

What Will You Find This Christmas?

Message for Sunday, December 1, 2019
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: Psalm 63:1-5

Children's Message: Psalm 63:1

What's your favourite dessert? What's your favourite main course? Think back to the last time you had that. Remember how it smelled when you walked through the kitchen. In your mind, see yourself putting that food into your mouth. Taste it — mmm, good! Are you getting hungry?!

Here's an interesting question: do any of you *like* feeling hungry? (Probably not.)

Why do you think God created us so that we would have these unpleasant feelings? And they don't happen just once in a while; the feeling of hunger keeps coming back every few hours. Why would God make us like that? (*Be open to answers; I expect we'll end up with something about it being good for us – hunger points us towards food, which is good.*)

God has also created us with a different kind of hunger – a hunger for knowing God. The Bible passage we just read — Psalm 63 — tells about that.

Psalm 63:1, New Living Translation:

O God, you are my God;
I earnestly search for you.
My soul thirsts for you;
my whole body longs for you.

Why did God put that desire in us? (same as hunger for food: it's to point us to something good). It's good to know God, to want to know God.

We're now in the season of Advent: it's the time of year in the church when we prepare to remember the wonderful day when Jesus was born. It's good to want to know God. Jesus came to make it possible for us to do that, to show us in person God's wonderful love for us.

Message: “What Will You Find This Christmas?”

1) What do you want for Christmas this year?

The only people who enjoyed the first Christmas were the people who were looking for it. Today I want to put one single question in your minds: what are you looking for this Christmas?

What do you want for Christmas this year? Maybe one of your loved ones joined the crowds at the Black Friday sales, and they've already bought your gift.

You might like this story about a boy named Brian. For weeks he asked his parents about getting a watch for Christmas. Finally his dad told him, “Brian, if you mention that watch again, you're not going to get it. Quit bugging us!”

One night Brian's parents asked him to lead in reading the Bible and prayer before supper.

Brian said, “I'd like to read from Mark 13:37 before I pray:

“I say unto you what I have already told you before: watch.”

You see, it's good to know your Bible!

A lot of us spend most of our Christmas season searching for the perfect gift, the huge bargain, the ideal decoration, and the last parking spot. We can get so caught up in the preparations that we're pooped by the time the main event rolls around.

Similarly, at the very first Christmas, many people missed it because they were too busy looking for other things. The politicians missed the first Christmas: Herod's only concern was securing his status. The business community missed the first Christmas: the innkeeper was delighted with a full house, and sent those homeless to the stable out back. Even the religious leaders missed the first Christmas, because they were looking at other things. The only people who enjoyed the very first Christmas, two thousand years ago, were the people who were looking for it.

Luke 2:12, 15, Today's English Version:

“You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger...”

When the angels went away from them back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us."

The shepherds found Jesus because they went looking for him. They were seeking him.

And later on, some others came looking:

Matthew 2:1-2, Today's English Version:
Some men who studied the stars came from the East to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star when it came up in the east, and we have come to worship him."

The wise men found Jesus because they were looking for him, too.

Let me ask you: what are you going to find this Christmas? I'll tell you what you're going to find: you'll find what you're looking for.

Jesus said, "Seek, and you will find." [Matthew 7:7].

So what is it that you're looking for this Christmas?

2) Satisfy your desire to know God

Anthropologists study different cultures. They report that every ethnic group around the world asks the ultimate questions of life, like "Is there any meaning to my life? Does my life count? Is there a God? And if there is, how can I get to know God?" It's not just us in North America. Where do you think all this comes from? Isn't it a bit much of a coincidence that all people, everywhere in the world, no matter what their background, ask these same kind of questions?

Here's what C.S. Lewis said about this:

If you are an atheist, you have to believe that the main point in all the religions of the whole world is simply one huge mistake. If you are a Christian, you are free to think that all those religions, even the queerest ones, contain at least some hint of the truth.

It's no accident. God created us with various desires: a desire for food, for drink, for sex, and so on. He also created us with the desire to know him.

Augustine, one of the early church leaders, put it this way in a prayer:

"You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until we find our rest in you." - Augustine

In the Bible, David wrote about this hunger we all have:

Psalm 63:1-5, New Living Translation:
O God, you are my God;
I earnestly search for you.
My soul thirsts for you;
my whole body longs for you in this parched and weary land
where there is no water. ...
You satisfy me more than the richest of foods.
I will praise you with songs of joy.

One message of the Bible is that God says to us, "I know everything about you: the good, the bad, the ugly; your past, present, and future. I know your thoughts and your secrets. I knew you in your mother's womb before you were born. Now I want *you* to know *me*." God wants you to know him, so he came to us at Christmas in the form of Jesus.

God wants us to know him. God doesn't need us, for God is self-sufficient—complete without needing anything or anybody. But God wants us. Do you remember the story of Adam and Eve? A.W. Tozer, pastor and author, commented on this:

Do you remember what happened after they sinned by eating the fruit? It wasn't Adam who cried out, "God, where are you?" It was God who called, "Adam, where are you?"

Again, God *wants* to have a relationship with us.

This Christmas God wants to give you Christmas gifts that you'll find if you seek them. Because whatever you're looking for is what you'll find.

That's what I'm going to be focussing on over the next three weeks of Advent, right up until Christmas Eve. Invite a friend to come with you!

- December 8: This Christmas, you can find forgiveness
- December 15: This Christmas, you can find peace

- December 22: This Christmas, you can find hope
- Christmas Eve: This Christmas, you can find love.

But of course, it all depends on what you're looking for. I'm going to leave you with this question. I hope it keeps bugging you all week: what are you looking for this Christmas?

Next Steps:

- Someone said the most North American Christians are "practical atheists." That is, they believe in God, but that belief makes zero difference in how they live from day to day. Is that true for you?
- Would you like to know God better? If yes, see next item.
- Wishing gets you nowhere. Write out a plan for doing this.