

AN ELF-ESQUE CHRISTMAS VACATION MIRACULOUS TEACHING SERIES ABOUT A WONDERFUL LIFE HOME ALONE ON 34TH STREET

Jesus is Coming | Scott Bruegman | 12.11.16

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer these two questions:

Like it or not, do you have a Christmas tradition or something that you and/or your family do every year?

If so, what is it?

SHARE

Welcome to *An Elf-esque Christmas Vacation Miraculous Teaching Series about a Wonderful Life Home Alone on 34th Street*. For this series, we decided on a simple and easy-to-repeat title, and we hope you like it!

The Christmas season is upon us and ready or not, we find ourselves in it once again. For many of us, that brings great joy and anticipation. For children: even more so. However, for those of us who are older, it can bring stress, pressure, and sometimes a real depression amidst the seemingly endless cycle of office parties and family obligations. Meanwhile, we know deeply that somewhere in all this chaos, we are supposed to be experiencing peace and joy ... that eludes many of us. Our Christmas season can feel exactly like the title of the series: just a long mixed up notion of what Christmas is all about.

As you read this today, remember these simple statements: God is with you. Christmas is simple. We remember the birth of the savior of the world. God sent his only son as a helpless baby into the middle of nowhere to be cared for by two nervous teenage parents who could only find a barn to have their first child. Jesus came into the world to save us. We celebrate God's goodness to us and remember our savior who arrived beneath that starry night sky so that we might have a relationship with God, his father.

This season, as we hear the song *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, allow God to speak to you. Emmanuel or Immanuel means "God with us." It's not just a song, but a daily cry of the heart, that we might know that God is truly with us and that is the best gift we have that money can't buy.

This week, Scott reminded us that when Jesus came to the earth, his arrival had been anticipated for centuries. However, it can be easy for us to forget that generations of people had lived and died in anticipation of this coming Messiah. And on this night, the savior of the world had finally come!

Let's read Luke 2:8-18

Take a look at verse 15 in that passage, and notice the response of the shepherds. When the heavenly host had left the shepherds alone with their flocks, nobody had to be convinced. Immediately they said to one another "Let's go..."

As Scott talked about, the shepherds were the last demographic of individuals that you would give important news to. Society had deemed them undeserving, lowly, and as outcasts. Yet, the Lord saw this group of people as the *perfect* communication vehicle to announce his arrival. Jesus was going to be a king who broke every stereotype, who knew no bounds, and whose radical love would be unmatched. By society's standards, the shepherds were not worthy of delivering a message like the birth of a savior, and that is precisely why the Lord chose them.

These shepherds were the first to ever hear the "good news" and they responded without hesitation. Do you think that people today respond this way to the gospel?

Why or why not?

What can we learn about the Lord, knowing that he specifically chose the lowly shepherds to deliver the message of his birth? How could that personally impact your relationship with him?

The shepherds were filled with awe and wonder at the birth of Christ. How can we incorporate that very same awe and wonder into our relationship with him?

G R O W

Most of us are familiar with what happens next in the story. Mary and Joseph raise Jesus, and in only three years of public ministry, with twelve disciples; he changed the world. During that time, Jesus says some things that start to once again build anticipation of an “arrival.”

Let's read Matthew 16:27; 24:30 and 24:36-37

So now we find ourselves as the people of God in a familiar place, anxiously awaiting our savior. Scott reminded us this weekend that we don't have to wonder *if* Jesus is coming back; it's just a matter of *when*. One of the devil's ploys to distract us from the reason we are on this earth is to make the coming back of Christ seem lofty, removed, and not imminent. If we are apathetic to the urgency of spreading the gospel, then the devil has nothing to fear. As we heard this weekend, the return of Christ will be glorious, it will be perfect, and it will be unexpected. Do we live each of our days fueled with the knowledge that time is limited, and that those who don't know Christ will spend eternity in hell?

Jesus did not leave us without direction for how we should live our lives here on earth. As Scott pointed out, he gave us five roles that we can fulfill while we wait:

Be watching, be ready, become more like Christ, be anxiously waiting, and be working.

Though each of those jobs is easy to read and understand, we don't want to pass by the weight of the call on each of our lives. We each are here to live out the plan God has for our lives, and each person's journey will look different. Yet every one of us is ultimately here to bring others to know Christ. Can we bring others to Christ by watching for Christ? Absolutely. Will we further the Kingdom by becoming more like Christ? Undoubtedly. Each of those five roles is crucial, and not only create a more intimate and focused connection with the Lord; but we get to help make heaven more crowded by actively participating in each one.

Which of these roles is easiest for you to fulfill? Are there any that are difficult for you?

Does the reality of the second coming affect the way you live your life? If not, how could it?

M O V E

Jesus is coming back again! When He does, He will complete the work that He started on the first Christmas. Jesus coming to this earth, dying for our sins, and then rising again was the beginning of the Kingdom of God colliding with the earth in a way it never had before. As N.T. Wright says in his book *Surprised by Hope*:

We could cope—the world could cope—with a Jesus who ultimately remains a wonderful idea inside his disciples' minds and hearts. The world cannot cope with a Jesus who comes out of the tomb, who inaugurates God's new creation right in the middle of the old one.

Although we still live in a fallen world, we have the hope of a risen savior who has told us He's coming back. While Christ has already defeated death, scripture tells us that the second coming will begin the downfall of ALL brokenness in creation. In the meantime as the church body, we are responsible for being the Kingdom of God in our world. This is a privilege. The Lord does not need us to complete his work. Yet he is a relational and loving God, and he chooses to invite imperfect humans into his work. He chooses to use us. How incredible is that? There is no greater joy than partnering with the Lord in his work here on earth, and getting to be a tangible part of changing people's lives. The best part is, you don't have to be in full-time ministry to partake in this. He has chosen to use every single one of us, and he has already deemed each of us qualified.

Let's read Matthew 5:14-15

If our command is to be the light of the world, is there any area of life that does not apply to?

What might be scary or unnerving for you to take the Great Commission seriously? What lies are holding you back from walking boldly in this calling on a daily basis?

What is one thing (big or small) you can do this week to act like a member of the "Kingdom of God" and not like the world?

P R A Y

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

T O G O

Philippians 3:20

But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.