

The Magic, Mystery, and Miracle of Christmas

Grace and peace to you from the Creator of the Universe who we can see in the baby in a manger, amen.

(SLIDE) Merry Christmas! It's finally here. Do you have all your gifts wrapped yet? If you do, I'm sure you went through a lot of of scotch tape. The Brand-Named Scotch Tape was made by the 3M Company. (SLIDE) 3M started out in 1903 as the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company. Today, they make over 60,000 different products. Besides Scotch Tape, 3M makes audio-visual equipment and media, medical and dental products, reflective coatings, and Post-It Notes. 3M makes a lot of stuff. Maybe we can imagine a different meaning behind 3M. What if the real 3Ms of Christmas stands for Magic, Mystery, and Miracle. (SLIDE) In the manger we can see all three M's, the Magic, the Mystery, and the Miracle of God with us. Let's look at each one, starting with the magic of Christmas.

Christmas is a magical time. The whole season is like riding on a "magic" carpet. (SLIDE) We're flying towards a destination we hope will bring us joy. Advent's been a time of waiting, a time of deferred gratification. We've been traveling towards Christmas for weeks now and it's finally here! We've been watching the Christmas lights going up all over town. Downtown Greenville is always so beautiful this time of year. (SLIDE) (By the way we should all drive by Portia's home. The pictures I've seen of Facebook are incredible. Great job

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Portia!) Besides all the Christmas lights, cards and letters or emails have been written. All the children are hoping their special gift will appear under the tree. We've sung Christmas carols, made the fudge and candies, prepared special meals, made Christmas cookies, and many other goodies that only come this time of the year. Our taste buds wait for the magic on our tongues. At our house tomorrow we'll once again have a delicious roast beast and all the trimmings. It's a magical time of year, but the real magic of Christmas is the magic of joy and generosity that grows and grows this time of year. It was truly amazing to see that joy find expression as people came up to put a buck or two in the blue buckets. There's no shortage of magic happening right here among us here in Darke County...

The mystery of Christmas is the greatest mystery ever. We celebrate Immanuel which means God with us. (SLIDE) The Divine Creator, the very Word of God is born and becomes flesh and bones, as a tiny baby. Almighty (God) appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, needing to be fed and changed and taught to walk and talk like any other child. The more you think about it, the more mind bending it gets. I mean God had to sort of set aside a portion of himself in order to make room to create the universe. In my mind I picture God sucking in his tummy to make room for all of us and everything else. Now, somehow and for some reason, God decided to enter into the creation He previously had to limit himself to create. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as this truth of the Incarnation

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of Jesus. How can God, the creator of all things, become part of His own creation and why would God do that for the likes of me, and you?... I hope you didn't come here tonight thinking I was going to give you an answer to that question. All I can say is, it's a mystery to me!

This is the night of magic, of mystery, and of miracle so, let's turn to the sheer miracle of this night. Some say it's a miracle we made it to Church tonight... (SLIDE) Most likely they're referring to how hard it is to get the kids up, dressed and out the door in time to get to church before the Gathering Hymn is over... The truth is it's a marvelous miracle in more ways than one. I mean it really is a miracle you're here at all. Without God's Holy Spirit tugging at your heart, why would you take this time on the busiest day of the year to stop everything, put on your best, and venture out on this winter's evening/night. It's also a miracle this tiny Church survived so many tough, tough years. It's a miracle the story of Jesus made it through all these years without being snuffed out by persecution. It's a miracle people risked their lives to pass on this totally miraculous story at all. Yes, for sure it's a miracle that God raised Jesus from the dead, and last, but certainly not least, it's a miracle that Jesus was born at all. Yes, Christmas is certainly a miracle. (SLIDE)

This magical, mysterious, and miraculous night changed the world 2000 years ago. Jesus was born on this night in order to take away the sin of the world.

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In our society, there's two great religious holidays—Christmas and Easter. The green wreath of Christmas is juxtaposed to the crown of thorns of Good Friday.

(SLIDE) Creator of the Universe invaded our world in the form of a tiny baby boy, but that wasn't the end of His mission. The wood of the cradle without the wood of the cross misses the true meaning of Christmas. (SLIDE) Bethlehem and Calvary, the Manger and the Cross, the birth and the death of Jesus must always be seen together, if the real Christmas is to survive.

Christmas is the most exciting season of the year. It's the time when we gather with family and friends. We sing. We celebrate. We laugh. We exchange presents. For children and most adults, Christmas is the climax of the whole year. And Easter? For most people it's just another long weekend, a break in the dreary stretch between Christmas and summer vacation. It's a great time for spring break... It's the great miracle of the resurrection of Jesus from death and the grave on Easter that gives Christmas its true meaning. If Easter had not happened, Christmas would be nothing more than a sweet-sounding fable. If Easter isn't true, then Christmas is only the story of an obscure baby born in an out-of-the-way town in a forgotten land 2000 years ago. Something extraordinary about one baby, born in Bethlehem to a set of parents, Mary and Joseph. That baby—and no other baby—was God, the Creator of the Universe, born in human flesh. (SLIDE) If that isn't magical, mysterious, and Miraculous, my name isn't Mel Musser.

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When it comes to Christmas, we confess that behind the carols and candy, behind the decorations and the parties, behind all the concerts and all the sermons; behind all of it lies an undeniable historical truth: that just over 2000 years ago the Word of God, became a human being in the person of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We not only believe it – We've staked our lives upon it. I mean, this birth of Jesus in Bethlehem is the hinge point of history.

For most of us human beings, our heart longs for peace and harmony. We need peace with our Creator because we've broken commandments left and right and this reality keeps us alienated from one another and our Creator. Reconciliation is what we need. (SLIDE) Reconciliation means friendship and relationship is restored is restored. The infant placed in the cradle, who was given the name Jesus accomplished what we could never do. His nail pierced hands and his death paid the price for our reconciliation. (SLIDE) He restores our lost friendship with our Creator. Because of and only because of the blood and righteousness of Jesus are we forgiven and made into God's people. That's all God's doing and our receiving. And so we can sing "Hark the herald angels sing, God and sinners reconciled."

Something special happened that first Christmas. The Creator of the Universe decided to rewrite your story. Because you were born sinful, even if you could keep all the commandment perfectly, in all the spirit and intent of the Law

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you're still sin stained by your birth as a sinful human being. As a result, your story called for death, but now the death sentence falls on Jesus and He has already died in your place. The magic, mystery, and miracle of Christmas is the beginning of a life that would change the ending of your story and the stories of all who are covered by the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

(SLIDE) May your whole life be filled with the magic, mystery, and miracles of the story of the Word becoming a human being. This Christmas, may God us all with his joy and peace. Merry Christmas. Thanks be to God. Amen.