

Cornerstone Connection

Thinking Biblically by Bill Moore

A Blue Christmas?

Christmas seems to be a particularly depressing time for many people. Statistics reveal increased numbers of suicides and attempted suicide when compared to other times of the year. Mental health professionals report an increase in cases of depression.

Many reasons for increased depression are offered. Folks get overwhelmed with trying to find the “perfect” Christmas gift. All the festivities can crowd needed rest out of one’s calendar. Expecting one’s Christmas season to match a Hallmark movie doubtlessly produces a blue Christmas for many. Gatherings that force folks to be around others they dislike can be a downer.

Perhaps more persons need to feel blue at Christmas, though not for any of the reasons often offered. The thrice-holy Christ entered the world. Juxtaposed against his holiness, any human should be filled with dread and shame, a state of the darkest blue.

In Isaiah 6 we find the prophet in the presence of the Almighty. Confronted with perfect holiness, Isaiah shrinks, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” (v. 5). Isaiah saw himself and his people as they really were: wicked and evil. “For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45) correlates what a person says with what a person is. That is not a comforting thought.

One might ask, “Well, that’s all well and good, but we’re talking about Christmas. What does Christmas have to do with Isaiah’s experience with the holy God?” The apostle John records this account in his gospel: “Though he [Jesus] had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ‘Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, ‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.’ *Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him*” (John 12:37–41, *ESV; emphasis added*).

Isaiah saw Christ in his glorious holiness and saw himself as wicked and unworthy. Somehow, that’s a reality we need to grasp during the Christmas season. We are not celebrating the miracle of a birth, though the Virgin Birth was certainly that. We are not celebrating the innocence of a little child, though this Child is the only one who has ever been born as innocent. Too much of Christmas in our culture borders on sappy emotionalism, and a lot of it is thoroughly baptized in sappiness. Even the “Put Christ Back into Christmas” campaigns miss the mark, because most people would be aghast at who Christ really is. Perhaps beside manger scenes should be a depiction of Revelation 19:11-15: “Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.”

Seeing Christ as Scripture depicts him should drive us to the cross, for there “he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21, *ESV*). Seeing Christ in his holiness reveals us in our sinfulness and lawlessness. By his grace, we loathe our sin, repent of it, and embrace his atonement for us. And, yes, we celebrate Christmas, but for no sentimental reason. We celebrate because our kind, benevolent, gracious, holy Savior God has satisfied divine justice due our sin and has clothed us in his righteousness.

Monthly projects

United Ministries continues to distribute food to needy families in our community. Cornerstone is asked to provide flour, sugar and peanut butter.

Remember to pick-up one or more of these items the next time you are in the grocery store.

Don't forget to save empty inkjet printer cartridges, old cell phones, Campbell Soup and Tyson Chicken labels, and Box Tops for Education found on General Mills products for **Laurens Academy**.

The Laurens Baptist Association helps families in need and in crisis situations. We can help by donating the requested items each month.

Crisis Center needs for December are:
canned vegetables and canned beans

Baskets are outside the church office for collection of monthly project items.



A Service of Christmas Praise is scheduled for Sunday, December 4, at 6:00 PM. Music will be provided by the adult and children's choirs.

A time of fellowship will follow the service. Bring your favorite finger foods.

The G.L.O.R.Y. Group's Christmas dinner will be on Thursday, December 8, at 6:00 PM, at the Parthenon.



All college students are invited to lunch on Sunday, December 4, hosted by Gerald and Kathy Foster, at the Moore's home.



Birthdays

- Drew Trammell 3
- Tommy Adkins 7
- Gracie Strickland 7
- Al Young 16
- Jackson Matthews 16
- Courtney Frick 18
- Jonathan Sears 19
- Ann Graydon 24
- Gary French 29



Holiday Schedule

Wed, Dec. 21	Regular schedule No supper
Sun, Dec.25	No evening service
Wed, Dec 28	No service
Sun, Jan 1	Regular schedule

Don't forget that the monthly financial reports will be on the table in the narthex on Wednesdays after the first of each month.

The reports are also available in the church office at any time.

Dear Friends at Cornerstone Baptist,

Last summer I had the opportunity to go to Fort Walton Beach, Florida, to participate in a ten-week program called Summer Beach Project, where I worked a full-time job while participating in weekly project-wide rallies, evangelistic outreaches, corporate worship, socials, and discipleship groups. This ten-week investment is sponsored by Campus Outreach at Berry College and is designed to help students grow in their personal relationships with God and learn how to impact others for Jesus Christ. This summer I have been selected as a room leader, meaning that this will be a very challenging summer as I grow spiritually, but I feel that this is where God is calling me to go!

This summer will be more successful with the support of my family and friends. The cost of my summer is \$1,500, which covers my room and supplies. I will have a job to pay for the rest of my expenses, but it would be a huge help if you would consider sponsoring part of my summer!

Thanks so much!
Hailley Oxner

Checks can be made to Campus Outreach and sent to:
Berry College
PO Box 3067
Mount Berry, GA 30149



The tables in the fellowship hall are being replaced. Contributions are being accepted to help cover the cost. If you would like to help with this project, please mark your donation *for tables*.

Inclement weather:

Any changes to the church schedule will be recorded on the church answering system. Call **833-1777** for information of any time change or cancellation.



Updates from missionary friends:

Peter and Sharon McMillan in Madrid,
Spain

www.psmcmillan.blogspot.com

Craig and Ava Cook in Spain
email the cooks at
craig.cook@worldteam.org and ask to
be included on their email newsletter
list

Paul and Elvie Barner in Philippines
www.barner.org

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[Carolina Commentary]