went through the pretense of worship, on the inside their hearts were far from the Lord. It was all a show. But God did not stop loving his people. As with the people of Israel, the Lord still loves us and wants us to turn from sin and begin to trust him. He is the only One who can save us. God proved his love for us when he sent his Son to live among us.

Read: Joel 2:1-13

1. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?
2. What are you going to do about it?
3. How can we help you?

“Turn to me now while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Don’t tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead.” Return to the LORD your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He is eager to relent and not punish (Joel 2:12-13).

You may be wondering: how do I turn to the Lord? First, trust the Lord and *ask him* how to include him in every area of your life. Give him first place in your heart. Declare it. Do it. The Lord Jesus went to great lengths to be *with you* and know you personally (Emmanuel means *God with us*) so be willing to go to great lengths to know him. Start praying, reading his Word, serving others in his name. Remember, don’t do ministry alone – serve with a friend, spouse, or alongside your Life Group. Everyday meet with the Lord in the secret place; then, with other brothers and sisters in the Lord, gather regularly for weekend worship. Listen to the message. The Teaching Team at Christ Church (campus pastors, special ministry pastors) do a wonderful job preparing messages for God’s people. As you *live* God’s Word, spoken through preaching, teaching, and personal study, you will begin to look more like Christ. Resolve to be a part of a Life Group. If you are already in a Life Group, invite someone to come with you – perhaps someone who may be empty on the inside.

Reflection

When we think about the word ‘idolatry’ we are reminded the first letter in the word is “I” – idolatry is when we make “I” the center of everything. The internet is full of people (adult, kids) making

stupid videos that are all about themselves – worthless and empty. In many ways, we are all products of our culture, even the craze of merchandizing and gift giving that came about in the last century or so, makes us think that we have to spend large amounts of cash in order to make people happy. We cannot *make* people happy with a gift. Gifts are an expression of love and appreciate; we should give gifts. But the best gift has already been given. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16 NKJV).

In Closing

Spend some time in prayer for your family and church family. Pray for those in a season of grief and loss. Pray for the unchurched. There are many people around us who do not know Christ; yet, there is a longing within every heart to know that God loves them, that they are persons of value, and that perhaps they can have a second chance at life. Ask the Lord to give you the words and for his Spirit to soften their hearts. This time of year especially, many people are open to a conversation about the Christ of Christmas. He is the Light of the World!

One Year Bible Reading For This Week:

December 10: Amos 1:1-3:15, Revelation 2:1-17, Psalm 129:1-8, Proverbs 29:19-20
December 11: Amos 4:1-6:14, Revelation 2:18-3:6, Psalm 130:1-8, Proverbs 29:21-22
December 12: Amos 7:1-9:15, Revelation 3:7-22, Psalm 131:1-3, Proverbs 29:23
December 13: Obadiah 1:1-21, Revelation 4:1-11, Psalm 132:1-18, Proverbs 29:24-25
December 14: Jonah 1:1-4:11, Revelation 5:1-14, Psalm 133:1-3, Proverbs 29:26-27
December 15: Micah 1:1-4:13, Revelation 6:1-17, Psalm 134:1-3, Proverbs 30:1-4
December 16: Micah 5:1-7:20, Revelation 7:1-17, Psalm 135:1-21, Proverbs 30:5-6

HOME

Text: Joel 2:12-13, John 1:1, 14, Psalm 90:1

PLAIN TRUTH

The journey _____ is a journey with _____.

Here are three principles to encourage you to *maximize the JOURNEY with God.*

1. A _____ relationship with _____.
2. _____ ultimately matters.
3. God says _____ with _____.

December 10, 2023