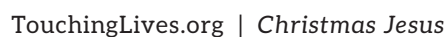




SERMON GUIDE

Christmas Jesus

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt



2. Concentrate on the Majesty of the Incarnation

Notes

“We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father...” (John 1:14, NIV). John didn’t just “look at” Jesus. The Greek word for “seen” means to “stare at with amazement.” For three years, John was discipleshiped by a man who had all the frailties of humanity but, at the same time, displayed all the glory of God. Every moment with Jesus was jaw-dropping. He got thirsty but walked on water, became hungry but fed 20,000 people, died on a cross but rose from the dead. Socrates taught for 40 years, Plato for 50, Aristotle for 40. Jesus taught for only three. And His influence infinitely surpasses their combined 130 years. Jesus painted no pictures, but inspired Michelangelo and Da Vinci. He wrote no poetry, but inspired Dante and Milton. This inspiration is not only spiritual; it’s flesh and blood and tells us just how much majesty and dignity God has invested into your body and mine. He could have turned up as a 30-year-old man, but He became a fetus in the womb, a baby in a cradle, and even a teenager going through puberty.¹ There is now a human body sitting at the right hand of God the Father.

Marvel at the majesty of the incarnation in Jesus. He didn't just tell you what He's like; He showed you by becoming one of us.

3. Celebrate the Ministry of the Incarnation

What two gifts did God wrap in Jesus' humanity and give to you? "... who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14, NIV). Jesus didn't come just to be something but to do something. He came to give us the two most important things God can ever give: grace and truth. Without grace, no human could ever be forgiven of sin, have a relationship with God, understand their purpose, or receive eternal life. Without

¹ Sam Allberry, *What God Has to Say About Our Bodies* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 20.



The Man

Christmas Jesus | Week 49 | John 1:14

truth, we would never know we need grace or really know who we are, why we're here, or where we're going. Jesus demonstrated both everywhere He went. He ate with tax collectors and prostitutes (grace), touched lepers (grace), and dined with Pharisees (grace). But He also confronted religious hypocrisy (truth) and addressed the woman at the well about her five marriages (truth). He told the woman caught in adultery, "... neither do I condemn you" (grace), followed immediately by, "Go now and leave your life of sin" (truth) (John 8:11, NIV). Grace tells us redemption is possible, and truth tells us repentance is necessary.

Because a human being came to take care of a human problem, you can now have a relationship with God and receive both the grace that forgives and the truth that transforms.

Key Takeaway

The God who created you became one of you, clothed in human flesh, and delivered the greatest gift you could ever receive: Himself, full of grace and truth.

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Reflection Questions

1. What happens in your heart when you think about the incarnation, God becoming human? How does it change your perspective on why we celebrate?

2. How does knowing that God, through His Son, personally understands your human struggles change the way you approach Him in prayer or during difficult circumstances?

3. Which do you find yourself needing more right now—God's grace (undeserved forgiveness) or God's truth (honest confrontation)? How does Jesus' ministry of bringing both into perfect balance speak to your current situation?

The God

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Introduction

When “Jesus Christ Superstar” debuted on Broadway in 1971, it became one of the most successful musicals on Broadway, grossing over \$240 million since its inception. But Mary Magdalene sings this interesting line: “He’s a man, He’s just a man.” That’s exactly what most Americans believe. A 2020 study found that 52% of U.S. adults say Jesus was just a great teacher and nothing more. But if Jesus was just a man, significant dominoes start to fall. First, Jesus would be a liar, and there would be no New Testament. No Christian faith or early church would exist, and 2.5 billion believers worldwide would be greatly fooled. British pastor John Blanchard said it well, “The deity of Jesus glues the whole of scripture together. Take it away, and the Bible falls apart into meaningless pieces.”² When Thomas saw the resurrected Jesus, he declared, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28, NIV). What was he seeing? Based on eyewitness accounts of men who lived with, walked with, and followed Jesus, you can be sure that Jesus was not just a man through whom God was revealing Himself. He was God revealing Himself as a man. Watch how these four proofs strengthen your faith.

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Key Points

1. Look at the Wisdom He Proclaimed

From His first public words—“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Matthew 4:17, NIV)—people recognized nobody had ever spoken like this man. Jesus didn’t speak with the authority of a man. He spoke with the authority of God. Jesus Himself declared, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Matthew 24:35, NIV). Jesus equated His words with God’s words. No priest, prophet, or teacher would ever claim their words last forever. Only God’s words are eternal. In fact, even Old Testament prophets always introduced their message with “Thus says the Lord”

² John Blanchard, *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1989), 134.



(used over 400 times). But Jesus said, “I say to you” 145 times. He never asked what anyone else thought. Even more incredible, Jesus began His statements with “Amen” or “Verily,” which are words normally used at the end of a prayer or statement to validate or confirm what was just said. But Jesus opened His sermons this way. There is no precedent for this practice in Jewish historical literature. These are words only God could use with confidence.

Build your decisions, your relationships, and your life on the wisdom that Jesus proclaimed, because when Jesus speaks, God speaks. You can stake everything on His words.

2. Look at the Works That He Performed

Of the 103 miracles in the Bible, Jesus performed 37, nearly one out of every four. He probably performed more miracles in one day than in all the centuries of Old Testament history. He performed healing miracles, exorcisms (no one before Him cast out demons, because only God has authority over spiritual forces). He raised people from the dead, calmed storms, walked on water, and fed thousands of people in one sitting with a sack lunch. Unlike other miracle workers who called on God's power, Jesus performed miracles by His own power, word, and authority. But His greatest miracle is forgiving sins. When Jesus told a paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5, NIV), the Pharisees rightly thought, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7, NIV). Jesus had never met this man, but forgave every sin he'd committed. C.S. Lewis explained that in this moment, Jesus behaved as if this man had sinned against Him, which he had, since Jesus was God. I read about 19th-century French artist Paul Gustave Doré who lost his passport, and an immigration official doubted his identity. The official handed him paper and pencil, saying, "Prove it." Within minutes, Doré produced such a brilliant sketch that the official was convinced. Jesus performed miracles as His proof.

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When you face an impossible situation today, remember that the same power of Jesus that calmed storms, fed multitudes, and forgave sins is available to you right now.

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3. Look at the Walk He Practiced

One thing we know about every human being is that nobody is perfect ... except Jesus. Both His friends and enemies claimed He was perfect. Jesus asked the Pharisees who hated Him most, "Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?" (John 8:46, NIV). He asked because He knew the answer was "No." Even Pontius Pilate, under tremendous pressure to find something wrong with Him, declared twice, "I find no basis for a charge against him" (John 18:38; 19:4, NIV). Two of His closest disciples who lived with Him 24/7 for three years said that, "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:22, NIV). Jesus Himself made this bold claim in John 14:1, "You believe in God; believe also in me" (NIV). Only God is worthy of our faith, but Jesus said that when you put your faith in God, you put your faith in Him, because He is God. What's unique about Jesus is that countless people believed Him because of the way He lived. The one thing we'd expect if God became human is absolute perfection, and that's exactly what we find.

Observe His words and actions; Jesus alone is worthy of your complete faith, total trust, and unreserved devotion.

4. Look at the Worship He Provoked

Before Jesus was born, an angel declared He would be called "Immanuel," meaning "God with us" (Matthew 1:23, NIV). Right after His birth, wise men "bowed down and worshiped him" (Matthew 2:11, NIV). A leper knelt and worshipped Him (Matthew 8:2). A synagogue ruler worshipped Him (Matthew 9:18). After He calmed the storm, His disciples "worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God'" (Matthew 14:33, NIV). Notice that at no time did Jesus rebuke anyone or stop anyone



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Reflection Questions

1. If Jesus was “just a great teacher” as 52% of Americans believe, how would that change the meaning of Christmas, the reliability of Scripture, and the foundation of your faith?

2. Which of Jesus’ miracles most convinces you that He is God?

3. How does knowing He performed miracles by His own authority (not calling on God) change your understanding of who He is?

Introduction

Key Points

1. We See Jesus Is the Man of Revelation

Notes



It literally means the mark or imprint reproducing the likeness of something, like a metal stamp or engraving. In other words, Jesus was the mirror image of God, the carbon copy of the Father. When Jesus was born, He didn't become God; He became a man. He was always God. After birth, He became the God-man. This God-man shows you what God is like. If you want to see God, look at Jesus. If you want to hear God, listen to Jesus. If you want to act like God, live like Jesus.

Stop searching for “something more” beyond Jesus. He’s not a stepping stone to God. He IS God’s complete message to you.

2. We See Jesus Is the God of Creation

The God who created the world came as a human being into the world He created. "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3, NIV). Everything from molecules to men, planets to people, moon to stars has stamped on it, "Made by Jesus." Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created..." (NIV). The Hebrew word for God in this verse is "Elohim," and is actually plural. It could be rendered "We is," which is bad grammar but perfect theology. Jesus created not just the physical universe but time, space, energy, and matter. He's "... sustaining all things by his powerful word" (Hebrews 1:3, NIV). He's the glue of the galaxies. The reason we have cosmos instead of chaos is Jesus. If the gravitational force differed by one part in 10^{40} , our sun wouldn't exist. That's one inch on a tape measure stretched across the entire known universe. He's not only the creator of all things; He is the controller and sustainer of all things.

When your world feels like it's falling apart, remember that the same Jesus who created the universe with unmistakable precision is sustaining your life right now.

Notes



The God-Man

Christmas Jesus | Week 51 | Hebrews 1:1-3

3. We See Jesus Is the Man of Salvation

Notes

Consider these seven words that transformed the world: “After he had provided purification for sins...” (Hebrews 1:3, NIV). The reason those words are so powerful is that if there’s no God-man, there’s no covering of sin and man can’t be in relationship with God. Hebrews 9:22 explains, “... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (NIV). But the blood of bulls and goats was not enough. To provide purification for sin by becoming a sacrifice for our sins, He had to be sinless, because a sinful man cannot save sinful men. But God cannot die. Jesus had to be both to save us. We needed someone to mediate. As God, He could take God’s hand; as man, He could take man’s hand. As the God-man, He could join both hands together. Paul said it best: “For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus...” (1 Timothy 2:5, NIV). Only Jesus Christ, the God-man, could offer Himself as a sacrifice reconciling a Holy God with sinful humanity.

Put your trust in the Man of salvation. He’s both God enough to save you and human enough to understand exactly why you need saving.

4. We See Jesus Is the God of Exaltation

God appointed His Son “... heir of all things...” (Hebrews 1:2, NIV). This universe wasn’t only created by Jesus; it was created for Jesus. He holds the title deed to every square inch. Every galaxy, solar system, and planet belongs to Jesus. “For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen” (Romans 11:36, NIV). People say, “I don’t know what this world is coming to.” I do. It’s coming to Jesus! Now, in the four Gospels, the only thing we’re told Jesus owned was His cloak, and Roman soldiers gambled for it at the cross. He owned literally just the clothes on His back. He was buried in a borrowed grave. But that lonely, crucified carpenter will one day hold the title deed to everything. All people, angels, Satan, and demons will bow before Him and confess Him as



Lord and God. That's why "... he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven" (Hebrews 1:3, NIV). That's the place of supreme power and authority. He's not "a" king; He's the King of kings and Lord of lords.

All things belong to Jesus. From eternity past to eternity future, He was, is, and always will be the God who deserves to be followed, praised, loved, obeyed, and worshipped.

Key Takeaway

He's worshipped by billions as God, but walked dusty roads with His disciples. The question isn't whether He's the God-man, because the evidence has settled that. The question is whether you trust the One who has both the power to save you and the scars to prove He understands you.

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The God-Man

Christmas Jesus | Week 51 | Hebrews 1:1-3

Reflection Questions

1. How does understanding Jesus as “the exact representation” of God change the way you read the Gospels or approach getting to know God personally?

2. How does knowing Jesus holds your world together change your perspective on whatever feels like it’s falling apart right now?

3. Which truth do you need to embrace more deeply today: that Jesus understands your humanity completely or that He has God’s full authority and power to save you?

The Greatest Verse

Sermon Single | Week 52 | John 3:16

Introduction

When world-renowned author Sir Walter Scott lay on his deathbed, he asked his son-in-law to bring him “the” book from his massive library. “Which book?” his son-in-law asked. Scott replied, “Son, there is only one book!” He meant the Bible, the most-read book in the world, with 100 million copies sold annually. Of its 31,103 verses, one stands above all others, and it’s John 3:16. Atheists, agnostics, Jews, and Christians alike know this verse. It’s only 25 words, with “Son” as the 13th word, dividing it perfectly in half. The first 12 words are about God: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...” The last 12 are about us: “that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (NKJV). Short enough to write on a napkin, but long enough to tell anyone how to have a lasting, eternal relationship with God. This one verse can save the universe. Unpack the power of these 25 words and discover God’s love for you afresh.

Notes

Key Points

1. Rejoice in God’s Awesome Profession

Are you in the world? Then you’re on God’s love list. “For God so loved the world...” (John 3:16, NKJV). Big things come in small packages, and these first six words affect everyone alive today, who has ever lived, or who ever will live. Can there be a more encouraging thought than “God loves me”? God has professed His love for everyone. There is no one God doesn’t love. In Jesus’ day, Jewish leaders would not have believed this. They thought, “Surely God doesn’t love the Romans who trample us or the Assyrians who burned Jerusalem.” If you were Greek or Roman, you’d laugh. Your gods had no compassion; they only cared about themselves. But this God loves you regardless of who you are or what you’ve done. God’s love extends beyond all traditional boundaries. It’s not limited by or exclusive based on politics, race, finances, or intellect. It’s total love. If God’s



love is for anybody anywhere, it's for everybody everywhere.
God doesn't love you because you're valuable; you're valuable
because God loves you.

You cannot influence, wear out, or reach the limit of God's love. It never ends, never fails. You can't go where God doesn't love you.

2. Recognize God's Awesome Provision

What's the most intense word in the entire verse? It's the smallest one. John 3:16 opens with God loving the world, but don't miss the little word "so." In Greek, it's actually first in the sentence, placed there for emphasis. God *so* loved the world. Bound up in those two letters is indisputable proof of God's love. Talk is cheap, but God hasn't just declared His love, He's demonstrated it. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." (John 3:16, NKJV). The profession of God's love is followed by His provision of His love. Love talks. Love walks. Love speaks and shows. A guy kept telling his girlfriend, "Baby, I love you so much I'd die for you!" She finally said, "You're always saying that, but you never do it!" God doesn't just say He loves you; He showed it by giving His Son, who gave His life for us. The cross is God's forever flashing neon sign saying, "God loves you." You cannot influence God's love (can't do enough good to make Him love you more or enough bad to make Him love you less). God's love never wears out, never ends, never fails. God loves you on good days and bad days. His love is final. You can't go where God doesn't love you, can't reach the limit or stop His love.

It's an insult to Jesus on the cross to put the word "if" in front of "God loves us." You can trust that it was settled with hammers, nails, and cross beams in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago.

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3. Respond to God's Awesome Proposal

The next five words of this verse tell us what God requires, “...that whoever believes in Him...” (John 3:16, NKJV). It’s amazing that God doesn’t ask us to work (can’t earn His love) or ask for money (can’t buy His love). He doesn’t tell you to grovel (can’t beg for His love). God asks for complete faith and total belief. In God’s world, the way you receive is to believe. But “believe” means more than most think. Eighty percent of Americans “believe” Jesus was God’s Son who died for our sins, but what we mean isn’t what Jesus meant. “Believe” in this verse literally means “commit to,” “surrender to,” “trust in completely.” You can believe in Karl Marx without being a communist, or believe in Hitler without being a Nazi. But true belief means your mind knows the truth about Jesus, your heart affirms it, and your will surrenders to Him. Think about the way Navy pilots make dangerous aircraft carrier landings. They depend totally on the Landing Signal Officer. When he signals to land, you land. You place your life totally in his hands. When you believe in Jesus, you place your entire life in His hands. This is one belief you need to get correct, because if you don’t, you will perish, dying not just physically but spiritually and eternally.

Believing isn't just agreeing mentally. It's complete commitment, total surrender, and absolute trust that places your life entirely in Jesus' hands. It's reassurance that lasts through your life now and into eternity.

4. Receive God's Awesome Promise

When you believe, you receive the greatest promise from the greatest Promise Keeper: "...should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16, NKJV). There's more to this life than this life. Notice the verse doesn't say "may have," "might have," or "will have"; it says you *have it now*. Many people think you must wait until death to know if you're going to Heaven. Jesus made it plain that when you believe, you receive. He

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said, “Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life” (John 6:47, NIV). Eternal life doesn’t begin when you die; it begins when you believe. You’ll spend far more time on the other side of death in eternity than you’ll ever spend on earth physically. If eternity is waiting, you’d better go into it with eternal life. Mickey Mantle, the greatest switch hitter in baseball history but a poor role model off the field, lay dying of liver cancer. When asked by Bobby Richardson’s wife what he’d say if God asked why He should let him into Heaven, Mickey answered: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Eternal life begins the moment you believe. It's not a future hope but your present reality that starts now and lasts forever.

God loved and God gave. Now it's your turn. The question isn't "Is this true?" but "Will you believe it?" Don't let the most famous verse in the Bible be memorized and not believed.

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The Greatest Verse

Sermon Single | Week 52 | John 3:16

Reflection Questions

1. Is it harder for you to accept that God loves people you struggle to love, or that His love for you can't be increased by your goodness or decreased by your failures?

2. How does viewing the cross as God's "forever flashing neon sign" change your response to doubts about whether God really loves you personally?

3. True belief means committing to, surrendering to, and trusting in Jesus completely, just like a Navy pilot trusts the Landing Signal Officer with their life. In what area of your life are you still trying to control the landing instead of completely trusting Jesus?
