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I just want to pull one thought into your mind, just one thought to walk out and to have that shape your thinking as we've sung about the Christ, as we've read from Scripture about the Christ and his arrival, I just want you to walk out with one thought in your mind, one question, really, that will lay everything out and bring the right focus to it all. I would just have you walk out with the question in your mind: why? Why would this Christ come? Why the virgin birth? Why God incarnate? Why was he born? Surely it's not enough for us to simply remember a nativity. Surely it's not enough to simply remember a birth from 2,000 years ago, to remember that infant, without contemplating the life that followed; without working through the implications of what that birth meant. We're never meant to view the nativity, to view the birth of Christ as an event in isolation. This birth of Christ was simply another step forward in God's redemptive plan which he established before time began.

You know this, but it's always good for us to be in remembrance of such essential basic truths that Jesus' existence did not begin in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago, in fact, his existence never did begin. He always was. He is eternally existent and Jesus said in John 6:38, a verse that helps us. Maybe one day I'll preach on this on a Christmas; I need to do this. Jesus said in John 6:38 that he had come down from heaven, and so Jesus wasn't simply someone who started in an earthly conception, even a miraculous conception in the womb of a virgin, this was the means by which he came down from heaven, an expression of the eternal plan of God, a continuation of his existence with human flesh added on to it. Why would he do that? That's the question. Why would he do that? And the Scriptures tell us plainly. Jesus spoke to this plainly and a little bit of grammar does wonders to help you understand the plan of God. Jesus would often speak in purpose clauses in which he explained why he did something and he certainly did when it came to his incarnation.

You know, if you think about it, we should expect such things from Scripture. We should expect such things from the lips of Christ. If such a momentous event was going to take place as the Son of God coming down from heaven as he said he did, a miraculous conception in the womb of a virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that child goes through a normal gestation period and is born and lives an absolutely perfect sinless life for 30 years plus, goes to a cross, is buried, he is resurrected, I mean, this is one miraculous life, isn't it? This is one amazing being that we've remembered here in Scripture and in song tonight. Well, if something that magnificent is going to take place,

if something that wonderful happens, then surely when Jesus got around to his public ministry after living in obscurity for 30 some years, surely he said something about why he did it. He didn't leave to obscurity, he didn't leave to mindless speculation why this great event of his incarnation took place and Scripture states it plainly. Jesus spoke to it often and it's of direct relevance to us 2,000 years later because you and I are as sinners before a holy God. Here you and I are as creatures who have rebelled against our Maker; we have broken his law. You have been guilty of lying. You have been guilty of adultery either in act or in your heart desires. You have cursed. You have disregarded the command to love God with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind. And on and on we could go; we don't need to give a catalog of all of your sins but you know that that is true.

So how does that intersect with us? Apparently it would make sense if God were to become a man that somehow it would have something to do with the condition of humanity. He didn't become something else. It must be directly relevant to the human condition that the babe bore, came forth from his mother's womb. What did Jesus say about it? In Matthew 20:28, you don't need to turn there. I'll just quote a few Scriptures here for this evening. Jesus said that he came not to be served, not to receive things from men, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many; that his life would be a ransom payment for those who are in bondage to sin. That's why he came. In Luke 19:10, he explains the purpose again. Same emphasis, slightly different expression. He said that the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which has been lost. There is a saving purpose to this incarnation. There is a saving purpose to this Christ. He came in order to seek sinners; in order to save them, to save those who are lost like you and me. The Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 1:15 says it in virtually identical terms. He said Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners, and then he adds, among whom I am the foremost.

So from the greatest of sinners to the least of them, in multiple places throughout the New Testament, these are just representative three, in multiple places it says that Christ came on a mission, a mission to save sinners from their condition; to save them from the judgment and the wrath of God. John 3:36 says that those who do not obey the Son, the wrath of God abides upon them. Somehow Jesus' salvation, his saving work, his purpose in coming, was directly related to removing that wrath of God from upon sinners like you and me.

Why was he born? He was born so that his life could be offered on a cross for you; so that his life could be given, offered to God as a sin sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God. You know, we mention, we detail the fact that we've all broken God's law and that our violations of God's law leave us subject to judgment, leaves under a sentence of divine condemnation. You know, I don't think people, generally speaking, contemplate in enough depth and seriousness just exactly what that means. We're so used to sin all around us. We're so used to seeing it portrayed in media, we're so used to seeing people sin, having them sin against us and us sinning against them, that it becomes so common by its very commonality that we tend to minimize and trivialize it. If it's so common, how bad could it be? Well, I want you to think about it in these terms: if an eternal God gave an eternal law that has been broken, the only fitting punishment, the only punishment that would be mete for that, that would be fit for that, that would correspond to that, would be

a punishment that was eternal in its duration. An eternal God with an eternal law must have an eternal punishment to satisfy his eternal justice.

You see, beloved, God won't simply overlook it. If you're here today and you're not a Christian or you've just been entrenched in such sin for so long that no one could possibly distinguish you from a Christian, from a heathen, understand that God won't simply overlook your sin; that though you might treat it casually, while the world might laugh with you in drunken revelry, God doesn't see it that way. God's view of it is completely different. Justice must be upheld; your crimes must be punished. So there we are, all of us guilty before God. There is none righteous, not even one. There is none who does good, not even one. Scripture is so emphatic about that that our sins have made a separation from us and our God. Well, tying all of that back into this blessed incarnation, tying that all back into the wonder of our Lord Jesus Christ, tying it all back into the virgin birth which gave rise to this human Savior, this God-man who saves us, and taking everything into its proper connection, at the cross where this babe one day would go, at the cross God imputed the guilt of sinners upon Christ and as he was on the cross, punished him though he was sinless, punished him as though he had committed every sin of all of his people.

Why did Christ come? That's why. It was to culminate at a cross where he would lay down his sinless, pure, holy, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens life, that he would lay that down, offer it up on a cross on your behalf. Christian, doesn't that make you want to sing again? Doesn't the fact of such immeasurable mercy call you to joy? Call you to praise once again? Christ voluntarily offered his life for that very purpose. That's stunning, but what's equally stunning if you can talk about infinity in terms of equality, something that you and I should never lose sight of here at Truth Community Church as we gather together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, is to remember that the reason that Christ did this was out of his own love for his people; that this incarnation, that this 33 year march to Calvary that he made, that those three hours of infinite darkness on his soul while the Father turned away from him and the wrath of God was poured out upon him, it was done as an act of love for you and me who know him.

Where do you even begin to measure that kind of generosity? That kind of mercy? That kind of kindness? Where do you begin to appreciate, to comprehend even, the magnitude of such a selfless act by Christ? Where do you begin? You and I aren't like that. Scripture acknowledges that and says a man will hardly give his life for a good man, but God manifested his love for us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Knowing that you would be a rebel. Knowing that you would turn your back again and again. Knowing that you would put your fingers in your ears when you heard the Gospel preached and harden your heart against it again and again and again. Knowing that all of that was still future. Christ went to that cross and by name, thinking of you and me who are Christians, thinking of us because Paul said, "He loved me and gave himself up for me," that there's a sense in which in some marvelous way in the realm of the infinite mind of Christ, that somehow he thought of us as he did that. That this wasn't simply an unquantifiable amorphous blob of desire for sinners generally to be saved, he laid his life

down intentionally for his people by name. We are on the receiving end of incalculable divine love.

That's what we remember. That's what we sing tonight. Our Lord Jesus loved his people enough to endure that punishment so that a free gift of his perfect righteousness could be credited to your account and mine; so that there would no longer be a separation, a barrier; that there would no longer be a judgment against our account, but that we could have stamped on our passport, as it were, "Fully and completely forgiven," and yet more, don't stop there, that stamped on our account, imputed to you, credited to you, in God's mind accounted to you as a legal certainty, "Righteous. Declared righteous before a holy God," so that you and I can boldly approach the throne of God because of a singularly great Savior who did a singularly great act on the cross of infinite divine love for his people saying, "I will save them. I will redeem them to the uttermost. Nothing will depend on their righteousness at all." Christ steps into the void of our righteousness, the lack of righteousness that we have, he steps into that void and supplies the righteousness we need in order to approach a holy God for our sins to be completely forgiven. And so we tie the manger to the cross. We see a direct linear line from Bethlehem to Golgotha and say that virgin birth was designed to end at Golgotha but not to just end there but to carry on through the resurrection, through the outworking of God's eternal saving purposes so that you and I would be one day saved. Christ removed the barrier of guilt so that sinners just like you could be forgiven and received into the family of God.

He said that he came down from heaven to do that. There is no way for us to calculate how disparate his preexistent glory was compared to walking on human sod with people who hated him and despised him and mocked him, with no place to lay his head, he said at one point in the Gospel of Luke. Do you see, beloved, how selfless our Christ is? Do you see how wonderful and magnificent his love is? It's not love like yours and mine where we condition it on whether someone loves us back and if they don't we strike out or get unhappy with them or whatever. This was a totally selfless act for Christ to do and why did he do it? Because he's loving. Because he's gracious. Because there's no one in all the universe like our Lord Jesus. No one is like that, but our Christ is.

So we ask why? You ask why? Why the virgin birth? Why these songs of glory? Why this wonderful time to remember? Why? Because you were guilty and could not save yourself and because Christ loved you enough to do something about it at the cost of his own life. It was an act of love. It was an act of mercy. It was an act of grace. And so, Christian, here we are together. We remember this and we offer up a response of unconditional allegiance and loyalty and love and praise to our Lord Jesus in response and we remember on a night like this and, Lord, we say thank you for doing that, thank you for the totality of who you are. There is no other affection in our heart that competes with you.

For those of you who are here and the year 2015 has been a manifestation of your sinfulness, take this opportunity. Christ through what has been said from Scripture, sung about and presented here from his word, is offering you an incomprehensible kindness and opportunity to repent. To turn from your sin. To trust alone in Christ alone and to

know that all of your evil deeds can be completely forgiven. You can walk out of this room tonight knowing that God will never hold them against you if you'll just receive Christ and bow the knee before him. Why would you do that? Why? Because that's why he came. He came for sinners just like you. To save sinners just like you. For you to come to him and he'll give you new life. He'll give you the forgiveness of sins. He'll give you a gift of perfect righteousness and wash you and cleanse you in a permanent eternal way and make you someone new and continue his preparations in heaven for his people where he would gladly welcome you too. Isn't he wonderful? Isn't our Lord Jesus wonderful? That's why he came to earth.

Christian, isn't it wonderful to hear the Gospel yet again? It never gets old, does it? Never gets old to talk about Christ. Never gets old about talking about our Lord Jesus. Never gets old about talking about the sufficiency of his salvation, his work on the cross on our behalf. Praise be to this Lord who came through a virgin birth but came down from heaven prior to that.

Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

*Our Father, we are so grateful to you for our Lord Jesus and when we ask the question why the incarnation, we understand that it was because of his love for sinners like us; it was because he intended to save a people for himself. Not to make us feel better about ourselves, but to remove our guilt and assign a righteousness to us that will set us in good stead with a holy God forever and ever and ever. Amen.*

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