

All Saints Waitara
Romans 8 – Christmas Day Sermon
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Intro – the art of yawning...

*** III** – The Copernican revolution and The Centre of the Universe

For thousands of years, most of the world believed that the earth was the centre of the universe. That everything in the universe revolved around the earth and that the earth didn't move. Like in this picture of a model developed by a man named Ptolemy. It was only 500 years ago that a man named Copernicus challenged this idea. Copernicus believed that the Sun was the centre and that the earth and the other planets revolved around the Sun. But he kept quiet for a long time about his beliefs. Maybe he was worried. I don't know. But there was always the chance that he would be laughed at. There was always the chance he could be discredited as a scientist. There was always the possibility that he could be rejected.

Finally in 1543 his work was published – in the same year that he died.
Since then, the world underwent what was called “the Copernican Revolution” – a revolution that challenged humanity to question what was at the centre of the universe.

Christmas Day is the day we are challenged to question the centre of OUR personal universe.
Christmas day is the day God said to us: “I want Jesus to be the centre of your world.”

2000 years ago, some shepherds were looking after their sheep in a field at night. And the centre of their universe was challenged. An angel appeared and said to them “Don't be afraid. Today in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.” And then a whole company of angels appear, singing praises to God. It was a life changing moment for those shepherds. A moment where the centre of their universe was challenged.

Copernicus challenged our understanding of the universe. Jesus challenges our understanding of ourselves. Look at Romans chapter 8, verse 1:

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”

I wonder if you've ever thought of yourself as being a person who is condemned?

**** III** – This is a picture of Timothy James McVeigh (*). He was convicted for the bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma on April 19, 1995. 168 people died because of his actions. Including Bailey, a baby only a few months old. McVeigh was condemned to death row and executed on June 11, 2001 at the age of 33. He was condemned for what he did. And I'm sure a lot of people expected he would be condemned to die for something that horrific.

But how does it make us feel, especially at Christmas, to know that because of what WE have done, God has condemned you? Because of the way EVERY ONE of us have sinned against God, we are condemned to die?

Look at verses 5, 6 and 7:

*“5Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; ..
6The mind of sinful man is death, ... 7the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.*

It doesn't seem like a very Christmassy message, does it? Condemnation. Death. Hostility.

Yet this is the reason we NEED Christmas. This is the reason for the season. Because we stand condemned, we need a Saviour. Because we are sinners, we need Jesus. Christmas is the solution for our condemnation.

The impossible change

*** III** – My 3 year old, Jonah, and 5 year old, Flynn, have a great love for centipedes at the moment. Every day they find at least one centipede and bring it inside. They put it in a box with some leaves and grass and look after it. But eventually, it dies. And one day they pick it up and its head falls off. And it's hard to explain to them that you can't put their heads back on. Jonah, my 3 year old, often walks into my study in the middle of the day, with a piece of centipede in each hand, trying to push them together. You can't make them alive again. You can't "un-squash" them, or "un-starve" them, or "un-break" them. Of course, kids have a simple solution. They just find another one!

But they learn this lesson at an early age – we can't "undo" death. We can't reverse it. Sometimes we can put death off for a while with good medicine and healthy living. But once death happens, we can't reverse it. And we are all living under the sentence of death. But Christmas is God's plan to reverse death. To "un-do" condemnation. To "un-break" us.

We must be humble enough to understand that we cannot save ourselves from death. It's like being in quicksand. We can't get out on our own. We need someone from outside our situation to come to us and pull us out. And that's what God did at Christmas. **God came to us.** We couldn't rescue ourselves. So God came to us. As a man. As God in the flesh. God with us. In the likeness of sinful man. But without sin.

Why did God come to earth? To be the centre of our universe. To start a revolution. To reverse death. To undo condemnation. To show us that he can bring us from death to life. To show us that through him, we can not only change the direction of our life; we can change the direction of our death.

When we live with ourselves as the centre of our own universe, we are on the path of hostility to God, and that's a path that leads to death. BUT, when we live with *Jesus* as the centre of our universe, the Spirit of God lives in us. And He transforms us. He gives us life and peace. He takes away fear. He takes away death. He takes away our slavery to sinfulness. And he makes us sons of God.

That is Christmas. Jesus wants to be the centre of your universe and make you a Son of God.

III – When I drive around at Christmas there's lots of people on the road not paying attention. People cut in on you, pull out in front of you, take your car space at Westfield! And usually I don't mind. Everyone makes mistakes. Nothing you can do about it. But there's one time I **do** get annoyed about it. It's when my kids are in the car. You can pull out in front of me and make me nearly have an accident, but if you do it when my kids are in the car, I'm not happy at all. Because they're my children. I'm their Father and I look after them. They depend on me to look after them. They know they're safe when I'm around.

They have a relationship with me that no-one else does. They are the only ones who can call me "Daddy". No-one else. My older boys know that my name is Bruce. But in the middle of the night when they have a bad dream, or they're sick, or they're scared, they don't cry out "Bruce! I'm scared!" They cry out "Daddy!" When I give them a Christmas present, the card doesn't say "from Mr Stanley", or "From Bruce." It doesn't even say "From your Father". It says "From Daddy".

verse 15:

"you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

This word “Abba” doesn’t just mean “Father”. And it’s not just the name of a bad 70’s band that won’t go away... “Abba” is an Aramaic *family* word that literally means “Daddy”. It’s personal. It’s not a word the Jews of the day would have used to address God. It was *too* personal. *Too* close. It would be like walking up to the Queen and saying: “Hey there Elizabeth!”

God is personal. He wants that close relationship with us. He wants us to cry out to him. He wants us to depend on him, to trust in him, to come to him. And in the world we live in, we need to cry out to God! Take a moment with me now to reflect on our world this Christmas day...

III – The world today.

There are 6 billion people in our world.

Half of our world lives on less than \$2 a day.

An estimated 800 million people suffer from hunger and malnutrition

Every 3.6 seconds someone dies of hunger.

An estimated 33 million people live with HIV. Of that, 2.5 million are children. 420,000 more children were infected with HIV this year. 330,000 children died this year from HIV.

In the world today, an estimated 1 billion children are living in poverty. That’s 1 in 2 children.

And currently the war on terror has seen nearly 90,000 people dead, mainly Iraqi civilians, and costs around \$275 million a day. So far it has cost nearly \$500,000 million.

The state of the world is not good. It never was. Generation after generation, things don’t change much. We don’t like it. And God doesn’t like it.

So God came to us. To rescue us. And he wants us to cry out to him “Father, Dad, help us.”

Friends, if Christmas teaches us anything, it’s that *God is personal*. Personal enough to come into our world to save us. God wants you to call him Dad and Father. He wants you to cry out to him as his child. Not as a stranger. Christmas is not just about a child born in Bethlehem. It’s about us being born as God’s children. It’s about changing the centre of your universe. Not just for a day or a week. But for eternity. To cry out to the one who *can* save us from this world.

Christmas is this: the Son of God came into the world so we could become sons of God.

I pray you have a great Christmas, but most of all, I pray that you might know what it means to call God “Abba, Father”.

Merry Christmas.