

THE REAL MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

Sermon Notes



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These notes are designed to accompany the video with Uncle Nath. The sermon is abbreviated, as befits a Christmas sermon often delivered to an audience with plenty of people not used to frequenting church.

INTRODUCTION

Christmas seems to come around each year with frightening regularity. Before you know it it's time for the usual Christmas routines to start.

It seems as if every year sales of Christmas decorations and presents start earlier. In a hyper connected and fast-moving world time seem to pass quicker.

Here in Australia we need a fair bit of imagination to get into the whole Christmas vibe. Instead of scenes of snow and sleds, we are usually sweltering in the heat. Conjuring up images of winter comes hard for many people.

There are always some who cannot wait for Christmas but for the rest of us there are some rituals and routines that can seem rather flat for us.

In this video Uncle Nath, a Baptist pastor and stand-up comedian, helps us laugh at some of the less attractive things about the festive period but also points us beyond.

 **PLAY VIDEO - <https://vimeo.com/373288149>**

There was an especially long wait for the first Christmas (the birth of Christ). For hundreds of years the people of Israel longed for a

promised Messiah, hoping he would deliver them from oppression. One of the best-known prophecies that people would have hung their hopes on was delivered by Isaiah 8 centuries before the birth of Jesus:

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this." **Isaiah 9:6-7**

Jesus was the fulfilment of this and many other prophecies that looked forward the birth of the Messiah, a new King unlike any before.

1. THE REAL COST OF CHRISTMAS

It's impossible to think of Christmas without thinking of the massive cost to your personal finances, of the gifts, food and parties. Children in particular make a direct connection between Christmas and receiving gifts. The tradition of making children believe in a Santa helps with behaviour modification but it comes at a price!

There are some gifts given at Christmas that set themselves apart from others thanks to their eye watering value. We have come to know though that the most important things in life aren't things. It is the giving of ourselves that others most appreciate. At Christmas we contemplate the wonder of how God gave of Himself. Jesus became one of us.

Matthew 1:22-23

"So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be

with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

This is the most extravagant gesture and gift you will ever have extended to you. In order to be among us, Jesus had to lay aside his claims to majesty. He lived as we did, and in obedience to God's plan to reunite us as people to Him. Jesus was faithful until the end – the events of which we dwell on and celebrate at Easter.

Jesus was born in humble circumstances, an extravagant gift enabling us to know God and for things between us and God to be made right.

When adding up your credit card debt at Christmas, reflect on the expense of the lavish gift extended to you:

John 3:16

"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. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

2. THE REAL WONDER OF CHRISTMAS

Uncle Nath discovered the meaning of John 3:16 - wonder of Christmas:

"God came down to us. My whole life I was at a very low level. Low level kid from a broken family who dropped out of high school and was wandering the streets. I was low level everything. Thank God that he came right down to our level. Jesus saved my life and the church gave me a wonderful future. Christmas is about that, we're not alone. God knew me, he loved me, and God gave me this big family."

Your circumstances may be different to Uncle Nath's, but your experience can be the same: an encounter with a God who reaches down to us to make a connection. This is the true wonder of Christmas – that we can know God and that he can renew us from within, giving us a purpose and future.

Nathan Ranclaud (Uncle Nath) discovered two key things about God's gift to us:

- *He never knew that an encounter with, and decision to follow Jesus, would transform his life and give him a future he had never imagined.*
- *He never knew that his local church could offer so much love, acceptance and encouragement.*

Nathan is a perfect example of someone who has accepted the forgiveness and life transformation that Jesus offers.

 **PLAY VIDEO – Interview with Uncle Nath:**
<https://vimeo.com/373287714>

Christmas has become filled with a million and one distractions from its powerful meaning: that we can move beyond the superficial and live a life that only God can grant: filled with forgiveness, purpose, love and the reality that we need never be alone again, as God lives in us through his Spirit.

It is likely that for many of us, we don't actually 'need' anything this Christmas in terms of things that can be bought for us. We all have a need to know and experience God through Jesus – and that is the real meaning of Christmas.



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