

Grief, the Holidays, and a Biblical Christmas (Thomas Kidd)

There's a stark difference between the tranquil, happiness-filled Christmas that companies market to us [from early November], and the Christmas that many of us actually experience. If you are reading this blog post, you're certainly old enough to have experienced the difference. Remembering loved ones no longer there at the celebrations. Estrangements that the holidays only magnify. Financial stress that the holidays exacerbate. If we're honest, I suspect that many of us sitting in church (not to mention those absent from church) struggle with the gap between the idealised Christmas, and the real holiday experiences of sadness, loss, or anxiety.

The good news is that the biblical Christmas accounts for the difference. This is one more reason why Christians need to stick close to the biblical meaning of Christmas, lest our "American cultural Christmas" set us up for amplified disappointment.

Biblical Christmas is full of great hope, but it hardly resolves the grief and suffering rooted in the world's sin. At least it doesn't resolve everything yet. Just look at the Bible's Christmas narratives. Fear, danger, and trouble are woven into the accounts. Yes, the angels proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" But that hardly resolves all trouble.

This trouble begins with the eternal Son of God becoming a baby, laid in a feeding trough in a backwater town, destined to die a criminal's death on a cross. He was born in exclusion, as there was no room at the inn. He was likely born to impoverished parents, as indicated by their offering of two doves or pigeons, the poorest gifts permissible at the temple.

In Luke 2, godly Simeon prophesied that the infant Jesus was the Messiah. But he also acknowledged that the coming of the Messiah meant the time had come for Simeon to die. ("Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word.") He told Mary that "this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." A sword piercing Mary's soul? No wonder that the Song of Simeon (the "Nunc Dimittis") is a standard for funerals, not for Christmas services!

We almost always end the reading of the Christmas account in Matthew 2:12, the conclusion of the visit of the magi. But that is just where the account turns the most dark. Mary and Joseph have to flee with Jesus to Egypt, fearing Herod's murderous campaign to destroy the Messiah. Indeed, Herod ordered the killing of all infant boys in the region of Bethlehem, one of the most horrific acts in all of Scripture. Matthew says, "Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

"A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, || Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

Weeping, lamentation, and a lack of comfort? They remain part of the Christmas narrative too.

Don't get me wrong: I would not advise your church to make this into "the most depressing Christmas ever"! But don't try to make it the "merriest Christmas ever," either. Don't get out beyond what Scripture teaches about Christmas. The long-awaited Messiah has come, a stunning, seminal moment in the history of redemption. This incarnation leads the saints to rejoice and worship.

But Jesus's earthly career had only begun, and the crucifixion still lay ahead. Not even Easter resolves all troubles and grief. At Christmas, we know that the time of complete resolution and reconciliation lies yet in the future, when God will wipe away the tears of the saints, "and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4).



15 December 2019 | Service Times: 9am & 11:00am

Welcome, we're glad you're here!

We are a church family committed to following Jesus Christ as Lord. We do this by getting to know him through his living Word, the Bible, which is why the sermon is the key part of our Sunday services. Find out more about us at www.slechurch.org.au.

This Week:

Salvation Through Judgement

Yahweh will save by judging the wicked, even if they presently seem to be getting away with it. The hope of those who trust in Yahweh is to affirm He is judge and will execute that judgement.



Next Sunday: Psalm 9 (+10)

Today's Service

Welcome and Singing Have Mercy on Me
The Lord is My Salvation
O Come O Come Emmanuel

Holy Communion

Offering

Community News

Bible Reading Psalm 9, 10


Sermon By Pastor Steven Tran

Song of Response We Belong to the Day

Stay Connected

 facebook.com/slechurch

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Check out slechurch.org.au/groups to find a group that you can join.

Say hello

Join us for morning tea at 10:30am.
We'd love to have a chat and get to know you better.

Our Pastors

SENIOR PASTOR BEN HO

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PASTOR STEVEN TRAN

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Financial Update

Last Week	\$7,509.18
Weekly Required	\$5,750.00
Shortfall 2019	\$0.00

Giving by Electronic Funds Transfer

A/C Name: SLE Church
Bank: National Australia Bank
BSB: 084-424
A/C No: 396558544

SLE Church is a branch church of Chinese Christian Church Brisbane

Prayer Points

SALVATION BELONGS TO THE LORD!

Praise be to God! When faced with taunts or temptations to doubt the faithfulness and goodness of God to save, pray for God to remind you that Salvation truly belongs to Him—through Jesus Christ, our salvation has been won and given freely, in full measure, to all who trust in Him.

PRAY THAT WE WILL NOT FALL INTO THE TEMPTATION

to seek for alternative saviours in our life. Pray that God will help you see both the futility of the alternatives as well as the dishonor it brings to God who alone saves.

THANK GOD THAT DURING THIS CHRISTMAS PERIOD,

we can both rejoice in the wonderful things about this season as well as grieve the troubles of this life with hope. It is precisely because this world is so broken (and don't we feel it?) that the Son of God had to enter and overcome.

THANK GOD FOR THE HUGE

RESPONSE to the carols event this evening! Pray that it will be a wonderful time celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, as we sing to Him and about Him, as many hear the good news and, God-willing, many respond to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith and repentance.

PRAY FOR CHRIS AND HIS FAMILY

as they grieve the loss of Chris' maternal grandmother. Pray for Sarah as she recuperates from surgery.

Community News

SERVICE TIME AND LOCATION OVER SUMMER

From 15 December 2019 to 26 January 2021, the 11:30am service at the South Hall will be changed to 11am service at the North Hall.

Over this period, both the 9am and 11am services will have its overflow at the White Door Room.

CAROLS @ SLE TONIGHT!

Time: 5-6pm (sausage sizzle from 6-7pm)
Address: St Lucia Evangelical Church, 83 Ryans Road, St Lucia.

An evening of Christmas carols for everyone!

Kids especially welcomed!

You are invited to join us for a sausage sizzle and ice cream after the carols event!

Doors will be open at 4:50pm and carols will begin at 5pm.

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICES

Wednesday 25 December, 9am and 11am services.

Please bring a plate of morning tea to share between services.

Serving

	Today	Next Sunday
Chair	Ps Ben	Randy
Prayer	Dan <i>Jolene</i>	Winnie <i>Randy</i>
Preach	Ps Steven	Ps Ben
Bible Read	Matthew <i>Dan Lowe</i>	Jansen <i>Ps Steven</i>
M.Tea	Alice Huynh, Ying Hee	Matt & Helen
Wash Up	Clay	SOS Central
Welcome	Philip Mee Lan Esther	Philip Mee Lan Esther
Stewards	Ken Richard Simeon <i>Cam</i> <i>Josiah</i> <i>DT</i>	Ken Richard Simeon <i>Cam</i> <i>Josiah</i> <i>DT</i>
Piano	Dan Lowe	Liesl
Guitar	Kevin	Mark
Bass		Kevin
Drums		
Vocal	Liesl	Alisha
PA	William <i>Stan</i>	William <i>Matt T.</i>

Salvation Through Judgement [Psalm 9 & 10]

Introduction:

1. I will... (9:1-2, 11-14)

2. Salvation through the judgement of the wicked (9:3-10, 15-20; 10:1-11)

3. God to the rescue (10:12-18)

4. The God we see, the God we trust

So what?