

Don't miss the main event at Christmas

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At our carol service the message focused on not missing the main event at Christmas and the main event in our life. If you look at the statistics around Christmas feelings they raise a lot of questions about where we are as a nation.

NOTES FROM A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE:

51% agreed with the statement “The birth of Jesus is irrelevant to my Christmas”

What is everyone looking forward to most about Christmas?

What is it that you love the most about this festival, this time of celebration?

There is often so much to organise and attend and prepare, and do at Christmas that it is easy to get a bit lost.

It can be the **most joyful time** and yet often also the **most disconcerting**, even depressing time. When there are high expectations for joy and instead we are faced with the cold hard reality of difficult relationships, family problems, or maybe just family apathy, it is hard to handle the tension of what is expected and what simply *is*.

So what is the main event?

Maybe it is presents? Maybe the gifts that we give and receive could have a way of leading us to what deep down we really want most at Christmas.

When children unwrap their presents what makes that toy under all the shiny paper special. It is what in the moment, they don't see. It is their parents, it is that person who loves them, who they normally turn to as they feel the joy of what they have received, and say thank you to. Thank you Mum, DAD!

What makes those presents more valuable and special is the **knowledge of how much that person loves you**, how they love, why they love you, and the value that you experience through that love.

Certainly we are not all natural present buyers or receivers.

We look forward to giving and receiving gifts at Christmas, but what do we really want to give and what deep down do we most want to receive.

We are looking for relationships that are significant and meaningful.

The main event in the whole culture of presents at Christmas is to do with how and why we love people.

Spend half as much money and twice as much time with your children, and they will turn out better.

Love people and use things. Don't love things and use people.

All those **statistics about anxiety**, January being a time when **divorce** becomes a serious option, they are all **signs that the people are missing out what is at the heart of Christmas**.

Jesus' Birthday is far from most people's mind, it is becoming something people don't understand, and yet everyone is keen for Christmas to come around.

This is not something new. It was like this when he was born.

Bible reading:

She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. Luke 2:7

The INN KEEPER:

When Mary and Joseph came to the Inn looking for a place to stay, and the Inn keeper despite seeing Mary's situation told them there were no rooms. His establishment was busy, people everywhere; a bit like Oxford st. probably one could hardly move because of all the people.

And so they were instead directed to the most unhygienic, inappropriate place for a woman in Mary's situation, a stable, the place where the animals were kept.

The Inn keeper missed the main event. He thought the main event was his business, all those people thronging around in his Inn, all the money coming into the till, all the food and drink he was selling.

But the main event was **a woman who was about to give birth to a new life**. Who needed a bed for her and her newborn baby, not a feeding trough for horses with hay in it. But the inn keeper didn't see that. **He didn't see the human need**. And so interestingly because he didn't see the human need he missed God.

Ironic. As he missed the opportunity to help a human life he missed the chance to be connected to the one who had actually come to give him the gift of life. New life, a new kind of love that was missing in his world, a gift from God.

He was so close to the truth, yet so far away.

John 1: In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

We are often missing the main event in our lives.

People run after things that at best don't make any lasting impact on the quality of their life or their world, and at worst can make their life less meaningful, less significant.

Jesus' birth was not ONLY the main event. He came to also explain to us the main purpose and main event of our life, how we share God's love. How to relate.

So...We celebrate God coming into this world in a special way at Christmas, but with an awareness of how hard life still is.

I met with someone this week who said to me they are trying to find meaning in their life.

We celebrate this moment when Jesus was born and when God came that much closer to us through His son. And we have made it a magical time, with bright lights and beautiful music, and delicious food, and fun and games, and charity, **and yet what came before and what came after was not always magical.**

It took a lot of long complicated journeys to arrive at this milestone in God's story, where Christ could live on Earth. And it took just as much, even more challenging courses after his birth for his message and spirit of love to be multiplied and start to impact this world.

So, though God may be present with us through Jesus and True Parents, we must say, in order to be taken seriously that the working out of grace in our lives is often a difficult journey. Even if our life seems to be working there will always be someone close to us or next to us who is going through difficulty.

The word was made flesh. A light came into this world, one that has still not being overcome by the darkness, and yet even my friend I was speaking with who believes in God, does not always find it easy to experience God's blessing.

As we read the Christmas story we see that when God sends a heavenly king for the world, there is an earthly king living near by who is determined to end that new life, kill off that Lord at birth, before he can get started.

I have spoken to people who have been born out of God's grace and with God's undivided blessing, and

yet seen how the world around them has in a sense tried to extinguish that light in their heart.

Many of you are seeking love in your life, and have experienced a profound deficiency of love, and yet you have grown up with faith.

When we miss the main event we miss out. We are left ill equipped for our life's work, we are helpless to heal life's hurts.

Christ, is the main event in all of God's creation. Someone who feels like God, loves like God, behaves like God.

When we buy something this Christmas, when we rip off the paper this Christmas, don't miss the main event.

are you celebrating Christmas with Jesus? Do you have a place for him at your table?

So how do we not end up like the inn keeper this Christmas?

Find three ways to remember the main event, to remind you of the significance of what Jesus' birth meant for this world. Find three ways to remember that will work for you and your people, your friends and family.

Maybe prepare a prayer for Christmas lunch, or go out and serve someone or people less fortunate, who don't have room at the inn. Or write a little something to put under each napkin, put a plate of food out for Jesus, oretc

This Christmas, don't shut the door on Christ. Don't miss the boat. Don't miss the reason for the season. Don't be the innkeeper