

Today I just want to share a brief word on getting ready for Christmas.

You tell me... What do you do to get ready for Christmas?

- Get a Christmas tree
- Decorations
- Christmas cards / letters
- Presents – how many shopping days until Christmas?
- Fill up the fridge with yummy stuff
- Get all the jobs done so we can have Christmas off
- Get in the car and drive

Let me tell ya, the most important preparation for Christmas, is preparing for Christ...

And if we fail to prepare for Christ, we've missed the whole point of Christmas...

The angel said to Joseph, “**you are to give him the name Jesus**, (now there's a reason for that) **because he will save his people from their sins.**” (YHWH saves).

John the Baptist came, to prepare the world to receive Christ, and he came with the message: repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand... and people came from all around and ⁶ **Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.**

That's how they got themselves prepared for Christ...

John's message was a very simple one: to “repent of sin” – and to repent means “to be sorry enough to stop”... The people confessed their sins... And Jesus came, to **save** His people **from** their sins... - there's a pretty common word there, isn't there??? - sin...

Jesus came to save you from **your** sins and He came to save me from **my** sins...

The rot sets in though, when we get all self-righteous and say “I don't have any sins”....

The biggest human delusion, of this millennium, is the pride, arrogance, and apathy, that convinces us that we don't **need** a saviour any more..., because you know what??? We do... The people of rural Queensland, today, need to be saved from their sins, just as much as the people of 1st century Judea....

We are **all** sinners – don't be conned – don't be lulled into a false sense of security – we are all sinners...

God has the final word on that – the bible says: ^{Romans 3:23...} **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,** ²⁴ **and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**

We have **all** sinned – we **all** need a saviour... Cattlemen, sheep cockies, graziers, farmers, workers, land owners, parents, children, roo shooters, teachers, house wives... everyone of us needs a saviour, because every one of us has sinned... Sin is the great leveller of humanity. It doesn't matter what strata of society you are from – we have all sinned...

So what **is** sin? What does it mean to sin??? What did Jesus **really** come to save us **from**??? Well, basically “sin” is “our attitude toward God”... And if I decide I don’t need God, well I don’t have a very good attitude towards God, do I??? – that’s sin. Let me put “sin” in its most practical terms for you: In the book of James, he says ^{James 4:17} ... **whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.**

That’s a very practical definition, isn’t it??? And by that definition, I am a sinner... Because often, I have known the right thing to do, and I have not done it...

And that’s why Christmas, is such good news – that’s why Christmas, is something to rejoice about – because without Christ, I would be doomed, but **with** Christ, I am saved... Christmas is wonderful news – it is joyous news to the world... - Jesus came to save sinners... OH, what a relief!!!

But it’s also terrible news...

When John the Baptist told the people to get prepared, he said that Jesus was going to come after him, and that humanity would be divided into 2 groups – wheat and chaff... Those of you who are farmers, know very well the difference.... The wheat is what you keep, and the chaff is what you blow out of the back of the header...

But of course, in Jesus' day, they didn’t have a self-propelled header to do the threshing – they used to do it on the ground. They’d either have bullocks to stomp all over it, or flails to smash the heads apart... But then to separate the wheat from the chaff, they used a winnowing fork. They’d grab a big fork full of threshed material, and throw it up in the air. And the grain would come straight down, while of course the chaff would blow away and settle on the ground...

And so you’d end up with clean grain here, and chaff down-wind.

And looking around this room, I don’t know who is wheat and who is chaff, but Jesus does.

Jesus knows the difference between those who rejoice because they have been saved from their sin, and those for whom Christmas is just a good time to party and enjoy a holiday...

John said, **“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”**

Let there be no mistake – Christ will impact greatly, on every one of us... Those who turn to Christ, repent of their sin, and receive Him as their saviour to be worshipped and adored, He fills these with His Holy Spirit – giving us joy and peace and hope for eternity... And that’s what the joy of Christmas is about – those who believe in Christ and trust in Him for their salvation, are filled with joy for the coming of Christ.

But Christ also impacts on those who do not repent... John says, they will be baptised with fire.... – the burning up of the chaff... That’s what Jesus came to save us from...

None of us have any reason at all, to celebrate Christmas, unless we have prepared for it with repentance...

My hope and my prayer, is that this Christmas – perhaps for the first time in your life, Christmas is a **true** joy, because you know your saviour... my prayer is that this Christmas would be a time when each of us draws close to God... my prayer is that Christ, would be the centre – not just of your Christmas, but life....

Merry Christmas everyone...

I'm going to pray now, and if you want to be ready for Christmas – if you want to be ready for when Christ comes again – if you are ready to be obedient to Christ, to turn from your sin, and to receive a saviour, .. – I'm going to say this prayer, and you can say this prayer with me, with your lips – you can say it in your heart:

Let's pray:

Lord God, have mercy on me – a sinner.

I accept that what you say, is true...

I am a sinner.

For the whole time and in every way I reject you, I have sinned.

For when I have known the right thing to do, but have not done it, I have sinned.

Every time I put myself in first place, and put you and your will, lower than mine, I have sinned.

Every time I have acted in greed or selfishness, I have sinned...

Lord, I accept and understand, that the consequences of sin, is death.

But I also receive the good news – that Christ came into the world to save sinners.

I receive the good news – that when Christ died, He paid the penalty – the punishment that I deserved, He bore in His own body....

Lord, Today, here and now, I submit myself to you.

I repent of my sin.

I am sorry enough to mean it when I say, "I don't want to do it any more."

I turn to you, receive Christ alone as my saviour,

And confess Him as Lord.

I believe that Christ has risen from the dead, and that He will return again,

To gather to Himself, all those who believe in Him.

Lord, fill my heart, with the true joy of Christmas.

The joy of not just a saviour – but the joy of **my** saviour, born for me..

Thank you

Amen...