

Why Did Jesus Come at Christmas Time?

Ephesians 5:2

By [Dr. J. Ligon Duncan](#)

If you have your Bibles, I'd invite you to turn with me to Ephesians chapter 5 verse 2, if you don't, there are pew Bibles in front of you and I'd invite you to open up and follow along. There's just one verse we're going to look at today and perhaps not a verse that you're used to looking at, at Christmas time or associating with the incarnation of Christ. But I want to ask a specific question. I want to ask this especially to the young people who are here today and the youngest of you I hope will have conversations with your parents and perhaps uncles and aunts and grandparents and cousins over this particular question, sometime, maybe tonight, maybe tomorrow, maybe tomorrow night, but talk with one another about the question of why Jesus came at Christmas.

Now I'm not asking about the timing of Jesus' coming; I'm asking about the reason for Jesus' coming. And one of the interesting things about this question is there's not just one right answer from the Bible. There are actually many things that the Bible says to us in answer to that question about why Jesus came. So for instance, boys and girls, if you and I were having a conversation right now and you were to raise your hand and say, "He came to die for our sins," I would say, "You're absolutely right!" But I'm going to talk about something different. You're absolutely right, the Bible says that Jesus came to die for our sins, but it also says a lot of other things that He came to do, and we're going to study one of the very important things that the Bible says that Jesus came to do in Ephesians 5 verse 2.

Now allow your eyes to look back at verse 1 as well. Sneak a peek at that, because verse 1 says something very, very interesting. It says, Paul says to us there that he wants us to be imitators of God. Now do you know what is interesting about that is that is the only place in all of the Bible where that phrase is used, "imitators of God." Now there are places in the Bible where Jesus, for instance, calls us to be like our heavenly Father. You remember in the Sermon on the Mount, He says, "Be holy because your heavenly Father is holy." And of course He's echoing something that Moses had said a long time ago when He says that. And so the idea of following God's example and being like God and imitating God is found in various places in the Bible, but this is the only place where the phrase, "be imitators of God," is used anywhere, in the Old or the New Testament. It's a very important passage. And verse 2 really explains what it means to do verse 1. You know, you might say, "How exactly do I, a human,

imitate God?" Well in a real sense, Paul explains that to you in verse 2 and in explaining it to you he tells you a very important reason that Jesus came into the world. And so I want us to read this verse together, and before we do it let's pray.

Father, teach us one of the great lessons of Jesus' coming at Christmas from this Scripture today. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

This is the Word of God. Hear it:

"And walk in love, as Christ loved us, and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Amen, and thus ends this reading of God's holy, inspired, and inerrant Word. May He write its eternal truth upon all our hearts.

Did you see the answer to my question? Why did Jesus come at Christmas time? The answer that Paul gives there is that Jesus came at Christmas time so that you and I, all those to believe Him, all those who trust Him for their salvation, all those who have faith in the promises of God in the Gospel, can walk in love. He wants us to be able to walk in love because he wants us to imitate God, who is love, and he wants us to imitate Christ who "loved and gave Himself for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Jesus came into this world because of His love and He gave Himself for us, He offered Himself as a sacrifice to God, in order that we can walk in love. Now that is something that Paul tells us here but this is not the only place where we learn this truth. Do you remember Jesus telling His disciples that very same truth in John chapter 13? Do you remember when He said to them, "A new commandment that I give to you that you love one another, just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another"? Paul is saying the same thing here just as Jesus said, "You love one another the way I have loved you," Paul is saying, "Walk in love the way Jesus loved and gave Himself for you."

But that's not the only place we learn this. If you turn to 1 John chapter 4 verses 7 and 8, John says this, "Beloved, let us love one another for love is from God, and whoever loves, has been born of God and knows God because God is love." When we live in love towards one another we are acting like God and we are acting like Jesus. And Jesus, one of the reasons He came, was to free us from our selfishness so that we could love one another. Now there are lots of ways that we could define love. One way to define it is love is seeking another person's happiness even over your own, caring about someone else's happiness more than your own.

A few years ago, I heard the wife of my college choir director give a testimony at a reunion banquet. And she paused and gave a word of exhortation to the young women in the room and she said, "Many of you have asked me what the secret of my husband and my happy marriage is. The secret is, I found a man whose

happiness I cared about more than my own and I love to devote myself to his happiness.” Well all she was saying was that she loved him because that’s what love is. Love is caring about another person’s happiness and even in preference to your own.

My father-in-law was telling us the other day that his wife had worked very hard for the Sunday school party that was held at their church just a week or so ago and that nobody had thanked her and he was very upset about this. And so he approached the Sunday school class president and said, “My wife worked very hard on that Sunday school class party and I think someone should have publically thanked her!” And my wife said to her father, “Women do that all the time! Have you just noticed that your wife does things that she doesn’t get thanked for? How often have you thanked her for the things that she’s done that nobody else notices?” Well she was saying that women do things that they don’t get recognized for, they don’t get publically applauded for, all the time. That’s part of being a woman, she was saying to her father. And you know what that is? It’s a picture of love. And Paul wants us all to walk in love.

Now it is just possible that even on your way here today or before you came to the service, something happened in your home or in the car that wasn’t loving. It’s possible! I know it’s a remote possibility (laughter), a distant possibility, a miniscule possibility, but a distinct possibility! One thing, children, that you can do to follow what Paul says in Ephesians 5:2 is determine to love your parents. Now that may be hard to do sometimes because they may ask you to do things that you don’t want to do. You may prefer to think about yourself, but Paul said that Jesus came into this world so that we didn’t just live for ourselves anymore, but we love one another. And you know, Jesus in John 13 says, “When people see us love one another they know that we belong to Jesus. They know that we are Christians. They know that His claims are true.” It’s a witness to Jesus that we love one another.

Now adults, there may have been some issues yourselves have experienced on your way here today. One of the things that would cause Jesus’ heart to rejoice is if we loved one another more in our families, in our congregations, in our neighborhoods, in our communities. Jesus came so that we could walk in love, so that we could be like Him, so that we could be what He created us to be. He was willing to give Himself for us and offer Himself as a sacrifice that we might walk in love. But Jesus doesn’t just give you an example, He gives you a motivation and He gives you the power to love, not just an example, but a motivation and a power. Yes, Jesus in His life shows us how to love, but He also motivates us to love. Some of you in this room know people in your life who have loved you well. Do you find it easy to love them? I do. When I have been loved well, it is easy to love, and you have been loved well by Jesus. And so He motivates you to love even some people who will perhaps not love you back so well because He has loved you well.

And not only that, He provides you the power to love. There are some relationships in life that are so difficult that we do not have the power to love in them, but Jesus has the power to enable us to love. Love answers love. Love is motivated by love. And love is made possible by love. Love answers Christ's love. Love is motivated by Christ's love. Love is made possible by Christ's love. So talk about why Jesus came, sometime during Christmas, as a family. You'll come up with many Biblical answers, but don't neglect this one, that Jesus came so that we could walk in love. And then do this – don't just think about that, love well this Christmas and all the days ahead. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, it is an easy thing to say love; it is often a hard thing to love. Grant, O God, this day and in the year to come and in all the years that follow that we, Your believing children, would walk in love more than we ever have before, better than we ever have before, because we're walking in a love that answers to Jesus' love, a love that's motivated by Jesus' love, and a love that is made possible only by Jesus. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Now take out your hymnals again and let's turn to number 224, "Go Tell It On the Mountain."

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God our Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, this Christmastide and forevermore. Amen. Merry Christmas!

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