

# Expecting Christmas: Knowing Jesus

1 John 5:20

December 22, 2024

Rev Joe Sanders

First Baptist Church Coshocton, Ohio

I had a great dream this week. We all have dreams, we just can't remember them. In my dream I'm flying. I flap my arms like they're wings and I fly. I can fly up and down, left and right, front and back. I can fly above the trees, or just above the ground. That's a pretty good dream, right? Don't you wish you could flap your arms and fly? But, that's not all. In my dream I'm flying to different people. I don't remember any of their names. I don't think I even knew the people. I fly up to people, they aren't surprised to see me. Then I sing to them. I'm actually a very good singer in my dreams. Even though I don't remember the exact words that I'm singing, the songs bring comfort, encouragement, and sometimes a challenge. Then I fly away to the next person.

So, wouldn't it be great if we could fly up to people and sing them a song. We could sing songs that comfort and encourage and hold one another accountable. There's a good Christmas gift.

***1 John 5:20 (NLT) We know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life.***

**Regardless of what you may hear Christmas is about being in a relationship with Jesus.**

Christmas carries all kinds of different expectations for different people. There are the expectations of the perfect gift. Since I want to give the perfect gift I ask them what they want.

Since my son wants to see the expression on the faces of family when they open their gifts, he comes up with a theme that no one expects. One year he got pictures of each family member and paid an artist to paint it Simpson's style. Now, the expectation is what's his theme this year?

At Christmas there is the expectation of being with family. Lonie and I have traveled every year since 1984 to be with family at Christmas. You don't have to travel long distances to have this expectation of being with family. The expectation at Christmas is for good food and great candy and cookies. Often times Thanksgiving is the big turkey dinner and Christmas is the family buffet. It always includes somebody's favorite dessert recipe or Christmas cookies. This is the Christmas that many people anticipate and expect.

As Christians who are committed to the truth we expect the Father, Holy Spirit, and Son. We want people to experience Christmas for what it is, God entering our world to save us. We want people to not just say Merry Christmas, but to know Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

Every relationship is about knowing the other person. I meet Archie Griffin and carried his second Heisman Trophy. I could say that I know Archie Griffin, but I don't. Archie and I don't have a relationship. I'm not even a blip on his screen of many memories.

I stood face to face with the winner of 2023 Lip Sync contest. I know him, he's my son. We have a relationship. We know each other. He is funny and serious. He is committed and ridiculous. He is inspiring and delirious.

In all of your relationships with friends and family you know the person. You know what makes them laugh or cry. You feel their pain and share their joy. You see them for who they are and you love them.

Does this sound familiar? Jesus knows us. He knows all the joys and the sorrows of life. He is aware of your medical condition as well as your mental and spiritual condition. He loves you.

How many people actually know Jesus? How many people have experienced the love of Jesus? How many people have known the grace and mercy of being forgiven of their sins? How many people are allowing Jesus to lead and guide their lives?

It doesn't matter what number you put at the end of each of those questions, there is always someone who needs to know the truth. There is always someone who needs to encounter Jesus and know His love. There is always someone who needs to be covered in grace and mercy, being set free from their sins. There is always someone who needs to know Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

***He has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. 1 John 5:20 (NLT)***

**In the midst of all the Christmas stories we want Jesus most of all.** We know lots of stories. I have lots of Christmas memories. I can visual them when I close my eyes. I can see the people as we're together again. It's almost like being there. Here's what's most interesting to me, I can't remember too many of the gifts.

For all the attention, effort and money we spend at Christmas, so many of those gifts are forgotten. The people and experiences we have with one another are what we remember. As a child I can remember family coming to our house one year, a parade of aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents. I can remember other years being at the home of our aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents. I remember the stories they would tell of when they were kids. We had fun laughing and carrying on. Those are good stories and good memories.

I'm certain you have great memories of Christmas and being with family. They are happy memories. Let me encourage you to hold onto those memories and create some new memories. Our lives are filled with stories about Santa Claus, reindeer, snowmen, Christmas trees.

We also have all the false ideas and expectations of Christmas. Surrounding us is one image after another of things which have no connection to Christmas. I saw a blow up dinosaur with Santa on it's back. If I believe what I see and hear my wife should have twenty-five different perfumes under the Christmas Tree.

Too many people misunderstand Christmas and Jesus. There are people all around us who won't admit it but they worship false gods. All these things I've already mentioned have become false gods. They make things and even feelings into a god. They ignore, or side step around the true God, Jesus Christ.

People want joy and peace and hope, but they don't want Jesus. People think of Jesus when there is a crisis. People talk to Jesus when they need a miracle. People go out of their way to blame God every time something bad happens.

We see all around us the attitude that God is irrelevant. Too often God is portrayed as absent and uncaring. Right before our eyes God is made out to be angry and condemning. This is not the true God, this is not the living God, this is not the God who entered the world, spoke the truth, sharing an unending and unconditional love.

He is misunderstood, but He is needed. He is misinterpreted, but He is relevant to every person and every situation. He is misconstrued, but He is the most desired of all the gifts all year long. Every year during the month of December people talk about love and forgiveness. The very essence of Jesus. Throughout the year people use His name, they want what Jesus offers, but they refuse to accept Him. Regardless of the hour during the day Jesus is ready to enter any willing heart and become everything they need, their Savior and Lord.

***We live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. 1 John 5:20 (NLT)***

**When we celebrate the birth of Jesus our relationship with Jesus is strengthened.** Whatever you give me for Christmas it will soon be gone. That is the nature of the world in live which, here today and gone tomorrow. If you give me food, it will be eaten quickly and enjoyed. If you give me a keepsake it will be cherished on a shelf until I'm gone and then it will be given away.

What Jesus and I have will never go away. Our relationship is forever. I know this because I know Him. I've experienced His grace. I live in His love. This is true for every person who calls Jesus Savior and Lord.

Since I know Jesus I have His mind, His heart, and His power. He has given me His thoughts and attitudes. He has provided for me a clean heart washed as white as snow. He has promised me that I will do greater things than He has done. This is true for every person who calls Jesus Savior and Lord. Therefore, it is true for you.

While I have all of this from Jesus I need to continue to trust and believe in Him. I need to believe in Him today for all of its joys and burdens. I need to believe in Him tomorrow for all of it's promises and interruptions. I need my relationship with Jesus to be stronger each day. New challenges happen everyday. Old troubles come back over and over again.

My relationship with Jesus is strengthened every time I call upon His name. God entered my life, His name is Jesus. God came into this world, He is with us. God came into this world, He is our Savior. By calling upon Him I am reminded that He is in my life. That gives me strength physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

When I call upon Jesus I am aware in ways that cannot be described with words that I am not alone, but He is with me. That gives me strength physically, emotionally, and spiritually. As I call out to my Savior and Lord I know without one ounce of doubt that I have been redeemed and delivered from whatever I face. That gives me strength physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

If I give you Jesus and you embrace Him, He will be with you forever. He will enter your life, He will be your Savior. He will be with you in every situation you face, He will be your Savior. He will give you all that you need, because He is your Savior.

Celebrate every day God coming into the world. Celebrate throughout the year God entering your life. Celebrate moment by moment God is always with you. The challenges of each day are not greater than Jesus, He conquered death. With all the expectations of this season be strengthened by the truth Jesus loves you.

***Jesus Christ is the only true God, and he is eternal life. 1 John 5:20 (NLT)***

**Instead of all the other Christmas stories celebrate the birth of your Savior.** Now more than every I feel like Christians need a strong faith. At least from my point of view people are in need of a Savior. I don't think there has been a time in my life where there are so many temptations. We often refer to them as options and some will say opportunities. For so many people they might be another option to Jesus.

Christians living today are facing a subtle persecution. It is twisted around little pieces of truth. It has so many tentacles that the truth is often hard to find. Surviving any day, especially holidays like the one the world calls Christmas, Christians need to have a strong and active faith. We are more than surviving, we are celebrating the birth of our Savior, the Lord of our lives.

Celebrating God's entrance into our world means people need to hear the Christmas story. We are equipped to tell the story, because we know it best. We can talk about a baby born in a manger. We can discuss angels appearing to shepherds. We can talk about a man who followed God's plan when his wife was found to be pregnant. We can talk about a young woman surprised to become the mother of God's Son.

These are the stories that lead us to God entering our world to share a love that was revolutionary, a mercy that provides forgiveness for every sin, and a grace that empowers people for all of life. You know this story. It is not only the story of Jesus' birth it is your story. Jesus has entered my life and your life. He has taken away our sin by dying on the cross. He has given us new life by rising from the dead.

Jesus is the true God who entered our world to save us. He can save your crazy uncle or your grumpy grandchild. He can redeem your neighbor, your co-worker, your enemy. Jesus has the only kind of love that overcomes all things and empowers people.

Celebrate the birth of your Savior. Celebrate the new life He has given to you. Celebrate today, tomorrow, and everyday. Celebrate for all of eternity.