

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

O Come All Ye Faithful, Joy to the World, Hark the Herald / King of Heaven, Your Name, What a Beautiful Name

WELCOME

Christmas Reflection: What was the most exciting part of your Christmas celebration this year?

WORD

LUKE 2:21-38

²¹ And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. ²² And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

People look forward to Christmas for different reasons. The greatest irony, however, is that Christmas is so hyped up that it crowds out the presence and the name of Jesus. There is a need to bring Jesus back to the picture of Christmas and tell other people about Him.

A COMPLETE PICTURE OF CHRISTMAS

When we think of the Christmas story, we often picture baby Jesus lying in the manger with Mary and Joseph. **Luke 2:21-38** is a scene very rarely talked about during Christmas. But this simple story gives us a complete picture of Christmas for we cannot separate Christmas from Calvary, the crib from the cross. Jesus came to earth on the most amazing rescue mission in the history of the universe. And He came to save you and me. But how can we know that for sure? How can we know that we were really the object of Jesus' mission on earth?

CIRCUMCISION (LUKE 2:21)

Jewish boys were given their names at the time they are circumcised. The name Jesus was not a unique name. It was related to the Hebrew Joshua which meant savior or rescuer. But **Matthew 1:21-23** tells us what was unique about Jesus — His mission was to set us free from the bondage of sin. God Himself took the form of man - **Immanuel**, God with us.

The circumcision of Jesus tells us that He was clearly set apart for the mission to save us. Circumcision symbolized separation from the rest of the world and being chosen by God. It also symbolized circumcision of the heart, which meant a commitment to do away with sin and be fully obedient to the will of God. Though Jesus had no sin, we see His total and willing submission to His Father's will (**Isaiah 53:10, 4**).

PURIFICATION (LUKE 2:22,24)

The purification ceremony for the parents, especially the mother, required a lamb to be sacrificed. If the parents could not afford it, they can offer two doves or pigeons. Mary and Joseph may not have realized it during that time, but they held in their arms the very Lamb of God who would take away their sins and everyone else who would put their faith in Jesus!

PRESENTATION OF THE FIRST-BORN SON

Exodus 13:2, 12 says ²"Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me... ¹²you shall devote to the Lord the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to the Lord."

The word 'sanctify' means to set apart. Jesus was sanctified — set apart for the purpose of our salvation.

The word 'devote' in **verse 12** is the same as "pass over". In the book of Exodus, during the last plague, God spared the first born of the Israelites from the plague through the blood of the lamb that was spread on their doors. The angel of death passed over these houses. That was a picture of the sacrifice that Jesus would eventually undertake for you and me! Jesus was set apart so that by faith in Him, because of His sacrifice, we will be passed over in terms of the ultimate consequence of sin.

WHAT MAKES JESUS UNIQUE?

If circumcision, purification, and presentation of the first-born son were all done by Jews, what makes Jesus unique in this story? The story of Simeon from

WORD (cont'd)

Luke 2:25-35 show us. Simeon was a righteous and devout man but he knew something was still missing in his life. He was waiting for the consolation (encouragement/comfort) of Israel. When he came face to face with his Savior and held Him in his arms, he was ready to die (**Luke 2:29-30**).

In the same way, God wants us to be sure of our eternal destiny. **1 John 5:11-13** says we have eternal life if we have the Son of God in our life! This salvation is for all people — Jews and Gentiles — meaning everyone (**Luke 2:31-32**). There is no neutrality when it comes to Jesus. It is either you believe with all your heart in Jesus as Lord and Savior, or you reject Him. If we reject Him, it will mean our downfall for eternity. But if we accept Him, He will guarantee that we will one day rise to be with Him forever. How we respond to Jesus will reveal the deepest thoughts of our hearts (**Luke 2:34-35**).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. **Complete picture.** How does having a complete picture of Christmas change the way you celebrate the season?
2. **Reveal your heart.** Who is Jesus to you? If you claim He is your Lord and Savior, how is this claim lived out in your life?
3. **A story to tell.** Are you telling your story to others who don't know Jesus yet? What will you do to be more intentional in telling your story to others?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Make the most of this season by telling your family, friends, and loved ones about Jesus. If you have started praying and showing care for them, share to them the love of Jesus through your own story to tell. You may use your one-minute testimony to transition to the gospel.

TELL OTHERS ABOUT HIM!

Anna, a prophetess and a religious person just like Simeon, was also missing Someone in her life. And the moment she met Jesus, she kept telling people about Him (**Luke 2:36-38**). She knew she was not the only one who needed Jesus. Shepherds were the most ordinary people at that time but they told people about Jesus and people were amazed (**Luke 2:15-18**). God can use us too. Let us tell people about Jesus and the difference He has made in our life.

How about you? Do you have a story to tell? Bringing the good news of great joy for all people is not an obligation but a privilege. When Jesus came to earth on the most amazing rescue mission, He came to save us. And He came to save us so we should tell others about Him.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants and a God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends