

The Cost of Christmas

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[0 : 00] What has Christmas cost you so far? Many of us will say, too much. And I'm sure some will say, way too much when the credit card bill comes in.

When we think about the cost of Christmas, as I just asked the question, I'm assuming that most of us think in terms of what it costs, in terms of the gifts we've bought.

Maybe some trips you have or will take. Our decorations, food, and all these kind of things. Well, I want us to take a few minutes this morning to think about the cost of Christmas in a different way.

You know, the real story of Christmas is found in the Bible, and it's all about the coming of Jesus into this world, the birth of God's Son. When we think about the first Christmas, or what the Bible teaches us about the coming of Jesus, we find that it was very costly.

It was first costly to Mary. I want you to think with me. The cost of Christmas for Mary. It cost her her reputation in a big way.

[1 : 14] Look at what the Scripture says in Matthew chapter 1. Now, the angel coming to Mary and announcing her that God had chosen her to be the mother of Jesus is found in Luke chapter 1.

Matthew 1 tells us about the problem that that immediately caused. Now, the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

Now, you think these are real people. Young woman, 16, 17 years old maybe. Joseph, a little bit older.

They're more than what we consider to be engaged. It was a legally binding betrothal. And it was serious to break it.

[2 : 31] That's why the word divorce is used here. Well, when Mary first told Joseph the situation, he didn't believe her.

Would you? It's beyond belief. No one would. And so, he was a good man because he didn't just explode in rage.

Look at what the Scripture says. He was a just man, righteous man, and unwilling to put her to shame.

And so, he resolved to divorce her quietly. In his mind, she had been unfaithful. He was not going to marry her, but he was going to honorably part ways.

Well, it took a supernatural intervention of an angel to change Joseph's mind, to convince him that Mary had not been unfaithful.

[3 : 43] Look at it. The next two verses, verses 20 and 21. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. Joseph believed the angel.

No one else would have, because no one else received the supernatural revelation. In the eyes of everyone except Joseph, Mary was an immoral woman.

And so for Mary to be chosen by God for this most special work, bearing his son, it ruined her reputation.

And she knew it from the get-go. Well, how did she respond? Well, look with me if you would. It'll be on the screen. Luke chapter 1, verse 38.

[4 : 59] Luke 1, 38. Now the story of God coming to her, the angel telling her she'd been chosen, is before this verse.

And after he said all this, this is how Mary responded. Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word.

She finds out she's been chosen by God. to miraculously conceive baby Jesus in her womb.

And her response to such a public scandal, she trusted God. I am the server of the Lord.

Let it be to me according to your word. She willingly accepted God's call to be the mother of Jesus, even though it would cost her publicly dearly.

[6 : 05] But what I want us to see here is she was willing to pay that high cost to be faithful to do God's will. Mary was the first to discover how costly Christmas can be.

But she was not alone. Look next, the cost of Christmas for Joseph. It was costly to him in several ways. First, it cost Joseph his reputation just as well as Mary.

Same reasons. But also it cost Joseph social relationships, job security, financial stability, because shortly after Jesus was born, he had to leave home.

He had to leave where he worked, his carpentry business, and go to a foreign place. Look at how the scripture describes this in Matthew chapter 2.

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him.

[7 : 15] And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt. Joseph acted on what God told him.

Just like Mary, he was willing to pay the cost of obeying God. Look back now at how Joseph responded to the angel when the angel told him all about Mary and the child she had conceived.

Look at how Joseph responded. When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him. He took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son.

And he called his name Jesus. The first Christmas was costly to both Mary and Joseph. But I want us to understand, it was even more costly for Jesus.

Look at the cost of Christmas for Jesus. Before he ever came into this world, the Son of God had always existed.

[8 : 29] It's a mystery. We can't really wrap our minds around the fact that God exists, our one God exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus left the glory of heaven that he had always enjoyed with the Father and the Spirit to come into this world to save us.

Paul describes that in Philippians chapter 2. Look at it. He's actually writing to this church about how they need to humble themselves, serve one another, and he gives Jesus as the example.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped or a thing to be held on to, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

To come into this world, Jesus laid aside the glory he had always experienced and enjoyed in heaven as the Son.

[9 : 57] He didn't cease to become God when he came into this world. He just became man, the God-man, but he had to lay aside some of the honor and the glory that he had known in heaven.

But I want you to note in the scripture you see on the screen there, he did that for a purpose. Jesus was born to die for sinful people like you and me so that we could be forgiven, made right with God, become a child of God.

But you know, what Jesus has done in coming to the world to save us, dying on the cross as he did, we have to respond to that.

We've got to respond by admitting that we are sinful people, we've offended God, we've rebelled against him, and we need a Savior.

No one's ever going to become a Christian until they sense that need and are willing to change their mind about how they're living. Admit their sin, turn from it, and put their trust in Jesus and him alone for their salvation.

[11 : 18] Have you done that? Have you called upon Jesus to save you? Is he truly the Lord of your life as you are celebrating his birth this year?

Christmas was truly costly to Jesus. In fact, the coming of Jesus has always been costly for everyone associated with Jesus.

That leads to one question that we need to answer. What has Christmas cost you? Christmas means Christ has come.

And when Christ comes into our lives as our Lord and Savior, it will cost us something.

And that's something that Jesus talked about, taught, explained on many occasions as you read through the Gospels. Here's a good summary of the kind of things Jesus talked about, costly commitment.

[12:17] It's from Luke chapter 9. And he said to all, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. Jesus calls each one of us who call ourselves his follower, every one of us who calls ourselves a Christian, Jesus calls us to costly commitment.

And in our country today, such commitment is becoming even more costly all the time. If you believe that the Bible is truly the Word of God, the perfect, without error, Word of God, and that it is the authority for what you should believe and how you should live, you may pay a price for that in today's world.

In some settings. For some people, maybe in a home. For some where you work. For some around the people that you call friends. For many years, Chick-fil-A has publicly stated that their business was built on biblical principles.

A few years ago, they openly supported traditional biblical marriage and they did it in a positive way.

[14:03] They got some flack for that. And Dan Cathy, their CEO, son of the founder, Truett, he emphasized, we do believe in biblical values, traditional, biblical marriage.

But we don't discriminate against anyone who doesn't believe that. We don't fire people who don't believe what we believe. And we certainly don't prohibit everybody from coming to Chick-fil-A.

We are open to all people. We hold the biblical values, but we embrace people and we want to serve people. And Cathy and Chick-fil-A was commended, have been, for having such a stance.

But over the last few months, several stories from multiple sources have reported that the Chick-fil-A organization has backed off their strong commitment to biblical values.

They have apparently decided to be more politically correct and not offend liberal groups who oppose biblical values.

[15:21] According to several reports, and I know a lot of you are familiar with this, Chick-fil-A will no longer support evangelical organizations like the Salvation Army and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes because these organizations affirm biblical values such as traditional marriage.

Chick-fil-A will now support more liberal organizations that are LGBT friendly. It appears that Chick-fil-A has chosen to be more concerned about pleasing people.

and making profits instead of pleasing God and paying the cost of being unfaithful or being faithful. Now, I don't want you to misinterpret these comments. I'm not throwing rocks at Chick-fil-A. I'm not advocating boycotting Chick-fil-A.

Where in the world would you eat? Be careful when you say you're going to boycott this company or that company. You'll starve to death.

[16:33] You'll walk. You won't have electricity. You won't have a telephone, smartphone. If you're going to start boycotting organizations, businesses, because they don't adhere to Christian values.

The reason I'm singling out Chick-fil-A is because since their founding, they have publicly stated we adhere to biblical principles, biblical values.

But under the pressure of today's liberal groups, they have changed. They have compromised. compromised. It's hard not to compromise in today's world. And so before we pompously explode against Chick-fil-A, let's make sure that we are not compromising in our commitment to Christ, in order to avoid paying the cost of being faithful.

Ask yourself this question. How have I shown my willingness to pay the price required to be obedient to God? We can see how Mary paid the price.

[18:10] It cost her reputation. It cost Joseph social standing, financial security. it cost Jesus the glory and honor of heaven.

Are you willing to say yes to whatever it is God calls you to do or to take a stand upon? In your relationships, in your work, among the people that you associate with?

faith. You know, the key to making this kind of commitment is found in what Jesus said about us taking our cross, taking up our cross daily. That means we've got to die to self in terms of always having it my way.

We've got to die to my comfort, doing just what I want to do, when I want to do it. It also means we've got to learn to trust God.

God, that His way is not only the right way, but it's the best way for us as His children. And if we trust God like this, we will obey Him, even if it does cost us our reputation, some social standing, financial security, or what we consider earthly glory.

[19 : 41] Christmas means that Christ has come. He's come into this world. But let me ask you, has Jesus Christ come into your life as Savior and the reigning Lord of your life?

And final thought, is there room in your heart right now? For God to write His story for you and where you are right now, even if it comes at a very high cost.

Let's pray together. Father, help us to take seriously the fact that the coming of Jesus is costly, always has been, always will be.

Help us, Father, to be willing to make the wholehearted commitment to trust and obey you, faithfully follow Jesus wherever that may lead and whatever that may cost.

And let's just in an attitude of prayer right now, listen to the Lord and respond to Him as we know He wants us to. I'd be happy to pray with you here at the front if that would be helpful to you right now.

[21 : 19] And I strongly want to encourage you, don't let this Christmas season pass. without coming to know Jesus as your Lord and your Savior and making Him first and foremost in your life.

Let's pray and respond to the Lord.