

Christmas Messages From Area Churches

Does Truth Really Matter?

By Pastor Quentin Byers of Heppner Christian Church.

I think a good way to focus in on the truth of the season would be to ask this question: "Is Christmas celebrated because Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was born to save us from our sins, bring us salvation, and restoring our relationship with God? Or is it, as the rest of the world would have you think, that the true meaning of Christmas is only about getting together with family and friends, eating good food and enjoy giving gifts with each other?" Don't misunderstand me, none of that is inherently wrong, in fact I consider it quite a joy to spend time with family and friends. However, when it comes to the truth of Christmas, well then, we do have a big problem. It is crucial to ask the question, does truth really matter? Have you ever thought about truth with regards to who Jesus is? In the gospel of John chapter 1 verses 1-5 we see John very powerfully and masterfully addressing this very question. He says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." Right out of the gate we see that John is not holding any punches with regards to who Jesus is. In fact, the whole point John is bringing us to in these first 5 verses is the reality that Jesus is God, and He is offering hope to the people of the world. This is why we see John, right out of the gate in verse 1, expresses the fact that Jesus, the Word, existed eternally with God. This would instantly draw the attention of any Jew during that time all the way back to Genesis 1:1 where it says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." By using the language that John did in the start of his gospel, he is connecting the Word of God, which is Jesus, to the creation process. Displaying for us all the perfect eternal unity that God has as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. John then tells us that "The word was with God and the word was God." Meaning that Jesus the Word, always existed eternally with God, and it is through Jesus, and Jesus alone, that "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." Everything in this universe as we know it was created through Jesus. The power of the unseen wind, the largest star in the sky, all the way to the smallest microscopic atom that makes up all matter, Jesus is the source in which all things came into being. When God spoke the heavens and the earth into existence it came through Jesus. When God created the birds of the sky, the beasts of the field, and all the creeping bugs of this earth, it came through Jesus. When God created us, to be His image bearers and stewards of this earth, it came through Jesus. He is the very Word of God in action, and nothing exists without Jesus because He is in all truth and reality, God. However, that's not all John has to say regarding our Lord and Savior for we also see in verses 4-5 that Jesus is the supplier of life. You see, it is only through Him that we have our physical lives here on this earth, and it is only through Him that we have spiritual and everlasting life in eternity. We learn through Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jesus is the only true source of life in this world. However, at the end of verse 4 John tells us that "The life was the light of Men." Now for us to fully understand this statement, we need know how the word "light" is used with regards to biblical language. Within the Bible the word "light" is not just used with regards to the light that we can physically see, it also represents the concept of goodness and hope. And that is how John is using the word here. He declares that the life that comes from Jesus is the light of hope for all mankind. And as verse 5 shows us when Jesus, our given hope for life, came into the darkness, that darkness which includes fallen humanity was unable to understand the truth of who Jesus was. And that He alone is the true life and hope we have been searching for. There's a story from Bits and Pieces that helps explain the point John is drawing us to. The story explains how, The school system in a large city had a program to help children keep up with their schoolwork during stays in the city's hospitals. One day a teacher who was assigned to the program received a routine call asking her to visit a particular child. She took the child's name and room number and talked briefly with the child's regular class teacher. "We're studying nouns and adverbs in his class now," the regular teacher said, "and I'd be grateful if you could help him understand them, so he doesn't fall too far behind." The hospital program teacher went to see the boy that afternoon. No one had mentioned to her that the boy had been badly burned and was in great pain. Upset at the sight of the boy, she stammered as she told him, "I've been sent by your school to help you with nouns and adverbs." When she left, she felt as if she hadn't accomplished much. But the next day, a nurse asked her, "What did you do to that boy?" The teacher felt she must have done something wrong and began to apologize. "No, no," said the nurse. "You don't know what I mean. We've been worried about that little boy, but ever since yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He's fighting back, responding to treatment. It's as though he's decided to live." Two weeks later the boy explained that he had completely given up hope until the teacher arrived. Everything changed when he came to a simple realization. He expressed it this way: "They wouldn't send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?" You see, just like this boy in the story needed the truth and hope to live, John new full well that we today need the truth and hope of Christ as well. That is why John points us to Jesus, the eternal God, who out of His great love for us, personally chose to come into this world. He took on flesh being fully God and fully man, to offer the greatest truth and hope we could ever imagine; the hope and reality of everlasting life, free from sin and death, being offered through a true and transforming relationship with Jesus. Truth really does matter, and the truth of Christmas is that Jesus came into this world so that you could receive the grace and gift of salvation.

The White Elephant Gift Exchange of Life

Pastor Tripp Finch from Willow Creek Baptist Church

Have you ever stopped and thought that life is a little bit like a white elephant gift exchange? For those not familiar with the Christmas holiday tradition, it involves exchanging presents with a group of people in which everyone brings a gift to the party, usually of nominal value. Everyone then gathers, sits in a circle, and places the wrapped presents in the center. Numbers are drawn from a basket by the participants to determine who draws a gift from the pile first. The gifts are often humorous, like a tube of diaper cream, but there are surprises as contributions could also be of high quality, such as a fancy wood engraved Let 'Er Buck Pendleton Roundup Salt and Pepper shaker set (yes, I know that is awfully specific). The catch of the game is that participants can either choose from the pile of unwrapped gifts or steal an already opened gift from another person. Stealing gifts is accepted as a part of the game, but this is where it gets a bit hairy and true to life. How many times have you seemingly drawn from the pile of life and pulled out a great treasure? Maybe you found the romantic love of your dreams. Perchance you fell into an unexpected inheritance. Perhaps you received what felt like a much-deserved promotion at work and finally began earning what you are worth. Maybe a long-awaited child was born to you, and you treasure this child above all things. If you would indulge me for a moment, these wonderful blessings resemble the prizes pulled from the gift pile. However, just as those white elephant gifts we love get stolen from our hands, there are times in life when our prized possessions are lifted from our lap, snatched away in less than a moment's notice. We lose that job. Relationships end. The gift we found security in evaporates right before our eyes and we are sent back to the pile of other packages in search of something to replace the hole left in our hearts. We can shed tears or verbally express our displeasure to all, as a child might do. We can pretend it doesn't bother us, as an adult is supposed to do. We could resolve to work harder next time to pick a better package from the pile or draw a higher number from the basket so that we could steal a better gift from some unlucky person. Plan, resolve, cry, or wail somehow it never really stops our continual despondency. Live long enough and you will discover that life is full of disappointments great and small. How are we to survive the monumental heartbreaks of loss that leave us deep in grief? There is a way. There is good news. There is a gift freely given to you that can never be stolen away. This gift arrived not in a pile of inconsequential presents, instead, it came in the form of a newborn baby. This baby was no ordinary baby. This child is Jesus. Existing from eternity. Equal to God in every way. God in the flesh. King and Lord of all creation. Yet born a helpless baby so that he might enter our world to live and then die for all the wrong we do and have ever done. Born to die so that he might settle the scales of justice forever so that we could be liberated from death and disappointment forever. This Christmas, would you consider accepting this priceless gift? You may never change that seemingly perpetual letdown of white elephant exchanges, but larger, grander change can happen in your life through a little baby in a manger. Service Times for Willow Creek Baptist Church 560 Minor Street, Heppner Worship Service 10am Christmas Eve (and every Sunday) OR live at <https://www.facebook.com/wcbcheppner> Candlelight Christmas Eve Service at 5:30pm.

Heppner FFA gives back



(L-R) Delilah Saucedo, Jules Archer, Claire Lindsey, Riley Archer, Piper Kelton, Teagun Kelton, Nick Wenberg, Quaid Jensen, and Lizzy Ginn.

The students of the Heppner FFA enthusiastically participated in the 'Adopt a Family' program. They are dedicated their time to shop for families in

need. They were excited to see how their Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) activity and shopping efforts will positively impact families this holiday season.

Santa's elf gets hearing test



Santas helper getting his ears checked to hear all the children. - Contributed Photo

Verna's Hearing Care Center is dedicated to ensuring optimal hearing for individuals of all ages, even Santa's beloved elves!

Mustangs defeat the Central Linn Cobras

The Heppner Mustang boys' basketball team won both of their games at the Heppner Christmas Classic this past weekend. The Classic was held at Heppner High School this past weekend. The Mustangs (6-2) defeated the Central Linn Cobras by the score of 50-41 and then beat the Echo Cougars 65-58.

In a tough matchup with a team who traveled a great distance from their school (which is located halfway between Corvallis and Eugene) the Mustangs trailed at the end of the first quarter 12-10. Heppner then fought back to go into the half time break with a 24-22 lead. The lead stayed at two points at the end of the third quarter as the Mustangs led 35-33. Heppner did trail briefly early in the fourth quarter but then put together a 15-8 point run to secure the win 50-41.

Caden George led the Mustangs in scoring with 23 points and he also had 6 rebounds. Landon Mitchell was next with 10 points, five rebounds and three blocks. Mason Orem had 7 points for the team and Thomas Bales 6. Cameron Proudfoot scored 3 points in the game and Marty Medina finished with 1.

The Echo Cougars didn't have to travel near as far as Central Linn did to play the Mustangs. Echo came into the game riding high after a big win over the Weston-McEwen Tigerscots the day before. Heppner coach Jeremy Rosenbalm knew that the Cougars

would be a challenge for his team and he was correct.

Heppner jumped out to a 19-12 lead at the end of the first quarter, but Echo cut into that lead in the second and only trailed 27-24 at halftime. Heppner got up by as many as nine points early in the third quarter, but the Cougars used a 23-19 run to take a 47-46 lead into the fourth quarter. The game stayed close throughout the quarter as neither team would have an advantage of more than one point. The Mustangs finally took the lead for good with a little over two minutes to play in the game. Heppner was able to build on that lead from there as they hit some crucial free throws down the stretch to seal the win by the score of 65-58.

Landon Mitchell had a big night for the Mustangs as he scored 23 points and ripped down 15 rebounds. He also had 3 assists in the game. Caden George followed up his stellar performance on Friday night with another great overall game as he scored 17 points, had 6 rebounds, 3 assists and 4 steals. Mason Orem was one point shy of a double-double as he scored 9 points and ripped down 12 rebounds. Mason also had 2 assists and 2 blocks in the game. Cameron Proudfoot had an outstanding game with 7 points, 8 rebounds and 7 assists. Thomas Bales had 5 points and 8 rebounds while Keaton Coiner chipped in with 4 points for the Mustangs.

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Specials 12/21 - 12/27

- *Thursday - Grilled Chicken wrap & cup tortilla soup \$9
- *Friday - Reuben and curly fries \$9
- *Saturday- Potato soup and grilled cheese and turkey sandwich \$9
- *Monday Closed. Merry Christmas
- *Tuesday - Seafood platter and cup clam chowder \$11
- Tuesday night 6-9pm \$2 hard shell tacos
- *Wednesday Spaghetti & meatballs with a side salad \$9 or \$7 for seniors
- **Open Sunday 12-31-23 New Years Day at 3pm

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