

The Ugliness of Christmas

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 80-7

For many years now here at Grace Church, it's been my challenge and joy to preach Christmas messages. In fact, some years I've preached two or three Christmas messages and so there have been many different ways that we have looked at the birth of Christ. This year for whatever purposes in the mind and heart of God, I have felt strongly the need to preach on what I have chosen to call "The Ugliness of Christmas." I don't intend by that to be negative in total. I don't intend in that to depreciate your joy at this time of year, but to enhance your joy, to create within you a true joy by understanding another one of the marvelous facets of the birth of the Savior.

I suppose the most famous popular song about Christmas is "White Christmas." "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas." But if we may, I'd like us to talk about the blackness of Christmas, the other side. And I suppose that most people when they think of this time of year think only of the beauty of it, and we're surrounded by the beauty, lovely trees with bright lights and decorations, colorful ornaments, beautiful candles, wreaths, snow scenes, warm fire places and a hearth in a family home, beautifully wrapped presents, everything is bright and light and cheery and happy. And I guess that all of that symbolism is conveyed to us most significantly in the Christmas cards that we receive which present to us almost a world of fantasy, beauty, wonder, loveliness and that is one side of Christmas, without question.

But there's also another side. There's a very ugly side. And there are a lot of ways we could approach that. I mean, we could talk about a dark, cold night in a small non-descript village in Palestine where a lovely young woman gave birth to a baby in the most unsanitary wretched conditions imaginable, standing in the filth and manure of a stable. We could talk about the ugliness of a man named Herod who because he feared the loss of his control and power massacred all the babies in that region. Christmas does have some ugly aspects. We could talk about an indifferent population in Jerusalem.

But there's something even beyond those things. There is lurking behind every beautiful scene on every Christmas card, every lovely sentiment of Christmas somewhere behind all of that is something very vile and very ugly, the most wretched heinous hideous reality in all the universe. And I really believe that to have a proper understanding of the beauty of Christmas, you must have a proper understanding of the ugliness of Christmas.

Let me see if I can't help you to focus in on what I'm referring to. In Matthew chapter 1 and verse 21 we read very familiar words, "And she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sin." First John 3:5 says, "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins." First John 4:14, "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." And then I want us to focus on one very specific text, 1 Timothy 1:15 where Paul says, "This is a faithful saying, a true word, a trustworthy word and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

The dark and ugly side of Christmas is sin...sin. The heart of Christmas is this, Christ came into the world to save sinners. Christ was manifest to take away sin. "You shall call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sin." And the real beauty of Christmas is to understand the ugliness that it cures. And that is my concern today, to demonstrate the power of sin, to demonstrate the power of Christ's living and dying and rising again to deal with that which blights all of human life, sin. The phenomena that damns every soul to hell, sin. That which pervades the entire world, and because of sin there are tears and pain and war and fighting and anxiety and discord and unrest and fear and worry and sickness and death and famine and earthquakes and pollution, all those things which mar our existence are the direct result of sin. Sin disturbs and disrupts every human relationship, whether between man and man, man and creation or man and God.

Thomas Watson, the great Puritan writer said, "Sin has turned beauty into deformity and the wicked takes more care to have his sin covered than cured." Men are much more prone to excuse their sin than they are to examine it. And so it's fitting that at this time of the year when men would cover their sin with all the beauty of Christmas that the covering be torn off if but for a brief moment to reveal the ugliness that is behind it all. You see, the reason that Christ was born was to be the Savior who came to deliver men from sin. If there were no sin there would need to be no Christmas. So we cannot divorce the two and we cannot hide behind the fantasy, we cannot hide behind the smoke screen of Christmas cards and all the rest, sin must come to the forefront.

It is that which generates cosmic chaos. It is that from which no one escapes. And all who die in childbirth or from heart disease or cancer or war or murder or accidents or old age or whatever else, all are dying and all are dying because of sin. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death." And every person on the globe will die and therefore has been affected by sin.

But the Bible says Jesus Christ came into the world to save us from sin. That's the reason for His coming. Sin is the ugliness of Christmas. It is the degenerative power in the human stream that makes man susceptible to disease, disaster, illness, death and hell. And it is the reason for Christmas. Every broken marriage, every disrupted home, every shattered friendship, every argument, every disagreement, every evil thought, evil word, evil deed, every good deed undone, good thought unthought, good word unsaid can be attributed to sin. And that is why in Joshua 7:13 it is called the accursed thing. It is compared in Scripture to the venom of snakes and the stench of a

grave. And anything that is that sinister and that powerful and that totally debilitating for the whole human race must be dealt with if God who was infinitely holy is to bring man to Himself, thus Christ came into the world to deal with sin. So, you cannot look at Christmas and celebrate its peripheral elements, you must understand that the heart of it is the ugliness of sin.

Many years ago Thomas Guthrie wrote of sin some provocative words. "Who is the painted temptress that steals our virtue? Who is the murderess that destroys our life? Who is this sorceress that first deceives and then damns our souls? Sin. Who with icy breath blights the fair blossoms of youth? Who breaks the hearts of parents? Who brings old men gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? Sin. Who by a more hideous metamorphosis than Ovid even fancied changes gentle children into snakes, tender mothers into monsters and their fathers into worse than Herods, the murderers of their own innocence? Sin. Who cast the apple of discord on household hearts? Who lights the torch of war and bears it blazing over trembling lands? Who by division in the church rends Christ's seamless robe? Sin. Who is this Delilah that sings the Nazarite asleep and delivers up the strength of God into the hands of the uncircumcised? Who winning smiles on her face, honeyed flattery on her tongue, stands in the door to offer the sacred rites of hospitality and when suspicion sleeps, treacherously pierces our temples with a nail? What fair siren is this who seated on a rock by a deadly pool smiles to deceive, sings to lure, kisses to betray and flings her arm round our neck to leap with us into perdition? Sin. Who turns the soft and gentlest heart to stone? Who hurls reason from her lofty throne and impels sinners mad as a Gadarene swine down the precipice into a lake of fire? Sin." End quote.

Sin is the ugliness of Christmas. It stands behind the scene and is the reason the Savior came. "This is a true statement and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," that's the issue.

Now I want you to face five questions regarding sin. Question number one, what is sin? What is it of which we speak that has so blighted the world? John Bunyan prosaically said, "Sin is the dare of God's justice. Sin is the rape of God's mercy. It is the jeer of His patience, the sleight of His power and the contempt of His love." But more than that, what is sin in simple terms? I believe the definition of 1 John 3:4 puts it as clearly as any, "Sin is the transgression of the law." Sin is breaking God's law, any violation of God's law. In the Greek text of that verse, sin equals lawlessness, lawlessness equals sin. It is living as if there were no God and no law, no authority, no standard, just like people live today and have always wanted to live. It denies the reality of God's law. It says God is not in charge and cannot put on me a binding rule. It is living beyond the boundaries God has set. It is thinking that is unacceptable to God, speaking that is unacceptable to God, behavior that is unacceptable to God, violation of His law.

And God has given His law. He has written His law in our hearts, the Bible says in Romans 2. He has written His law in the pages of holy Scripture and the law according to Romans 7:12 is holy, just

and good. In it there is nothing impure, nothing unfair and nothing wrong. It is holy, just and good. And there is no sane reason to violate God's law other than the fact that men desire to run their own lives, to do what they will and they deny God His rightful place. All of God's law is for man's blessing. All of God's law is for man's good. All of God's law is for man's happiness, man's salvation, man's eternal joy. But man is a fool and while like horse who has a beautiful pasture to graze in and leaps the fence only to land in the mud, man has defied the beauty of what God has provided within the framework of obedience to His law, he has leaped the fence, overstepped the boundaries and landed deep in the quagmire and muck of his own sin and cannot extricate himself there from. And so, though we can look through Scripture and find many different kinds of sin and many different terms to express what it is, the simplest definition is that it is a violation of God's law.

Now that leads us to a second question, what is sin like? What is the nature of sin? What are the properties of sin? What are the characteristics of this which has caused the Christ to be born as a Savior? First of all, sin is defiling. We need to understand that its nature is that it defiles. It is not only a defection, that is it is not only a rebellion, it is not only a transgressing of God's law or stepping over the boundaries, but it is a pollution. It is a defiling. It is to precious metal what rust is. It is what scars are to a lovely face, what stain is to silk cloth, what smog is to an azure sky. It is a defiling thing. It makes the soul red with guilt and black with evil. In 1 Kings 8:38 the sin of man's heart is compared to oozing sores of a deadly plague. In Zechariah 3:3, compared to filthy garments. It is a defiling polluting staining thing. It stains the soul and blots out the image of God. And according to Zechariah 11:8 it makes God loathe the sinner. And according to Ezekiel chapter 20 verse 43, when the sinner sees his own sin, it makes him loathe himself.

Sin pollutes and defiles and stains and mars everything it touches. And it touches everything in the human realm. In 2 Corinthians 7:1 it's little wonder that Paul calls it "filthiness of the flesh and spirit." Thomas Goodwin, the Puritan, wrote, "Sin is called poison; sinners, serpents. Sin is called vomit; sinners, dogs. Sin is called the stench of graves; sinners, rotten sepulchers. Sin is called mire; sinners, pigs." And all of that, that biblical concept, speaks of its pollution, its defilement, its ugliness. So sin is defiling.

Secondly, sin is also defiant. It is defiant as to its nature. In Leviticus 26:27 God speaks of those who choose to walk in opposition to Me. It is defying God. It is clenching your fist and striking a blow in the face of Jesus Christ. No matter what homage you may want to pay to Him at Christmas, sin strikes a blow in His face. Sin drives a nail in His hand. Sin crushes a crown of thorns on His head. Sin jams a spear into His side. Sin spits on Him. Sin mocks Him. Sin says "I will do what I will do, I don't care what Your claims are or who You are."

In Psalm 12:4 it says, "Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us," we will say exactly what we want to say is the implication of that passage. We're not accepting You as any authority, we don't believe that You are binding on us, we'll say whatever we want. And Jeremiah when he was indicting the

people of Israel for their evil against God says in chapter 2 verse 31 that the people say, "We are lords, we will come no more to Thee." And that is the statement of every sinner, we are lords, we come no more to Thee, we're not interested in Your sovereignty and Your rule. We rule. We're in charge. And the very word pasha(?) in Hebrew for sin signifies rebellion. It is the heart of defiance that is in the heart of every sinner. And Jeremiah 44:17 says, "We will certainly do whatsoever thing goes forth out of our own mouths." In other words, it is the characteristic of the sinner that he does exactly what he's desiring to do.

You see, sin is God's would-be murderer. Sin not only would unthrone God, it would un-God God. If the sinner had his way, there is no God and the sinner is God. That's the defiance of sin. No matter what kind of homage it attempts to pay to God, it strikes a blow against God, it spits on the Savior, it defies God and demands to do its own will. So sin is defiling and sin is defiant.

Thirdly, sin is ingratitude...sin is ingratitude. You see, according to Acts 17:28, the Bible says, "In Him...that is in God...we live and move and have our very being." You know, of course, that without God you wouldn't be here. You were created by God, you live and breathe because God made you as He made the whole world. And whatever it is in this world that you have and whatever it is that you enjoy and whatever it is that you possess, you have because of God and because He is a merciful God and providentially kind and gracious. He has created a good world for us and blessed us with His favor. And we have another breath because there's God and He gives that breath to us.

In Mark...pardon me, in Matthew 5...chapter 5 verse 45 it says of God, "He makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and He makes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust."

In other words, He has blessed the world...the world of sinful men with His kindness and His favor. It is God who has provided all the food the sinner eats. Every delicacy, every taste you enjoy, every beautiful scene you've ever seen, every good feeling you've ever felt God gave you that. It is God who has granted every beauty, it is God who has given wisdom to our minds, coordination to our bodies, to allow us to think and to feel and to work and to play and to rest that life might be full and useful. It is God who made love. It is God who made laughter. It is God, of course, who gives us joys in life, little children, friends. It is God who gives each man the special skill, each woman the special ability that makes him and her who they are and no one else. And by which they excel in some very special way and thus no self-respect and self-worth. It is God who made man to have a basic care for himself and each other so that life is filled with those kinds of good things that we all enjoy. It is God who preserves us from getting every disease and dying every death. God literally surrounds the ungrateful sinner with His providential care and when we continue in sin, we defy that goodness and we express ingratitude for that kindness.

And like Absalom who as soon as David, his father, had kissed him and taken him to his heart went right out and plotted treason against his own beloved father, so the sinner will gladly take into his

arms all the good that God will give and strike a blow in God's face in return. And we find ourselves asking the same question that was asked in 2 Samuel 16:17, "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?"

Sin is such gross ingratitude. It seeks to dethrone and destroy the one who gave us all we have...unbelievable. That's the nature of sin. You wouldn't think to render evil to someone who had saved your life in a great and heroic act. And yet you will strike your defiant blows in the face of God who has given you everything you have. Sin is defiling and sin is defiant and sin is ingratitude.

Sin also is incurable, humanly. Sin is humanly incurable. In Jeremiah 13:23 the prophet said, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" The answer to that rhetorical question is no. The Ethiopian can't change his skin, the leopard by thinking by doing something cannot change his spots. And then the prophet says, "Then may you also do good that are accustomed to do evil." As the Ethiopian cannot change the color of his skin and the leopard can't change the color of his spots, nor can you do good who are bent to do evil. There's nothing humanly that can change that...not all the resolution in the world, not all the self-effort, not all the religion, sin is humanly incurable.

In Isaiah 1 we read in verse 5, "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, loaded with it, a seed of evil doers." In other words, you just keep begetting evil doers. "Children that are corrupters, they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the holy one of Israel to anger, they are gone way backward. Why should you be stricken anymore? You will revolt more and more, the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint, from the soul of the foot to the head there's no soundness, nothing but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." That's how God describes the sinner...total sickness. Sin is the incurable leprosy of the soul. It can't be legislated out. It can't be philosophized out. It can't be psychologized out. It can't be wished out. It can't be pushed out by self-effort. John Flavil once said that all the tears of a penitent sinner should he shed as many as there have been raindrops since the creation of the world couldn't wash away by his own tears one sin. And then he went on to say, "The everlasting burning of hell couldn't purify the flaming conscience from one sin because sorrow can't cure one's sin and punishment can't cure one's sin, only Christ can cure sin."

And so, Christmas is this, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. There's no other way. There's no other cure. Sin is a disease cured only by one thing, and that is the blood of the divine physician Himself.

Further in understanding what sin is like, we ought to say that sin is also hated by God. It is detestable to God. This must be obvious to us but let me pursue your thinking a little further. Sin is the only thing that God has eternal antagonism against. He damns no one except a sinner. That's all. That's the very narrow category in which God has eternal hatred. God does not resist a man because he's poor. God does not resist a person because they are ignorant or crippled or ill or despised by the world or limited in ability or because they seem to have little to offer. No, there's only one thing that alienates a person from God and that is sin...that is it. God is antagonistic only to the

sinner.

In Jeremiah 44:4 God says, "O do not this abominable thing that I hate." That's God's word to wayward rebellious defiant defiled sinners. You see, our God is holy, all holy, only holy, altogether holy and always holy. And the sinner is sinful, all sinful, only sinful, altogether sinful and always sinful. And how the two can be brought together, only when sin is eliminated. And that is done by the work of Jesus Christ who came to save sinners.

So, sin is defiling and defiant and ingratitude, it is humanly incurable, it is hated by God. And listen, sin...if I can add this...is hard work. It is the character of sin that it is hard work. Have you noticed? All it causes is pain and yet people go through pain to do it. It's a strange compulsion our nature gives to us. In Jeremiah 9:5 the Bible says, "They weary themselves committing iniquity." In Psalm 7:14, "Behold he travails in pain with iniquity," describing Cush the enemy of David who was chasing David. He's in pain trying to bring forth evil. And it says of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 24:12, "She has wearied herself with sin." Sin is hard work and people go after it with avengence.

I'm reminded of Genesis 19 where those perverted twisted homosexuals in the city of Sodom came to the house of Lot because two beautiful angelic creatures had come to his house from God. And they saw those magnificent creatures and they wanted to come and molest them in their vile perverted way. And they wanted them to come out of the house so that they could do that to them. And, of course, they would not allow that to happen. And the Bible says in divine judgment God struck those perverse homosexuals blind. And you know what shatters my understanding? When they went blind they didn't fall on the ground and crawl around, they didn't run and cry out for mercy, they with greater intensity tried to beat the door down and get into the house anyway they could, actually going stone blind on the spot was not enough to overpower the incredible impulses of their lust. They ignored their blindness and went to extreme effort to reach the goal their lust drove them toward. That is the essence of sin. It is so perverse that ignoring the pain and the consequences, men go after evil and weary themselves in the process. People go to hell sweating.

What is sin like? It's defiling, it's defiant, it's ingratitude, it's incurable, it's hated by God and it's hard work. All of that for men to violate the law of God. What a wretched thing.

How many people does sin effect? That's our third question. I've received letters through the years from people who have said to me, "I don't know what you're so worked up about, I've never sinned." I have. How many people does sin effect? The answer is in Romans 3, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. For there is none righteous, no not one." That's just for you who think you're the one. No, not one. Sin entered the world through one man, Adam. And by Adam then came a whole civilization of sinners. Like produces like.

Job said in Job 14:4. He said, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." No one. In Psalm 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb." Psalm 51:5, "In sin did my mother conceive me." Ever since Adam it's been sinners and sinners and nothing but sinners. And the only non-sinner was Jesus Christ, in Him was no sin, 1 John 3:5 says. And not only the guilt of Adam's sin but the depravity, corruption and pollution of it has been transmitted to us. We drink from the same poisoned well. We inherit the same fallen genetics. Adam's sin clings to us as Naaman's leprosy clings to Gehazi in 2 Kings 5. "With the flesh," Paul says in Romans 7:25, "I serve the law of sin."

Original sin in Adam contaminated the entire human stream. And if you have a question about it, it's very simple to answer...the wages of sin is death and if you die you die because of sin, that is simple and clear. If you look at your life and you want to know whether you're a sinner, ask yourself if you've ever been ill, if you're growing older, if you will die. The answer is yes and sin is the reason. You cannot deny that. And the roots of sin are so deep, they are so deep that even after salvation, sin remains a problem for the Christian. Paul cries out, "The things I want to do I don't do, the things I don't want to do I do, I see this sin that is in me." And even when it was forgiven and even when the Lord had put the righteousness of Christ over that sin because Christ had paid the penalty for that sin, it's still there, the roots of sin are so deep.

All of us are affected by it. All of us. Even when we are Christians, sin is still a reality. And if you say you have no sin, you make God...what?...a liar.

And then a vital question. What are the results of sin? What are the results? What does sin cause? Let me share this with you. First, sin causes evil to overpower us. Sin turns a person into a victim of evil. Evil dominates the mind. It says in Jeremiah 17:9, "At the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." It says in Ephesians 4 that the mind is dark, that the mind is alienated. That the life of God is absent. It says in 1 Corinthians 2 that we cannot understand the things of God. In Romans 1 that the mind is reprobate.

In other words, sin has dominated the mind so that its thinking process is overpowered with evil. It thinks evil. It plans evil. It conceives evil. And then we know, too, that evil also dominates the will. I mentioned earlier, quoting from Jeremiah 44:17, "But we will do whatsoever things proceed out of our mouths." The will is also dominated by the evil that overpowers the sinner. He is a total victim. And if his thinking is overpowered by evil, so will his willing be for he will will to do what he conceives...and what he conceives is dominated by evil.

And then evil dominates the affections. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Their loves, their affections, their wishes, their wants, their desires, their longings are toward those things which are not right. And so, man is overpowered by evil. As Paul says, "Sin that dwells in me," it hangs like blackness hangs to night. And sin is in the nature even of a Christian. It's in the essence of a Christian. It's in the person of a Christian, like a sleeping lion and the least thing can

enrage it. It is an overpowering thing. It smolders sometimes high like a flame, sometimes low, the slightest wind of temptation fans it to fury.

Secondly in thinking about this matter of sin and the results of it, sin brings us under the dominance of Satan. People think that they're free, you know, they're free, really free to do whatever they want. We say they're free spirits. Listen, the only free person is one who has had his sin covered and is free to do what is right. A sinner is not free. He is under the total domination of sin and the control of Satan. Ephesians 2:2 the Apostle Paul says in Scripture that the sinner walks, that is daily conduct, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit working in the children of disobedience. Satan is at work. He is in control. They bear the imprimatur of Satan. They bear on their faces the image of their father. And Jesus said it, John 8:44, "You are of your father the devil." It was obvious. They were visibly the devil's children because they were manifest that way. They bore the mark of Satanic control. Man is a slave to Satan. He is not free, he is totally controlled. Satan works in him to accomplish his own will. Only, Jesus said, if the Son makes you free are you free.

So, the results of sin...sin overpowers and brings into the control of Satan. Thirdly, sin makes a person an object of God's wrath. It is sin that causes us to be condemned and damned. It is sin that sends men to hell. We are exposed, Ephesians 2:3 says, to the wrath of God. And the psalmist said in Psalm 90:11, "Who knows the power of God's wrath?" That's why we don't want to mock, that's why Proverbs 14:9, I think it is, says only fools mock sin because when you mock sin you mock the wrath of God. God's wrath is not some momentary whimsical passion, it is a holy hatred, it is an act of His pure and holy will against that which is evil and unacceptable and He will destroy it. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God, of a mighty God, of a judging wrathful vengeful God.

And so, sin makes men the heirs of God's wrath. And while they think they're feasting like Domicles(?) banquet, there's a sword hanging over their head held by a thread and some day the thread will snap and judgment will fall.

And then another thought about the results of sin that is very important. Sin subjects a person to all the miseries of life. Sin brings the worse of all there is on the individual. Job said in chapter 5 verse 7, "Man is born unto trouble and trouble becomes his names." Trouble is everywhere. Paul says the sin of Adam has subjected the creature to vanity, subjected the creature to emptiness, to uselessness. There is something missing. There's an unsatisfaction so it's trouble and it's nothingness. You live a life of sin and you get trouble and nothing else, emptiness. Solomon said, "Vanity of vanities, emptiness of emptiness, all is nothing, all is nothing." What a conundrum, what a paradox. A man enters the world with a cry and leaves with a groan and nothing in between, only emptiness. Sin has torn man down from the place of honor. He has lost his dignity. He is robbed of peace. He knows no lasting joy, no hope, no meaning, no values. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked. The wicked rather are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up

mire and dirt. And the wicked, says Proverbs 28:1, flee when nobody pursues, they are hounded with the nothingness and the meaninglessness and the guilt in the absence of peace in their lives. Judas so terrified, Judas so wrought with guilt and horror hanged himself to quiet his screaming conscience. And even hell proves no rest.

Listen, sin brings the worst things in life. It exposes men to all the ultimate misery. The final result of sin is that it damns people to hell. In Revelation chapter 20 it says in the end at the Great White Throne Judgment the Lord will gather all the unbelieving and cast them into the lake of fire that burns forever. Jesus taught the doctrine of hell. He was the one who framed it and articulated it in the gospels. The Apostles picked it up and it's repeated throughout the New Testament. And we need to know this, dear friends, that of the four billion, two-hundred and twenty-five million or so people living on the earth today, all of them will die...all of them will die and all of them will face hell if they die without Christ. Fifty-million people will die this year, a hundred and thirty-six thousand nine-hundred and eighty-six die every day. Since I've started speaking over five thousand people have died, ninety-five die every minute. And they're being replaced on this earth at 2.5 times the birth rate which means more will die in the future that are dying now. And hell awaits the vast majority of people.

Spurgeon said, "Man is hanging over the mouth of hell by a solitary plank and the plank is rotten." And that is the fatality of sin ultimately. What a horrible thing it is.

Now why all of this? Because this, dear friends, is the ugliness of Christmas that brings us to the point of its beauty. You see, the beauty of Christmas is that Christ came into the world to...what?...save sinners. Now isn't that the beauty of Christmas. And who can understand the beauty of Christmas without the ugliness. It isn't the cards and the trees and the lights and the presents and the fantasies and the snow scenes and the warm fires, the beauty of Christmas is that Christ came to cure the ugliness of the world. And Ezekiel Hopkins many years ago said, "It is not man's cannots but his will nots...it is not impotency but obstinacy that destroys him." Men will not, obstinately will not come to the Christ who came to save. God determined to send His Son into the world, the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person, partaker of the divine perfection to die for us. That's Christmas. That's the meaning of Christmas. And no matter what you may think and what sentiments you may have and what warm feelings you might have about Christmas, unless you understand the ugliness of your own sin and embrace Jesus Christ who alone by His death and resurrection can save you from that sin, you don't have any connection with Christmas.

Joseph Hart(?) wrote, "Come ye sinners, poor and needy, weak and wounded, sick and sore, Jesus ready stands to save you, full of pity, love and power. He is able, He is able, He is willing, doubt no more. He is able, He is able, He is willing, doubt no more. Come ye weary heavy laden, bruised and mangled by the Fall, if you tarry till you're better you will never come at all. Not the righteous, not the righteous, sinners Jesus came to call. Not the righteous, not the righteous, sinners Jesus came to call." Shall we pray.

Indeed, O Lord, we know that this is the truth. This is a trustworthy word and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Yes, that is the beauty of Christmas. That is the glory of Christmas. The wonder, the beauty is not a tree or a decoration or lights or scenery, the beauty is that the ugliness can be cured by the coming of the Savior.

While you're head's bowed for just a moment, if you don't know Christ, if you've not given your life to Him and received Him as Lord and Savior, you may do that now in your own heart. Ask Him to come and cleanse your sin, wash you clean and He'll do that by virtue of His promise.

You may be a Christian and you see in your own life a certain sin and you've seen afresh today what that sin is like and perhaps you want the Lord to cleanse you again, wash you. He comes once to save, but daily He keeps us clean.

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