

“Missing Jesus”

Scripture: Luke 2:7; John 1:9-13

Graphics: baby Jesus in the manger

Big Truth: Many people miss Jesus amidst all the other things that distract us during this season. Tonight is our opportunity to find Him and place Him in the center of it all.

Focus phrase: Everything we try to replace baby Jesus with never seems to last.

1. Introduction

- A. VIDEO - Missing Jesus
- B. “Have you seen the baby Jesus?” Those were my exact words two weeks ago when I was placing the little ceramic figurines in the manger scene at our house as we decorated for Christmas. I’d unpacked the wisemen and their camel, the shepherds and their sheep, the donkey and the cow. I carefully unwrapped Mary, Joseph, and the manger. I got it all set up, and I said to Stacy in the next room, “Have you seen the baby Jesus?”
- C. And being the wiser part of this marriage tandem, she said, “Did you look in the box?” *Of course I looked in the box...where do you think I got all these other pieces.*
- D. But, knowing my propensity for not always SEEING even when I’m LOOKING (maybe some of you share my condition), I opened the box again...I started rifling through the wadded up paper, one piece at a time. No Jesus. No Jesus. No Jesus. And then, in the middle of the last piece of crumpled paper towel, there He was. That little half-naked ceramic baby Jesus...just the right size for the manger that sat empty in the middle of the stable that sat on the table.
- E. I picked him up, and said, “There you are!” I then placed him **behind** the stable...since it wasn’t time yet to put the baby in the manger, right? It felt a little cold putting him out back, but this Jesus is ceramic after all.
- F. I was very thankful that Jesus didn’t stay missing to long. I wouldn’t have wanted to find a gummy bear or doll head to try to replace him. That’s weird.
- G. The reality is, as the video proclaimed: **we can never replace Jesus with anything that will truly last.**

2. Scripture

- A. In Luke 2:7, we have the very simple, one verse description of Jesus’ birth: “... and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.”
- B. In that moment, Mary was all about Jesus. She would never even think of replacing him with anything! And in those first few hours and days, Mary was

- completely attentive to Jesus. There's really no way that Mary would ever be missing Jesus, right?
- C. WELLLLLL...but there was that one time when Jesus was 12 that Mary and Joseph sort of "left him behind" in the Temple one day...and then realized it a day later that He was missing. They were distracted by the journey they made to the Temple. When they went back and found Jesus, he was with the teachers and rabbis...doing the work that the Father sent Him to do. Whew!
 - D. But surely no one else ever missed Jesus, right?
 - E. WELLLLLL...(thinking) except for that one time after the first Easter when the resurrected Jesus was walking along the road with two disciples who had been with Jesus. They were distraught and they didn't know it was Jesus. That is, until Jesus ate a meal with them and THEN they recognized him.
 - F. As I think about it, there are times in the bible when people didn't know who Jesus was or, even after they did, they weren't sure about Him.
 - G. And, I think there are times when we miss Jesus too. But we're not alone.
 - H. In John's gospel, we read this, "The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."
 - I. I wonder if we sometimes miss Jesus - not because we don't believe that He was born that night in Bethlehem - and not that we don't believe that Jesus is who He says He is - but that sometimes we leave Him in the box, wrapped in the messy tissue paper of our lives...or because there are other things that are shiny and urgent and distracting for us.
 - J. Speaking of shiny and urgent...do you know who didn't miss Jesus? The Wise Men - who the Bible tells us traveled from the Far East to meet Jesus.
 - K. Matthew 2 tells us that these Wise Men, or Magi, saw a Star appear and began looking for the Messiah - Jesus. In verses 9-11, we read this: "After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh."
 - L. They would've never found Jesus had it not been for the Star that appeared in the sky over the place where Jesus was born.

- M. They dropped everything and went to see Jesus.
- N. They didn't miss Jesus, because they were looking for Him. They had their eyes on Him...and I bet that throughout their whole journey, they had to keep checking that they were heading in the right direction...until they found Jesus.
- O. For the Wise Men, Jesus wasn't still in the box amidst the tissue paper. He was right in front of them. And they worshipped. And they gave Him gifts.

3. Application

- A. This Christmas Eve is a great time to see - to find - Jesus again in your life, and put him in the place that He was born to be: the center of it all.
- B. The simple Christmas Play the kids so lovingly re-enacted for us this afternoon is one great way to put Jesus at the center.
- C. Another way is to read the story of Jesus' birth and light candles to signify the light that has come into the world.
- D. When we worship Jesus and bring Him our gifts, like the Wise Men, we recenter our lives around Jesus.
- E. In a few minutes, we'll sing Happy Birthday to Jesus...to celebrate His birth!
- F. These are all ways to put Jesus at the center of our lives and in our hearts so we never miss Him...today, tomorrow, or all year long.

4. Conclusion

- A. Everything we try to replace baby Jesus with - no matter how big or small - never seems to last.
- B. I can't wait until later this evening to reach behind the manger scene that sits on that table in our house...to find the baby Jesus.
- C. And to put Him in the manger, which is at the center of the whole scene.
- D. If there's anything right now that's taking the place of Jesus this Christmas for you, let me encourage you to set that aside. Put Jesus in the place that He was born to take - the center of it all. The center of our church. The center of your family. And the center of your life.
- E. As we light candles and glow sticks and sing Silent Night and Joy to the World, simply let your heart and mind not only find Jesus, but be found BY Jesus...and put Him right where He was born to be.
- F. Don't miss it...don't miss Jesus!
- G. PRAY!**
- H. Silent Night...Joy to the World...