**B.C. (Before Christmas) - Week 5 – Good**

**Introduction: The Christmas Story**

(Enter stage left into darkness or single spotlight) ***“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world…”***

*“In those days…?”* Those days in the Roman world were some dark, dark days.

* 3 Women and children were considered property that could be bought and sold for cash or cattle.
* ~~Men could do whatever they wanted including kill a family member with no legal repercussions.~~
* 1 Caesar ruled as a self-proclaimed God. Everything was for his benefit and never the people.
* 2 Because of that the Roman Empire would sometimes tax the Jewish people upwards of 90% of their income.
* ~~And while yes, the Roman Empire had some incredible innovations with their roads and the aqueducts - even those were built on the backs of slaves with money that was not theirs!~~
* 4 And their favorite sport -- cheering for gladiators who would fight one another to a ~~bloody~~ gruesome death.

 *“In those days…?”* Those days in the Roman world were some dark, dark days.

(Open up a Bible and read this edit of Luke 2:4,5)

***4So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem … with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.*** (move to stage right while the lights are slowly coming up with a distant star beginning to flicker on the screen) ***6While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.***

In the shadows of that dark realm no one notices the arrival of this young couple or that a child is born. Everyone is groping for survival; trying to make a living in a dim existence.

(Read this edit from Bible Luke 2:8-11)

***8And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9An angel of the Lord appeared to them saying,*** (The star bursts big and bright on the screen) ***“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you…”***

It was on that dark, dark night that God had entered the world as a baby…and with Him came a light…A light that would change everything.

(Transition lighting and teacher walks to center stage)

**Jesus Changed the World (Currently 1,234 words but Removing highlighted sections gets us down to 819 words)**

No one shaped and changed the world more than Jesus…In fact, we now look at and reference all of history into either Before Jesus lived and After Jesus lived…

The impact of his life is so deep that his birth which we are celebrating tonight is the most celebrated birthday in history! I mean who is second?! No one is even close!

It is by His name that millions curse…and in His name that millions pray.

Jesus is the hinge of history… And yet most people simply have no understanding of the incredible impact Jesus had on our world.

Well known theologian and historian, Jerislav Pelikan writes,

“Regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of Western culture for almost twenty centuries.

If it were possible, with some sort of super-magnet, to pull up out of history every scrap of metal bearing at least a trace of his name, how much would be left?” -Jerislav Pelikan, Jesus Across the Centuries

Much of these next 4 sections could be cut. ~~You have to ask yourself,~~ Regardless of what people say about him or claims of divinity…You have to ask yourself…Who was this man?

Even if you just consider him as somebody who lived…just look, without prejudice, at his life and his impact on our world and you have to ask…Who was this man?

So, for the next few minutes I just want to begin to scratch the surface…looking at Jesus’ impact on our world.

Many people have written on this through the centuries after Jesus but much of what I am going to share with you today summarized and gathered together by Pastor Jon Ortberg and a few other historians.

**His Enduring Legacy**

Jesus’ His legacy truly is amazing. (Image of the cross-black background, white cross?) The instrument on which his enemies killed him, The Cross, adorns more jewelry (picture of cross jewelery), marks more graves (Picture of Grave), appears in more art (Art piece), and shows up in more tattoos (Funny Tattoo picture) than any other image in the world.  Who hasn’t seen a biker with a cross tattoo. The cross is the single most recognizable symbol on the planet. Don’t use pictures in this section.

**His Mark on History**

His mark on human history is unparalleled.

Which is particularly incredible because you would be hard-pressed to pick a person less likely to change the world than him.  He never held an office, never wrote a book, never led an army, never traveled more than 75 miles from his home. And on top of that, His first followers were remarkably ordinary, uneducated and unimportant.

If you were around in the 1st century and had to bet on whose influence would last longer: this man’s or the Roman Empire…You would *not* have put your money on the carpenter and his little band of misfits.

Yet today, two thousand years later, millions give their children names like Peter, Paul, and Mary; and we name our dog food and salad dressing after Caesar

 

**His Way of Compassion** (Start word cloud with Compassion, Kindness and all other categories mentioned below)

It is true that some who claimed to follow Him have committed many atrocities and cruelties. But he was clearly not what was driving them.  For he is the one who changed and shaped the very existence of compassion and kindness in our world.

In ancient Greece and Rome, before Jesus, it was common place for a child to be left to die if it was the wrong gender. Anybody want to guess what the wrong gender was? A historical sociologist by the name of Rodney Stark writes that in the ancient world there were around 1.4 million boys for every 1 million girls, mainly because the other 400,000 girls were left to die.

But there was this little group of people who followed a man who said, “Let the little children come to me,” (Matthew 19:14) and they did. They actually began to take in abandoned children.  People began to leave unwanted children at the homes and communities of this man’s followers.  It was the beginning of what we now know all over the world as orphanages.

And it didn’t stop there…the first hospitals, the red cross, Salvation army, world vision, YMCA, Goodwill, habitat for Humanity… When you go to hospitals and they have names like Good Shepherd or Good Samaritan or St. Anthony’s… You see the touch of this man.

~~Cut this - This is not to say that there would be no compassion in the world without him, but one scholar writes: “If you ask what is this man’s influence on medicine and compassion, I would suggest that wherever you have an institution of self-giving for the lowly, schools, hospitals, hospices, orphanages for those who will never be able to repay, this probably has its roots in the movement of this man.”~~ *~~(Can’t find reference)~~**~~Who was this man~~*~~?~~

He and his followers created and shaped our **educational systems** and made them available for all people…not just the wealthy and privileged.

Think of his influence on **the arts**…Without him, there is no Bach, no Ode to Joy.  Without him there is no Sistine Chapel, no Da Vinci’s Last Supper. There simply has been no transcendent vision of reality, no cosmic story that has gripped the artistic imagination like that of this man. *Who was this man?*

**His Impact on Human Rights**

This man changed how we think about **human rights** and dignity. In the U.S. there is a famous statement, a kind of core to governance here: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal and have been endowed by their creator with certain rights.”

Where did that idea come from? One of this man’s followers, the Apostle Paul, wrote: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in” the name of this man (Galatians 3:28).

~~When the late Martin Luther King Jr gave his “I Have a Dream” speech, he spoke of what it would be like if all children of every color were to join hands. “I have a dream of a world that is not yet, but that one day will be...” That was not a secular dream. It was inspired by the one who MLK followed, by this man.~~

**He Changed our Perception of God**

This man changed our **perception of God**. In our day even many non-Christians say, “I believe God is a God of love.” Where did that idea come from? Because it was not self-evident in the ancient world.  Nobody in the ancient world said, “I believe Zeus is God of love,” or “Baal is a God of love.” This man brought a new way of thinking about God and love, and it would change everything.

No one in history is even remotely close to impacting the world as much as Jesus has…

This could be the conclusion

* Jesus is the hinge of history.
* Jesus is the hope of the oppressed.
* Jesus is the inspiration of the despairing.
* Jesus is the greatest teacher that ever taught.
* Jesus is the greatest mind that ever thought.
* Jesus offered the greatest gifts ever given.
* Jesus launched the greatest movement ever known.

Jesus is the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

He is the Son of God.

Jesus is the Hope of the nations.

Jesus is the Savior of the world.

*THAT’S WHO THIS MAN IS*.

Was and Is contrast?

**Jesus is still changing the world (110 Words)**

And the good news is that If Jesus was able to have that kind of lasting impact on world history, just imagine what he could do in your life.

His birth is the hinge of history and, if you let him, today can be new day for you as well…

He speaks to each and every one of us through his Spirit and says:

* Come to me, and I will forgive you.
* Come to me, and live in relationship with me.
* Come to me, and live the life to the full you were designed to live…
* Come to me, and even though you will one day die, death will not hold you down either.

Today can be the beginning of your After…Your step into His light…Just like it was for Robbie

**Story: fywbtG Story** We should ask Robbie Corirossi – robbiecorirossi@ymail.com (yes…ymail)

**Challenge** (244 words)

Jesus comes into our dark world and says, ***“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*** What does it mean for him to be the light? Let me just tell you from my experience…

* Jesus has been a light when I am trying to find my way. When I’m confused and I can’t see and don’t know where to go next, he is light that shows me the way.
* Jesus has been a light when I’m afraid. We all have areas in our lives where whether we want to admit it or not, we are afraid…there is uncertainty and we are feeling some real anxiety?
* Maybe it’s a relationship that has you worried.
* Maybe it’s finances that are making you feel anxious.
* Something about your career that has you concerned.

And Jesus says “I’m here to shine a light for you. You don’t have to be afraid.”

* Jesus has been a light in the darkest areas of my life. We all have dark places in our life that if left in the dark it will destroy every good thing God wants to do in your life! I need Jesus to shine a light on it and remind me there is a better way!

If you want Jesus to be the light in your life; if you are ready to follow him, here is what I am asking you to do…

**(Insert Ted’s idea here…Follow-up plan still in development Text “Blank” to 313131 or “Blank2” to 313131)**

**This next moment doesn’t follow right after the above. We still need some kind of conclusion.**

**Closing Candle Moment** (117 words)

It was on that dark, dark night that this light (holding the candle) of Christ entered our world as a baby. When you and I ask the light of Christ to guide our life; he comes into our lives and our very lives become a light to others! So, Jesus goes from being the light to saying to you and me: ***“You are the light of the world…let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”*** – Matthew 5:14-16

Let this candle be a commitment or a re-commitment that Christ will provide light for you life and in so doing you will be a light to the world.



