

Pastoral REFLECTIONS

December 18, 2022

Christmas Worldwide

Christmas is a special time for Christ worldwide. During the early days of Christianity, different parts of the world celebrated Christmas on different dates. In the mid-fourth century, Pope Julius I appointed a monk named Dionysius to set up a calendar standardizing a universal date, which came to be December 25. If you traveled widely in the Roman world, you could conceivably enjoy six different Christmases in the span of a single year.

Christmas was outlawed in England by the Puritans under Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), who thought of it as a “heathen celebration.” It was illegal to celebrate the holiday until the British monarchy was restored in 1660.

The Puritans of New England also outlawed Christmas. The following law was passed in Massachusetts in 1659: “Whoever shall be found observing any such day as Christmas and the like, either by forbearing labor, feasting or any other way, shall pay for any such offense five shillings as a fine to the country.” The law remained on the books for 22 years, and Christmas was not made a legal holiday in Massachusetts until just before the Civil War.

In Spain, Christmas gifts are not exchanged until January 6—for a very good reason. That is the date commemorating the visit of the Magi, who were the first to offer Christmas gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. That night, children would set their shoes outside on the doorstep, filling them with straw for the camels. They believed the wise men would use the straw to feed their camels and, in return, fill the shoes with gifts and candy.

The custom of sending Christmas cards began in 1843 when a wealthy Englishman, Sir Henry Cole, ran out of time to write personal letters to his friends at Christmas. He commissioned an artist, John Calcott Horsley, to design a card instead. Horsley drew a picture of a group of merry-wishers raising their glasses in a toast. Underneath were the words, “A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You.” The card created much controversy, as critics complained it encouraged holiday drinking, but the custom of sending cards at Christmas caught on nonetheless.

The Poinsettia is a Christmas tradition harkening from Mexico. According to legend, a boy named Pablo was headed to his village church to see its nativity scene. Realizing he had no gift for the Christ child, he hurriedly gathered some branches and weeds from the roadside. The other children laughed at him when he laid them before the manger, but suddenly, there appeared on each branch the brilliant, star-shaped flower of the Poinsettia.

Candy canes were reportedly developed by a Christian candymaker in Indiana who built the story of Christmas into each piece. The hardness of the candy represents the solid rock of the Christian faith. The white represents the sinlessness of Christ, and the red stripes symbolize the bloody wounds caused by His flogging. The shape of the candy is that of a shepherd’s staff, representing Christ as our Good Shepherd. Turned upside down, it forms the letter “J”—for Jesus.

Our word Christmas comes from the English observance of the birth of Christ called Christes masse (Christ’s mass) because a special mass was celebrated on that day. In France, it’s known as Noel; in Spain, Navidad; and in Italy, Natale—all those words meaning simply birthday. The Germans use the word Weihnachten, meaning holy nights.

The word Yule comes from the Teutonic tribes of northern Europe. Because their winters were so long and harsh and their days so short, they always celebrated the winter solstice on December 22, the shortest day of the year. It was a time of great joy for them. From that point, each year, the days began to lengthen. They called the month Yule, or Jol, from which we get our English word jolly.

The day after Christmas is commonly called “Boxing Day” in England because of the custom of giving Christmas boxes containing gifts and money to the servants (Morgan, Robert J.: *Nelson’s Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, and Quotes. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000, S. 110*).



UPCOMING Events



I REMEMBER CHRISTMAS

Living Word, Do you remember Christmas? Join us for a Christmas Eve Service at 6:00 pm on Dec. 24th as the Drama Ministry and Creative Jams present, *I Remember Christmas*. This production is filled with joy, dancing, singing and much more! For more information contact Melita Washington at melita290@gmail.com



URBAN MISSIONS TEAM CHRISTMAS DAY OUTREACH

Join the Urban Missions Team on Christmas Day, right after service to minister, pray, and give out Packs of Love to Houston’s unhoused population. We will leave from the church right after service on Dec. 25th and meet at Minute Maid. You must register and attend a special preparation training today on Dec. 18, 2022 at 10 a.m. in the main sanctuary. Register at <https://bit.ly/UMTChristmasOutreach>



CONNECTION SUNDAYS—CHRISTMAS EVENTS EVERY WEEK IN DECEMBER

Today—Donuts & Coffee in the Foyer at 10 a.m.

DEC. 24TH—“I Remember Christmas” Christmas Eve Service at 6:00 p.m.

DEC. 25TH—“Ugly Christmas Sweater” Sunday Service at 9:30 a.m. & Photo Wall



BE INTENTIONAL WOMEN OF GRACE MINISTRY CONFERENCE 2023

The Women of Grace Ministry BE INTENTIONAL Conference will take place Sat., Feb. 4, 2023 9 a.m.—2 p.m. This dynamic Conference will feature praise and worship, vendors, a panel discussion, and our phenomenal sister-in-Christ and featured speaker, **Priscilla Shirer**. Registration will be \$50.00. T-shirts are available for pre-order at an additional cost of \$20.00-25.00. For more information visit www.wogconference.org or Register Now at <https://bit.ly/WOG2023>



LWCA PRESCHOOL—\$85 PER WEEK BEFORE/AFTER CLUBS—\$35-\$55 PER WEEK

Would you like your children to learn to be a little more like Jesus? Then, join the Living Word Christian Academy for preschool and before and after school programs and clubs including: robotics, chess, tennis, music, culinary arts, academic enrichment and much more! For more information, call (713) 686-5538 or register at www.lwcacademy.org



ORDER OF WORSHIP

Announcements

Communion

Visitor’s Welcome

Worship In Giving

Offering boxes are located at all perimeters under crosses

Special Music

“Convinced”

Luke 2:8-20

Pastor Duane Lawrence

Click on the “Resources” tab and click “Sermon Notes”

Call to Discipleship

Benediction



Children are required to check-in upon arrival. Please report to the registration desk located in the children’s wing.



MIDDLE SCHOOL - HIGH SCHOOL



Convinced
The Testimony of The Shepherds
Luke 2:8-20

- I. The shepherds were doing what they had done before - v. 8
 - a. In the same country
 - b. Living out in the fields
 - c. Keeping watch over their flock
 - d. By night
- II. The shepherds' lives were changed forever - v. 9
 - a. The angel of the Lord stood before them
 - b. The glory of the Lord shone around them
 - c. They were greatly afraid
 - d. The shepherds were completely unprepared for what they witnessed
- III. The Message from The Angel - v. 10
 - a. The very first thing that the angel said to the shepherds was - "Do not be afraid"
 - b. Why should the shepherds not be afraid - they were receiving some "good news"
 - c. The "good news" was not just for the shepherds but for "all people"
- IV. The Message of The Angel - vs. 11-12
 - a. For there is born to you - (referring to the shepherds, which also includes you and me)
 - b. This day at this very moment
 - c. A Savior - destined to die for the sins of the world - yes, your sins, and my sins
 - d. Who is Christ the Lord
 - e. This will be the sign to look for - You will find the Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger
- V. The Heavenly Host Praising God - vs. 13-14
 - a. A multitude of angels joined the Angel of The Lord - "suddenly there was with the angel"
 - b. Glory to God in the highest
 - c. And on earth - peace, goodwill toward men
- VI. The Shepherds Response - vs. 15-20
 - a. Let us now go to Bethlehem - no discussion or debate - v. 15
 - b. To see this thing that has come to pass
 - c. Which the Lord has made known to us. Notice, the shepherds-did-not-say-the angel, but the Lord. THE SHEPHERDS WERE CONVINCED OF THE RELIABILITY OF THE MESSAGE
 - d. The shepherds came with haste - v. 16
 - e. When the shepherds had seen Him - (Jesus) - v. 17
 - f. They made known the saying which was told them concerning this Child-(Jesus) THE SHEPHERDS COMMUNICATED THE REALITY OF THE MESSAGE
- VII. The people who heard the testimony of the shepherds were amazed - v. 18
 - a. The shepherds were the first to hear of the birth of Jesus
 - b. The shepherds response was to worship Jesus
 - c. The shepherds were the first to tell the Christmas message
- VIII. Mary's Response – v. 19
 - a. She kept all these things - made it a matter of private meditation and reflection
 - b. She pondered them in her heart - as she had left it up to God before, she will now do the same
- IX. The shepherds returned - v. 20
 - a. Glorifying and praising God
 - b. For all the things that they had heard and seen
 - c. As it was told to them THE SHEPHERDS CELEBRATED THE REVELATION OF THE MESSAGE



PRAYER REQUESTS

Grieving: Kim Young & family, the family of Ethel Davis, Vivian Jackson & family, Jo Lathan & family, and Larry Ellis & family.

Health and Healing: Lurlean Lane, Florence Wiggins, Retha Amos, Margaret Baptiste, Cici Sharpe, Eunice Johnson, Jeffrey McQueen, Barbara Gordon, Eric White, Ella James, Pat Crawford, Lisa Roberts, Birdie Williams, Jon Heard, Lakessia Davis, Rutha Patrick, Betty Goode, Latifah Brown, Tanisha Collins, Eric Prichett, Rufus Hadnot, Pat James, Kevin Carey Lori Lee, Nikisha Doyle, Jessie Austin, Patricia Jackson, Sherri Love, Elizabeth Clark, Clara Williams, and Deborah Smith.

Convinced



Luke 2:8-10