

1 Away from the Manger

2 Important Announcement

- I'm afraid I have something to share tonight that might be too hard for some people in our congregation to take.
- Even though we just survived the Mayan Apocalypse, you might think we could take a deep breath and breathe easy once again.
- But NOOOOOO!
- I have uncovered a sinister sacrilege that if not checked could mean the end of Christmas.
- In fact, each year this blasphemy has been getting worse and spreading like a bad case of Poison Ivy.

3 A True Horror

- Just Google "Stolen Baby Jesus" and you'll see what I'm talking about.
- Page after page of stories coming in from all around the country of disheartened Americans going out to admire their Nativity displays and in horror finding Baby Jesus gone!
- That's right my friends, we got Mary, Joseph, Wise Men, Shepherds, Frosty the Snowman, and the all the animals, but no Jesus.
- All we have in the manger is straw!

4 News Reports

5 News Reports

6 News Reports

7 News Reports

8 News Reports

9 Baby Jesus Gone

10 War on Christmas

- I know what many of you are probably thinking about.
 - You are probably asking yourself who would stoop so low as do something like this?
or,
 - Who in their right mind would want to mess with a poor and defenseless baby?
 - Have they no honor or conscience?
 - Are they part of some sort of larger conspiracy against Christmas?
- But regardless of the motive, I have good news!
- At last, the police are cracking down on these offenders.

11 Monmouth Five Gang

12 Theological Question

- Nobody likes to have their things stolen and theft is always wrong, but what is worse: stealing Jesus, or misrepresenting his life, purpose, or mission.
- One of the problems with preaching about Christmas is that everyone knows the story.
 - Mary & Joseph, no room in the inn . . .
 - Baby Jesus born in a manger in a barn . . .
 - Angels singing, and shepherds in their fields . . .
- But the truth of the story is -- and what we often miss -- is that there were people who wanted to steal the real baby Jesus right after he was born too.

13 A Dangerous Baby

- The gospels make it clear that the arrival of this baby, while a joy for many, was a threat to many more.
- Matthew tells us the story of Herod the Great, who was so threatened by the possibility of a rival that he ordered all the babies in Bethlehem under 2 years old to be stolen from their parents side and killed.
- Even Luke implies that if Caesar Augustus had known of such a rival that he may have wanted to do the same thing.
- The point is that many knew that this baby Jesus was a dangerous baby and was a threat to their power and sovereignty.
- So then, those who steal baby Jesus from Nativity scenes for whatever motive may get the Christmas story better than most of us.

14 A Dangerous Baby

- Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.” (Luke 2:34-35 NIV)
- Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: “‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? . . . (Matt 21:42 NIV)
- “He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.” (Matt 21:44 NIV)
- In other words, those who throw themselves on what God has made as the capstone (Jesus), will find self-will broken in their lives.
- But those who won’t fall in submission to Christ, the capstone will not only fall on them but completely destroy them as well.
- So then either we fall on the stone or the stone will fall on us.

15 The Magnificent

- When the virgin Mary came into the presence of her relative Elizabeth who was pregnant with John the Baptist, she gave a prophecy that is called, “The Magnificent.”
- In it she rejoices that God . . .
 - Extends mercy to those who fear him,
 - Scatters those who are proud in their inmost thoughts,
 - Removes rulers from their thrones,
 - Exalts the humble, and
 - Remembers His promises.
- In other words, God has always been and still is through the coming of Christ opposing the proud taking control of thrones.
- Except for the humble, no wonder people want to remove this threat from their lives.

16 Interesting Enough

- Interestingly, the world seems to get this, but many Christians do not. We want Jesus to stay right where he is.
 - We want a Jesus who matches our expectations, and who blesses our agendas -- a personal Jesus who orbits around us, our purposes and our needs.
 - We want a baby Jesus we can admire rather than the living and active Jesus who cares less about our worldly expectations than he does about His Kingdom come for the whole earth.
- The truth is that while some people might be stealing Jesus, we who claim him must actually go a step further and let him run loose in our lives.
- The manger-born baby, God's Word made flesh, came to change the world and us along with it.

17 Jesus' Rightful Place

- Jesus doesn't need to be protected, guarded, tracked or defended.
- Out of love, humility, and becoming a servant, He has won the title, King of kings and Lord of lords.
- However, to make Jesus lord of our lives we must give Him his rightful place in our hearts and choose to live out his will because we trust him.
- Jesus is only dangerous to those who are proud in heart and foolishly think they can better manage their lives than God.
- However, those who believe, gladly give up their sovereign rights because they know that God truly cares for them and wants them to succeed in life and in the life to come.
- So out of trust they by faith submit to His will—even though it may be difficult at times and make Him Lord of their hearts.