

## The Dark Side of the Christmas Story

### I. Announce:

- A. Slide#1 Christmas Eve Services - 7 & 11pm.
- B. Slide#2 Christmas Catalog
- C. Slide#3 Children at Risk Mtg today 3-5pm help plan our JM3 conf
- D. Slide#4 City Councilmen *Rick Gibbs* wife **Kathy** *succumbed to pancreatic cancer* this week.
  1. Her viewing is at **Evan Brown Mortuary** this eve from 4-7pm (5pm Doug McAllister will officiate the viewing). There will be a funeral mass for her at St.Martha's Mon 10am.
- E. Pray:

### II. Intro:

- A. Slide#5 **Title:** *The Dark Side of the Christmas Story* [opps not that picture (Darth Vader w/Xmas sweater)]
- B. Slide#6 The German artist **Beate Heinen** (Bay-ah-tay High-nen) painted the *Manger and Cross*.
  1. In the foreground one sees a **rock cave** with the newborn Child Jesus.
  2. He lies in a feeding trough, looking like a coffin.
- C. **The path** is leading from the Manger to the Cross.
  1. From the manger a **path** starts through a **blooming garden**, **but** along the way the trees become more and more **bare**, **and** the colors more **gloomy**.
  2. At the rear edge of the image a **hill w/3 crosses**. The way is winding **upwards**, it's **steep**
  3. Nothing is growing there any more. **There is no green, only grey**.
  4. **It is not a place of life, but of death**. We know the name of the hill: **Golgotha**.
  5. **Jesus had to go this way. It was the way of His life.**
- D. Slide#7 The **Cross** and the **Manger** belong together.
  1. **It is not possible to accept only a part of the life of Jesus; for everything is connected, everything woven together.**
- E. **Oh that's what was meant by a body you have prepared for me.** Heb.10:5 baby body/man body
- F. **Oh that's what was meant by For this cause I was born, & for this cause I have come into the world.** Jn.18:37
  1. **The cradle** involves the **cross**, **the cross** illuminates the **cradle**.
  2. It started in the stable...He was **Born to Die**.
  3. Slide#8 **Bethlehem to Calvary. Galilee to Golgotha.**
  4. **Manger & Cross. Cradle & Cross. Creche & Cross.**
    - a) The Cradle & cross are inseparable.

5. Slide#9 This is **The dark side of the Christmas Story.**

G. We continue this week to contrast the Cradle & the Cross.

H. Slide#10 Changeless Responses Mat.2:1-12

I. Reactions to Jesus Christ have timelessly remained the same in every epoch of man's response to the good news.

1. The faces we see around the **cradle** are also the faces we see around the **cross**.
2. There is a *startling sameness* of man's reaction to the Christ in contrasting His first week and His last week, **His cradle and His cross**. [people wanted him dead at both events]
3. The cradle and the cross represent the two points of **His greatest weakness, His manifest impotence**.
  - a) In the cradle, weak, frail, dependent...*like any baby*.
  - b) On the cross, weak, frail, resigned, compliant, passive, submissive...*like only our Savior*.

J. Slide#11 The Light & Darkness

K. At both events there were 2 profound cosmic disruptions: *He lives and there is light; He died and there is darkness*.

1. At His birth, there occurred a singular phenomenon in the sky, *His star, a new light*.
2. At His crucifixion, there occurred a striking disjunction of the heavens - **darkness** in the midst of the day.

L. Slide#12a Jesus was put on the cross at 9am (the 3rd hour, vs.25). Now, it's High Noon (the 6th hour, vs.33)

M. Our Lord's 7 statements: 3 before noon. 4 at 3pm\*. 0 from noon to 3pm.

1. Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.
2. Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.
3. Woman, behold your son" "Behold your mother" (Jn.19:26.27)
  - a) Slide#12b When **Darkness** fell at noon, there was silence on the cross, for it was then that He was made sin for us. Then at 3pm...
4. Slide#12c \*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? (vs.34)
5. \*I thirst (Jn.19:28)
6. \*It is finished (Jn.19:30)
7. \*Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit. (Lk.23:46)

N. Slide#13 Remember it was Passover. Passover required them to *remember back* to the 1st Passover. (Passover had to do w/the 10th plague)

1. Do you remember the 9th plague? (Ex.10:21-29) **Darkness**, that was even felt.

2. How long? For 3 days.
3. Do you remember the 10th plague? (Ex.12:29,30) **Death of 1st born.**
  - a) The shed Lamb's blood meant the saving of life for some & the surety of death for others.

O. Now, this Passover:

1. We have **darkness** for **3 hours**. The death of a 1st born (God's own). His blood shed, saving some & damning others.
2. These 3 hours of darkness seemed to symbolize, "The cross being draped w/the mourning sackcloth of darkness" as Kent Hughes said.
  - a) **Story:** I remember 3 these hours well as a 5 yr old: As a 5 yr old **Catholic** back in 1966 we weren't supposed to talk from noon to 3pm. Mom said it was a time to be somber/mournful. I remember my neighbor *Marilynn Lacy* asking me to play. With teeth clenched I said, "I can't talk". Why not? "I can't tell you right now".
3. But this **darkness** over the land was **nothing** compared to the **darkness** that settled over Jesus' spirit.
4. It was God's will that His Son should, **taste death for everyone.** Heb.2:9

P. **Slide#14 The Cosmic Disruption** [veil/earthquake]

- Q. In His cradle and on His cross, both events were marked by 2 profound cosmic disruptions.
1. In each case, there was a *disruption* on the earth and a *disjunction* in the heavens.
  2. At His conception, there occurred the mysterious moving of the Holy Spirit over the womb of Mary. A quite physical miracle.
  3. At His crucifixion, there was a quaking of the earth Mt.27:51-54.

R. **Slide#15 The renting of the Veil.**

1. If there was a sign hanging above **the veil** it would have originally read, "**No Entry! Keep Out! Danger! No Trespassing!**"
2. Now it would read, "**Come boldly to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**"
3. Ripped **top to bottom...i.e.** something **God** did...**not man**. And, speaks of the **completeness** of Jesus' sacrifice (not torn 1/2 way).

S. **Slide#16 The Gentile Phenomenon**

1. Among the first to come to Him at His birth were **Gentile Magi**, drawn by the light of the star.
2. Among the first to respond to the cross was the **Gentile centurion**, drawn by the shaking of the earth.

- a) How sovereign God is. When His own people will not respond, He can shake the earth or move the stars to draw men to Christ.
3. Story: Before his salvation C.S.Lewis thought, **We can't know God anymore than Hamlet or Romeo & Juliet could know Shakespeare.**
- a) *We **can't** know God, any more than **any character** in a play can know its **author**.*
- b) *Then it occurred to him...Hamlet or Romeo & Juliet **could** know their creator...**IF** Shakespeare *wrote himself into the Play.**
- c) *Then he realized...this is the phenomena of the bible...*God wrote Himself into the play, so man could know who God is.**
- (1) This Centurion just witnessed the Greatest **Scene/Act** in History.  
This Centurion just witnessed *God wrote Himself into the play!* And he had front row seats.
4. Look how quick we see fulfilled the statement, **And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.**
- a) *His confession* seems to be the **climax** of the whole of Mark's Gospel. Which would be significant for Mark's 1st readers, being **Romans**.
- T. **Slide#17 Human Reaction** Centurion/Pilate/Herod & all Jerusalem - Herod & all Jerusalem.
- U. Around His cradle, *Herod and all Jerusalem with Him were troubled.* (Mat.2:3)
1. **What a paradox** that **a raging tyrant** shakes at **an impotent infant**.
  2. And at the last, another Herod & all Jerusalem were also shaken by the crucified Christ.
  3. **What a paradox** that a Man nailed to a tree and bleeding away His life should terrify a city and trouble its rulers.
- V. In the cradle of Christ and at the cross of Christ, there is a twofold reaction, acceptance and homage, or rejection and persecution.
1. **Blue-Collar Fisherman** believe while kings and priests reject.
  2. *Those who are near were really far off. Those who were far off were really near.*
  3. **The great reversal of God**, see it in the cradle...see it in the cross.
- W. **Slide#18 The Divine Intervention**
1. **From the cradle**, Jesus is **taken away** to another land, **but returns**.
  2. **In the crucifixion**, Jesus **dies** **but** is **brought back to life**, through the *resurrection*.
- X. **Slide#19 Stone Cold Earth**
1. **In His cradle**, Jesus was laid in a **stone feeding trough**.

2. **After the crucifixion**, Jesus was laid in Joseph unused **stone tomb**.

Y. **Slide#20-22** Behold, the **Manger** and the **Cross** are **one**, **only transformed**.

1. **Behold the cradle** where **He lays** subject to all the laws of nature...naked, cold, hungry, in poverty.
2. **Behold the cross** where **He hangs** subject to all the laws of nature...naked, cold, hungry, in poverty.

Z. **The ultimate consequence** of **Bethlehem** is **Golgotha**.

**The ultimate consequence** of **the Love of God** is our **Redemption**.

AA. **Slide#23** I'm going to read an excerpt from, *When God Weeps*, by *Joni Eareckson Tada/Steven Estes*.

BB. **"On your back with you!"** One raises a mallet to sink in the spike. But the soldier's heart must continue pumping as he readies the prisoner's wrist. Someone must sustain the soldier's life minute by minute, for no man has the power on his own. Who supplies breath to his lungs? Who gives energy to his cells? Who holds his molecules together? Only by the Son do "all things hold together". The victim wills that the soldier live on – he grants the warriors continued existence. **The man swings.**

**As** the man swings, the Son recalls how he and the Father first designed the medial nerve of the human forearm – the sensations it would be capable of. The design proves flawless – the nerves perform exquisitely. "Up you go!" They lift the cross. God is on display in his underwear and can scarcely breathe.

**But** these pains are a mere warm-up to his other and growing dread. He begins to feel a foreign sensation. Somewhere during this day an unearthly foul odor began to waft, not around his nose, but his heart. He feels dirty. Human wickedness starts to crawl upon his spotless being – the living excrement from our souls. The apple of his Father's eye turns brown with rot. His Father! He must face his Father like this!

**From** Heaven the Father now rouses himself like a lion disturbed, shakes his mane, and roars against the shriveling remnant of a man hanging on a cross. Never has the Son seen the Father look at him so, never felt even the least of his hot breath. But the roar shakes the unseen world and darkens the visible sky. The Son does not recognize these eyes.

**"Son of Man!** Why have you behaved so? You have cheated, lusted, stolen, gossiped – murdered, envied, hated, lied. You have cursed, robbed, overspent, overeaten – fornicated, disobeyed, embezzled, and blasphemed. Oh, the duties you have shirked, the children you have abandoned! Who has ever so ignored the poor, so played the coward, so belittled my name? Have you ever held your razor tongue? What a self-righteous, pitiful drunk – you, who molest young boys, peddle killer drugs, travel in cliques, and mock your parents. Who gave you the boldness to rig elections, foment revolutions, torture animals, and worship demons? Does the list never end! Splitting families, raping virgins, acting smugly, playing the pimp – buying pornography, accepting bribes. You have burned down buildings, perfected terrorist tactics, founded false religions, traded in slaves – relishing each morsel and bragging about it all. I hate, loathe this things in you! Disgust for everything about you consumes me! Can you not feel my

wrath?”

**Of course** the Son is innocent. He is blamelessness itself. The Father knows this. But the divine pair have an agreement, and the unthinkable must now take place. Jesus will be treated as if personally responsible for every sin ever committed.

The Father watches as his heart's treasure, the mirror image of himself, sinks drowning into raw, liquid sin. Jehovah's stored rage against humankind for every century explodes in a single direction.

***“Father! Father! Why have you forsaken me?!”***

**But** heaven stops its ears. The Son stares up at the One who cannot, who will not, reach down or reply.

**The Trinity** had planned it. The Son endured it. The Spirit enabled him. The father rejected the Son whom he loved. Jesus, the God-man from Nazareth, perished. The Father accepted his sacrifice for sin and was satisfied. **The Rescue was accomplished.**

**CC.***Living He loved me, dying He saved me, buried He carried my sins far away, rising He justified, freely forever, and one day He's coming, Oh glorious day!*