

Are you a Grinch?

December 25, 2016

The Grinch is a fictional character created by Dr. Seuss. He first appeared as the main character of the 1957 Christmas story "How the Grinch Stole Christmas!" The grumpy, anti-Christmas spirit of the character has led to the term "Grinch", which is probably derived from the French word "grincheux" which means "grumpy", coming to refer to a person opposed to Christmas time celebrations or to someone with a coarse and greedy attitude.

There are two types of spiritual Grinches – the ones who purposely miss out on the real meaning of Christmas because of the things of the world and the other ones who intentionally try to destroy it.

Whether you'd like to admit or not, our current culture stripped the word Christmas, gutted the meaning and the truth of it, and set it back in a very meager position, way in the background without any true power. It is not only being secularized and commercialized Christmas by the unbelievers, but also it is either sanitized, romanticized, or sentimentalized by many well-meaning believers to the point, it no longer has the same meaning as the Bible recorded.

You all are familiar with a Nativity scene – the Baby Jesus, Joseph and Mary. Naturally, they all have their own halos in the very clean and sanitized stable. Of course, it even glows. If we see the three wise men, they would wear all color-coordinated outfits. Someone made a lot of money by joining two separated incidents that happened two years apart, into one.

Instead of the celebration of the Savior of the world, the image of Christmas was also changed to the Jolly Old Fellow, Santa brings gifts to the people who are not on his naughty list. If you are on his naughty list, hope that you have enough money to buy your own presents.

By being pulled into all of these sideways, we are becoming the spiritual Grinches who allow someone to steal Christmas from our hearts.

A. THE ONES WHO MISS OUT

Luke 2:1-7 And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3 So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. 4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. 6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Nowadays, we never miss a thing due to the modern technology. If you have a smart phone, like an iPhone or a Samsung Android, you get to see what is going on around the world within a short time. Or you can even see and hear what is happening from the other side of the world in real time.

But even though these gadgets keep us from missing our phone calls or important news, they can cause us to miss the real Reason for Christmas. Some people even say, "I cannot go to the church Christmas service, because I have to wrap the presents, and do this and that. On top of all, the guests are coming." Let me ask you a point blank question: Is there anything more important than your Savior Jesus Christ?

The majority of the people in Israel of the first century also missed the very first Christmas, too. As we read in the Book of Luke, the innkeeper was so pre-occupied with his cash register ringing that he did not have time for Christmas. As you've seen many Christmas pageants, there was no room for Joseph and his pregnant wife Mary in the inn.

According to the latest Gallup Research survey, 74% of Americans consider themselves Christians. I think that this number is rather too generous if they really define the true meaning of Christians. But let's go along with that number for now. Can you guess how many of them are actually putting the Savior in the highest priority in their hearts during this time of the year over gifts, party preparation, and all the other things that go with the commercial Christmas? Yes, one way we lose Jesus is when nonessentials displace essentials. God's only begotten Son can become God's only forgotten Son.

The people who miss out on Christ because of the distractions reminds me of the group of people Jesus talked about in one of His parables – 4 different types of soils. *Luke 8:4-13 And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: 5 "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. 6 Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. 8 But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" 9 Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?" 10 And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.' 11 "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. 13 But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.*

Some seeds fell on rocky soil, which refers to a thin "skin of earth over a shelf of limestone rock. Without enough depth and nourishment to take root in such soil, the sprouts would wither under the sun's heat almost as quickly as they had sprung up.

The thin, rocky soil represents people with superficial, impulsive hearts. These people may receive the truth with an impulsive joy. But when temptation comes, they simply fall away because they have no root of faith.

Here comes an important question: "Are these people saved?" I don't know. I cannot be a judge of that, but I have to wonder if they don't show any fruit of salvation in Christ in their lives. Because when a person is truly saved, that person's life shows the fruit of salvation which is a changed life.

Ask yourself seriously and honestly. Are you saved by the grace of God? If you are, is your life reflecting the truth of Jesus Christ and the love for Him? If not, how do you know you are truly saved?

I am going to extend this a little further. The late pastor Chuck Smith, the founder of Calvary Chapel said it so well, "If you are not closer to Jesus Christ than yesterday, you have backslidden." I agree with him. Ask these to yourself, please:

Q1) How is my walk with Christ?

Q2) Is it closer to Him than yesterday, last week, last month, and last year?

Q3) Do I still have that fervency in my heart once I had to serve Him and love Him and love His people?

Q4) Do I still have hunger and thirst for His Word?

Q5) Am I still excited to hear from Him through my own daily devotion and church services?

If your answer is "No" to any one of these questions, I say, "You have backslidden." You may say, "Don't you think you are a little hard on us?" No, not really. Because I measure myself to the same standard.

What is getting between us and God? The devil is happy to provide many excuses for us:

"You need to take care of _____, so forget that prayer time,"

"You cannot go to the church service, because you have to do _____,"

"You don't have time to do the daily devotion, because _____."

Each time we come up with these flimsy excuses, it is like we are telling Him, "There are more important things in my life than You, God." Nothing should be more important than Jesus in our lives.

As a matter of fact, if you are justifying what you have been doing right now, that is the evidence of having an idol in your life. If you've been living in this kind of life, you need to repent and get back to the Lord and stay close to Him. You will never regret it. Neglecting the Savior on Christmas is just a tip of your unspiritual iceberg.

B. THE ONES WHO TRY TO DESTROY

Contrary to the traditional Nativity scene, the wise men from the east didn't come to see the Child Jesus until a couple of years past the time of His birth.

Matthew 2:7-16 Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also." 9 When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. 11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. 13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." 14 When he arose, he took the young

Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." 16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

King Herod was the man who had everything – wealth and power. Yet he came to complete ruin. According to Josephus, a Jewish historian of that time, Herod was at the end of his life and his body was infected with disease. But he was not about to relinquish his power to anyone. He was willing to kill and destroy any men, women, and children who might have any possibility to take the throne from him.

Additionally, Herod was a false worshiper. There are many people like him today. They say that they believe in God, but their life contradicts what the Scriptures teach. They will not allow anyone or anything to get in the way of their career, lifestyle, or plans. To them, Jesus is a threat. They don't have a problem as long as Jesus remains in the manger as a baby.

Then, there is the second type of Herod – the ones who are willing to destroy anything and everything to do with Christ. They don't want Christians to say, "Merry Christmas"; they don't want us to let others know, "Jesus is the Reason for the season"; they don't want us to sing our Christmas carols; they don't want anything that has even the remotest connection with Christianity to be shown anywhere in public places.

But they don't mind muslim or buddhist stuff, only against Christianity. It is because the Word of God deeply penetrates to their souls and reveal the true ugliness of their evil intents that completely are controlled by the devil.

Like Herod, these people fight against God. Like Herod, these people will end up destroying themselves. One day, every human being – every man and woman, whether they are believers or unbelievers – will bow their knees and confess that Jesus is Lord. The locations will be different. The believers will bow their knees in front of Him in heaven, while the unbelievers will bow their knees in front of Him right before they will be cast into the Lake of Fire for eternity.

C. APPLICATION

Neglecting the Savior on Christmas is just a tip of your unspiritual iceberg. Come back to the Lord.