

THE SAVIOR WHO UNDERSTANDS
Phil. 2:5-11: Luke 2:1-7

The Christmas season is a time of praise and celebration. Many people visit with friends and relatives and reflect upon their many blessings. Christians reflect too upon the great work of God who sent His only Son to earth to eventually die for the sins of the world. As a whole, hearts are full of thanksgiving. Joy and merriment abound in families and groups.

However, Christmas can be a time of depression and loneliness for Christian and non-Christian alike. We can find ourselves mulling over times we have been let down in our friendships or felt betrayed by someone who pledge his loyalty and support.

Economic struggles place burdens on parents to present gifts for their children on Christmas day. The death of a loved one can be rekindled as we sense their absence more intensely during holidays.

In times like these we all need someone whom we can go for help. One who totally understand what we are going through without one word of being spoken. We need to feel completely accepted and unconditionally loved, no matter what we may have done or how irrational our thoughts may seem.

It is for this reason that I would like to invite your thoughts to take a fresh new look at the manger and find Someone, Jesus Christ, who knows us intimately, and love us without measure.

Have you ever stopped and wondered why God sent His Son to us as a mere babe during one of the most politically, socially, and religiously unstable times in world history?

Let me give a clue. For centuries, the Russians told of a legend about a young prince called Alexis. He lived in a gigantic beautiful palace, while all around him lived hundreds of poor peasants in filthy surroundings. The prince was moved to help them. So he began to visit them. But he could not make any real contact with them. They always treated him with high respect, and felt ill-at-ease with him.

Then he thought things over and one day came out to the people dressed as a rough and ready young doctor who wanted to devote his life to the poor. He started by renting a rat-ridden shack on a back-street. He wore old torn clothes, just like the people. He lived on the plainest food. Often he did not know where his next meal would come from. He made no money because he treated everyone free and gave away his medicines. Before long, he won the love and respect of all the people. As Prince Alexis, he had never succeeded in doing that.

Little by little he transformed the whole spirit of the place: settling quarrels, reconciling enemies, helping people to live decent lives.

No one guessed that this doctor was in fact the Prince himself, who had abandoned his palace and gone down among his people to become one of them.

Is this not a parallel to the story of Christ and Christmas Day?

God had in mind to provide a Savior for us who would do more than just dictate of do's and don'ts. He wanted a real, living, deep, emotionally penetrating relationship with mankind, a relationship of real trust and love.

He knew the only way to establish that kind of intimate relationship with mankind was to convince man, through Christ, that He had our best interest in mind. He then had to convince us that Christ really knew what He was talking about.

A real trust relationship was going to be established with a Savior who was not merely a ticket to heaven, but a compassionate Savior who really understood our feelings and emotions because He walked through the same valleys we tread daily.

God, in His infinite wisdom, knew we would not be able to accept a long list of rigid rules from a distant heaven. He knew we could only trust someone who had experienced the full range of human existence and could boldly instruct and help us based upon His life on earth.

Christ does not treat us like the Father who leans across the table and says: "Son, let me tell you what it was like when I was growing up," He is not the doctor who begins to write out the prescription before you have finished explaining your symptoms. He is not a counselor who tells you the same things he told the last three people. And He is not like the friend who tells you how much he understands while all along you know that he does not really comprehend or even care about your problems.

Jesus Christ, is one who boldly and caringly reassures us and says: "I understand the family stress that comes as a result of tough economic times. A carpenter's family, you know, does not make much money." "I know what it is like to be the oldest son and responsible for younger brothers and sisters when the father dies early."

"I know the sting of rumors that are set to ruin a spotless reputation, that spread lies about you." "I know what it is like to have your best friends pledge their loyalty only to leave in your darkest hour."

"I know how it feels to be a teenager and a single. I understand the temptations and the weaknesses you will face."

"And I know what it is like to face death alone." "I understand. I really understand."

So you see, not only did Jesus experience all of life's emotions

in order to give us complete love and understanding; He went one step further. He experienced death. You don't die for someone unless you have their best interest in mind. What more could we ask for in such a Friend?

You may be saying, "I really do need Jesus to help me through my situation, but I don't feel worthy. I need to clean up my act first." But God is saying to you right now: "I understand your frustration and why you think you have to. I want you to know that because I do understand, you don't have to wait. I'll take you just the way you are. Just trust me."

God invested thirty-three long years into understanding our lives on the deepest level possible. He does not want to feed us truth far afar. He wants to lead us into truth from the context of a true relationship of trust packed full of understanding.

So the list of do's and don'ts given by Jesus are motivated by true love. Having lived an authentic life on earth, He knows personally those things we need to avoid, ways to conduct ourselves and how to respond when temptation strikes. His commands keep us from experiencing any more heartache than is necessary.

Like for example, teens struggle with peer pressure and misunderstanding with parents. Everything inside wants to burst out in rebellion. But God's Word tells them to "Obey their parents." (Eph. 6:1). This is not instruction from an insensitive dictatrix. It's from someone who knows what family life should be, who has lived to see the beneficial side of obedience. His instruction to us come from the context of reality, not theory.

Not only does Christ understand what we are going through, but He understands those accompanying pangs of guilt we sometimes have for feeling the way we do. Still He says: "I understand. I really understand." Thus, my friends, there is nothing we can throw at Him that He does not understand or that causes Him to think less of us.

So, this Christmas when you view a manger scene, remember that it was the beginning of a thirty-three year process Jesus invested in so could come to Him as the Savior who understands.

Now if God in Christ, has taken time, efforts, and the sacrifice to come to us in order that He will be able to help us, do we have the guts and the faith to trust Him and entrust our problems?

Let me tell you a story. It is about a devoted Christian woman executive. She has an assistant who had been coming late. She talked to her about it, but there was no change. This situation had become a burden in her own heart. The assistant attitude and her being always late is not giving a good example to the ranks and file. One vesper Sunday service she was struck by the words of a hymn the congregation were singing:

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful Who will all our sorrows
share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; Take it to the lord in prayer.

Right after the vesper service she went straight direct to the office of her assistant, knelt down and prayed to God about her assistant. The following day, Monday, she was surprised to see her assistant rushing on time. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday though always in a hurry her assistant arrived just on time. Before the end of Friday, this woman executive could not contain anymore her curiosity so she ask her assistant, "you were always on time this week?" Her assistant replied, "well, I made myself a goal this week to try my very to come on time? It work didn't I." "Yes, very well," her boss replied. As she returned to her own office, she murmured as if talking to God: "Forgive me, Lord, for not taking you seriously. Now I will not delay."

The message is unmistakably clear, the Lord is saying to you right now: "I will help you in every trouble. I will never leave or forsake you. Bring all of your problems, sins, and anxieties to me. I can handle them. I love you, and I understand. I really understand."

Yes, this message is for you. Why delay when you can take your burdens to the Lord right now! Have faith, take His offer. You have nothing to lose but everything to gain. Your move!