

The Christmas Calendar

by Jim Cymbala

Jesus' first coming was to provide salvation and invite us to receive the gift of eternal life, but the story doesn't end there, and we must look forward to his second coming as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Duration: 48:21

Scripture: Luke 15:1

Topics: "Christmas"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of sharing the good news of God's love and forgiveness with others. He highlights the fact that we are all sinners and have broken God's law. The preacher poses a hypothetical scenario of someone who has three minutes to live and is not a Christian, asking what message should be shared with them to save their soul. He emphasizes the need to believe in Jesus and his sacrifice for our sins, referencing the story of the thief on the cross. The sermon also mentions Jesus' teachings and parables, emphasizing his desire for all people to be saved.

Transcript

This is called the Christmas Calendar. So in the book of Luke, which gives us a more detailed story of the birth of Jesus, even more so than Matthew, we find these words in chapter 2. There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. All the people.

Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord, and this will be a sign to you. This is the pathetic part of the passage.

This will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger like a barn. That was what the shepherds were to go and look for.

In the book of 2 Thessalonians, we read this. This church was undergoing persecution because they believed in that baby that was born in Bethlehem. And they're going through real persecution, not like we get some insults and society's becoming more anti-Christian all the time, government, schools, whatnot.

But they were facing losing jobs, maybe being killed, threatened, whatever. Paul writes to this church that he started, we ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. There's a good word for Pastor Cymbala, isn't it? This is what he's supposed to try to lead the congregation into.

Your faith is growing more and more, and the love everyone has for each other is increasing. That's the sign of a healthy church when people are learning to trust God more and more. How many want to trust Him more in 2012 than you did 2011? Yeah, faith can grow.

None of us have arrived at this thing called faith. Do we love each other? Yeah, but our love can grow more and more. Therefore, among God's churches, we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you're enduring.

Here comes the turn. All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result, you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are suffering. God is just.

He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to those who are troubled and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God.

Jesus, that one born in the manger, He will punish those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord. From the majesty of His power, when on that day that He comes to be glorified in His holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed, this includes you because you believed our testimony to you.

What does that have to do with Christmas? I'll tell you. Anticipating Christmas is an amazing thing to see with kids, isn't it? The countdown. Mommy, especially if they see the tree and the gifts, can I open that now? How many days till Christmas? Please, mommy, let me open some.

At least my kids did that when they were growing up. They always wanted to push the envelope and open the gifts earlier. And when they're real little, certain gifts made them happy, certain gifts did not make them happy.

Practical things that you appreciate as an adult mean nothing when you're a child. You want a toy. You want a doll.

You want a gun that you can shoot at somebody with, right? You're not interested in a nice sweater. Levi's birthday was this last Wednesday, and a deacon couple in this church gave him this beautiful box gift. I mean, he was so happy.

He's on the floor. We're watching him. He only had one other present to open, and he's ripping the thing open, and his sister helps him take off the lid, and she pulls back, and there's this gorgeous pair of polo jeans for a little baby, two-year-old, and a beautiful sweater, and underneath, a sweatsuit.

But the minute he saw it was clothes and not a toy, he went, no, no. And his sister, half tormenting him, holds it up. She realizes what's happening, and she goes, Levi, look, and he goes, no, no.

And he takes the clothes, and he tries to push them back into the box and push it down. But the next present was a toy, and he was going crazy for a truck that cost a few dollars, but so anxious to open, especially at Christmas time. I thought that that was the most anxious I was for Christmas as a kid, and I got some gifts like that.

You ever remember some of those gifts that you got at Christmas that you didn't enjoy? I remember one uncle, when I wanted a basketball or a toy or guns or something, one uncle or aunt gave me a flannel shirt, and I was depressed like for the whole Christmas season. I mean, I was depressed. Like, how in the world could you buy me a flannel shirt? Don't you know what life is about? Don't you know what I'm interested in? But then when I went to the Naval Academy, then I learned about wanting Christmas to come, because I was a plebe, and starting in June, I was hazed and hassled and trained and kicked into shape one way or another by the upperclassmen.

It's bad now, but it was a lot worse when I was there. They had you under their control, so they could make you do anything at any time. Every morning, I had to report at 620 to somebody's room to be abused and be yelled at and to do sit-ups or push-ups or sweat a penny to the wall by pressing your forehead in this position against the wall until the perspiration would hopefully cement that penny to the wall and all kinds of other abusive things, switching uniforms.

That meant instead of getting up at 615 with everyone else, I had to get up at 5, because your shoes had to be like glass, and they would look at my shoes sometimes and go, you must be joking, and put their foot right on top of it and rub out all that work that I had done. But Christmas leave meant you got out of there and you could go home. So every day when you were running, no matter where you were running, no matter what table you sat at, and you only sat on the front three inches of your chair and you ate a square meal and you never moved your eyes, you had to not look at your food, and you had to do that.

Just the plebs, just the freshmen. You had to know the menu for that meal. You had to know the menu for the next meal.

And you had to know how many days till Christmas leave and how many days to graduation. You had to look at the menu, memorize it. They were just putting pressure on you all the time.

But Christmas leave? Looking forward to Christmas leave? I didn't even know how great Christmas was until I had that kind of pressure. But it just so happens that no one in heaven looks forward to Christmas. No angels, nobody in heaven is counting the days.

We do that. And it's become very commercial, hasn't it? A lot of people are busted by January. But no one in heaven is discussing when's Christmas coming.

Because Christmas already happened. There's only one Christmas. It happened 2,000 years ago.

So none of the angels are singing and no one's talking about Mary and Joseph. That's just us. Oh, they're talking about another coming of the Lord, but not his first one.

Now the problem with Christmas is it gives you a false picture of who Jesus is. The picture of Jesus at Christmas, which a lot of people are not threatened by, is this picture of a baby, special baby born of a virgin. God so loved the world that he gave his son.

And that baby was born and was sought after by Herod to kill him. There was stress around him from the beginning. But he was an innocent baby who couldn't survive unless his mother and supposed father took care of him.

And they had to flee into Egypt. And then when the coast was clear, an angel spoke to Joseph and said, come back. The people who are trying to kill the baby are gone.

Herod had died. And that's what a lot of people have, a picture of Jesus. I just want to give you a doctrinally more complete picture of who Jesus is.

Because if you've got to celebrate Christmas, we might as well celebrate the real Jesus. How many say amen? And the real Jesus is not that baby in the manger. That's how Jesus began.

Sure, he was born. And the gold and frankincense and myrrh. You know, the shepherds never came at the same time as the wise men.

We do that for nativity scene purposes, but they came at separate times. We read about the shepherds coming when the baby was just seemingly born that night. But wise men seemed to come later when they were in some house, Mary and Joseph.

And they worshipped him. And then he grew up. And people who know about Christmas and who know about the Bible make a point to say, the story doesn't end there.

The story does not end there. The story goes to the cross. The first time I saw love, it was hanging on a tree.

The first time I saw life, it was dying there for me. The baby grew up and we don't know when. He got an awareness of who he was.

This is the miracle of the incarnation. He was fully God, but fully man. He could feel pain.

He got hungry and all the rest. But he was fully God in terms of nature. The fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him in bodily form.

So how that all worked out intellectually and emotionally, we don't know. But we know he had to read the Bible and study to learn it. We know he was taught.

We know that he grew in stature. That he grew in wisdom. That's a mystery.

But we know for sure that when Jesus Christ came into the world, at one point when he saw the sacrifice in Jerusalem and they saw the lamb being killed on let's say the day of atonement as a little boy with those little eyes looking out, when did it dawn on him that he was the lamb? That they weren't gonna kill any more of those after a while. When did it hit him that that's why I've come? Not to teach, not to preach, not to walk on water. Those all just proved who he was.

But why did he really come? He came into the world to die for you and me. And aren't we happy he did? How many are happy he did? And just think, through dying on the cross as a substitute for us. The baby, the cross, that's a good quote I accidentally read there from Amy Carmichael.

The cross always has to be right near the manger or you don't get the story. The story's not about a baby. Christmas is not about a baby being born.

It is, but the baby grew up to become the savior who died on the cross as your substitute and my substitute. He died for the sins of the world. He was the one that God punished so you and I could get a free pass and be forgiven of our sins.

For by the works of the law, nobody is gonna go to heaven. Nobody's good enough here to earn God's gift of eternal life. Nobody's good.

There's none righteous, not even one. All we like sheep have gone astray. But the baby was born so he could grow up and then at just 33 and a half years old, he never saw his 34th birthday.

He was killed on a cross. And they buried him in a tomb. And to prove he was the son of God, he was raised from the dead on the third day.

And the disciples saw him. Now they must have seen him. They didn't make that up because who would be chased and persecuted and lose your life because you keep saying he's alive, he's alive.

I mean, if it was a lie, you'd say, all right, it's a lie, but don't kill me. He didn't raise from the dead. No, these people went into flames and were fed to gladiators and animals all because they said he died, but he's alive, he's alive.

They tried to pay off the guards or anyone they could find not to try to cover up the story of the stone that was rolled away. I want to present to you the whole Jesus. I don't want you looking at some tree and saying, oh, yes, the baby in the manger.

I want to give you the whole story. He grew up and died for you and I. He loves us. He loves us so much that he took the blow for me.

What kind of love is that? He has loved me when I haven't loved myself. Anybody here with me? He has loved me when I haven't loved myself. He's comforted me.

He's helped me. He's led me. He's guided me.

How about you? He's everything to us, right? So this Jesus is not just the manger Jesus. This Jesus is the one who died on the cross and rose again. But oh, after he rose again from the dead, he appeared off and on for about 40 days and he talked to the disciples.

It was odd. He had this resurrection body, a glorified body, yet he could sit and eat with them. Nobody understands that.

He would sit and eat food. In fact, one time he told them, make me some fish. And he appeared with them and he told them what to do and he explained what the kingdom of God was all about.

And then after 40 days, he ascended. They saw him go up vertical, as in vertical. And they saw him go up and he ascended.

And the Bible tells us Jesus is only here with us today. We sense his presence, don't we? But that's through the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself, the glorified Jesus, he's seated at the right hand of the Father.

He's in heaven now. He's not here. He's not here.

He said, I'm gonna go away, but I'm gonna send another one in my place. And that's the Holy Spirit. So where he said, where two or three are gathered, I'll be there.

He didn't mean himself in his glorified presence. He meant my spirit, the Holy Spirit, who is called the Spirit of Christ. He will be there with you.

But right now, to be in the body, Paul says, is to be absent from the Lord. Why? Because when you're here on earth, and you're in your body, and you're living, the Lord is in heaven, so you're absent from him. But when you die, you go to be with him.

To die is to be present with the Lord. But we feel his presence, and his spirit lives within us, doesn't it? That's how we're born again. So that's a little fuller picture of Jesus.

So you just don't get hung up on that. But that's not the full picture of Jesus. Not at all.

I told you heaven's not interested at all in Christmas celebrations, and no one's counting the days. You know, in late November, Gabriel doesn't say, Michael, archangel, how many days now till Christmas? They don't talk about that. Oh, but they're talking about some days.

But they don't know the day. They never talk about his first coming, except to worship. It's the second coming.

That Jesus is coming again. There's more promises and verses about his second coming, and what he's gonna do than his first coming. If you believe in Christmas, you better believe in the second coming.

Because Jesus said to his disciples, look, I go to prepare a place for you. Don't be sad, don't be troubled. Let not your hearts be troubled.

Don't be discouraged and dismayed. For I go to prepare a place for you. Why? So that where I am, you can be also.

I'm going away, but I'm gonna come back to get you so that we can be together forever and ever. Let's put our hands together and just thank God for that. We're living in between his first coming, baby in a manger, and we're living now, not yet has he come for the second time.

He's coming again. Jesus is coming again. And the Bible warns us that ministers who don't preach that are not preaching the whole counsel of God.

If you only preach about the baby in the manger, you're really not doing a good job. If you preach about the baby in the manger and you take it to the cross, you're doing a better job, but you're not doing a full job unless you tell people the real truth that the one who died and rose again and ascended, he's coming again. That's the blessed hope of the church.

The hope of the church is not in the UN or the White House or the Republicans or the Democrats or the mayor's office. That's your hope. You're in a lot of trouble.

Our hope is in Jesus coming again as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. That's the full picture of Jesus. Do you have a full portrait of Jesus or do you just have some dabs of a brush and do you have like a stunted

picture of Jesus? Who's Jesus to you? Do you understand the doctrine of Jesus from the Bible? We're doing a little Christology today.

The study of the person of Christ. Prophesied in the Old Testament, came in the New Testament, born in a manger, died on a cross, ascended to the right hand of the Father after he was raised from the dead and now is waiting for a moment that no one knows when he will split the sky and come down here. And then the Bible says, salvation will be completed.

We don't have complete salvation yet. So let's pursue that a second. We're saved but we're not fully saved yet.

Oh no, no, no. That's not happening until he comes. Let's just compare his first coming and his second coming because there's much more in the Bible about his second coming than his first coming.

I'm all for the Christmas tree and I'm all for remembering the baby but it's a shame we have no day to celebrate a second coming. There's Christmas but no second coming day. Let's start a new holiday.

All in favor say aye. Let's make it in June when it's warm and we'll call it second coming day and we'll celebrate all these verses about the second coming. So let's just compare.

Why did he come the first time? And then we'll ask why. Let's just do a couple of analysis here. Why did he come the first time? He came the first time to provide for our salvation and to invite us to receive that gift of eternal life.

Why did he come the first time? He came to provide salvation. Why? He needed to die. No one else could die for my sins.

No angel could die. It took the precious blood of the Son of God. Jesus is the only one who could take human form and his blood would be of such value to God that when God said in the Old Testament, when I see the blood, I will what? There's only one blood that will pass over all your sins and my sins.

You can shed your blood and cry a river of tears. It means nothing to God in terms of forgiving any sin. No, no, God didn't say when I see your tears or when I see an animal.

It's when I see the blood and the blood of his Son. That's why he came. He came to provide salvation.

And then he came to call people. He would say, come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden. Follow me.

I'll give you rest. If you believe in me, though you are dead, you'll live. And if you believe in me, you'll never die.

Speaking of the resurrection life, the gift of eternal life, that's what Jesus went about doing. He provided salvation. And then he called people to salvation.

And he told the disciples, what's the last thing he told them? Go into all the world and preach the gospel. What's the good news? Do you all know the good news? You know, I did a pastor's conference in another country this year. And I asked people, this is a good question for you to analyze.

Somebody's had an accident and they're dying. And they have three minutes to live, 180 seconds. And they're not a Christian.

What do you tell them? What do you tell them to get them saved? What do you tell them that they could believe in that their soul could be saved like the thief on the cross? What would you tell them? It was amazing. Even the ministers who stood up, they started rambling. You know, God is on the throne.

That won't save anybody. God is on the throne. But that's not what you tell people if they've got three minutes to live.

You got to tell them the good news. What's the good news? That God so loved the world that he gave his son. That if you believe in him, your sins can be forgiven.

You can have a new beginning and you'll live forever. And you are a sinner, sir. You are a sinner, ma'am.

We've all sinned. We've all broken God's law. That's interesting.

What do you tell someone? He only got three minutes. You don't tell him join the Brooklyn Tabernacle. That won't help him.

He provided salvation and he called people to salvation. And he told people to go out and invite people to be saved. When he comes the second time, what's the reason? Why is he coming the second time? He's coming to complete our salvation.

What's not complete? Oh, our sins are gone. We're justified before God, but we're dealing with a lot of luggage that he's going to get rid of so that we can spend eternity with him. Those that have already died, already with the Lord who are Christians.

To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, but they don't have their resurrection bodies yet. That glorified body that's going to spend eternity? No, they're going to get it the same time we will if we're living when he comes. We'll be caught up to meet him in the air and we'll be changed in the twinkling of an eye.

Now listen, with that new resurrection body, we'll have no more sinful nature to deal with. No more temptations. No more devil.

No more devil. No more temptation. No more selfish tendencies.

How many have a troublesome little person inside of you that wants to break out from time to time? Lift your hand. Oh, I'm the only one, huh? Yeah. God's going to change all that.

He's going to wipe away every tear. He's going to complete the work that he's begun. It's like this.

We were saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved. It's all happening, past, present, tense, and future. We were saved when we put our faith in Christ.

We are being saved. He's changing us from glory to glory, but wait till you see the finished product. Oh my goodness.

How many are looking forward to that day? Come on. That's where the comfort comes in. Paul says, now I know a lot of people are troubling you, but guess what? You're enduring it, and you're holding your chin up

high, and you're keeping your faith in Jesus, and that's proof that you're the real thing.

And guess what? When he comes, he's going to take care of those who trouble you. He'll trouble them. How about that? You don't have to get back at anyone.

Jesus is going to settle all the accounts, and all the people are troubling Christians and mocking Christians, making fun of Christians, making fun of anyone who is a Christian. God's going to handle all of that. Only then will it happen.

No revival will do that. No miracle from heaven will do that. Paul says, you will be comforted when? When the Lord is revealed.

But the final comfort for all of us doesn't come on earth. The final comfort comes when the Lord says, come on home. You live for 70, 80 years.

Now you're going to live for billions and billions and billions and billions and billions of years. The reward is not fully ever understood here. That's the wrong thing with the prosperity and the wrong faith teaching.

They want to make it all here. It's not all here. If it's all here, it's a sad thing to be a Christian.

People getting killed for the Lord in Pakistan, people being persecuted, burning down churches in Egypt, people being martyred for Christ, underground church. I met people who had been locked up for 10 years in mainland China for their faith. That's the reward.

That's joy unspeakable, full of glory. Yeah, he'll bring you through all of that. But the real payoff is coming when Jesus comes.

We're living, look, we're living in the pause between the comma of when he came, baby died. And now we're living in this long period of time. And now, not long to him, because a thousand years is like a day.

And a day is like a thousand years. And then he's going to come again to complete what he's begun in all of us. So that I can spend eternity without a fallen nature and a temper and selfish tendencies and all of that.

Oh, can't you just wait for that? You talk about waiting for Christmas. The last thought of the Bible was this. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.

We're so materialistic in America and American Christianity has become so perverted in ways that a lot of American Christians, the thought of Jesus coming today is going to ruin your party. Oh, yes, it is. I had a friend who wrote a whole musical about the second coming of the Lord and the publisher in Nashville turned it down.

Why? Because the name of the musical was, behold, he cometh. And they said to him, no one wants to hear in church that Jesus is coming again at any moment. Don't you get it? I want to try out my new iPhone and my new whatever.

That's what people are into. But even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus. But I'd rather live waiting for the Lord to come any day than all caught up with this world.

And Jesus said over and over again, stay awake. Stay alert. Keep watch for no one knows.

My coming will be like a thief in the night. No thief in the night sends you a fax or an email and goes, hey, yo, yo, about two weeks from now, I'll be stopping by. I'm going to hold you up.

Have a lot of money in the house, please. And leave some cookies and milk out for me. I get hungry on the job sometimes.

No one does that. No one does that. Listen, it comes like that.

So he's coming suddenly and he's coming to complete what he began. But if you're looking for the payoff in this life, you'll be frustrated your whole life. Here we suffer.

But if we suffer with him, we will also reign with him. In what manner will he come? How did he come the first time? In a manger, humble, so poor that they didn't have a blanket. They had to take strips of cloth and wrap it around him.

His parents were so poor that when they dedicated him in Jerusalem and presented him to the Lord, instead of a real animal to offer, they offered the animal that Moses provided for the poverty-stricken people, some birds. You could bring some live birds and they'll give their life as part of the offering. Everybody who had any kind of money would bring a lamb or a goat, a real animal.

They brought birds. That's just where his parents were. That's who God picked for the parents of Jesus to be.

Born in a stinking manger. And nobody was impressed if you were a carpenter. Carpenter was a low-life job.

That's what Jesus came, humble, unnoticed. Imagine, people would be walking in Jerusalem or in Nazareth, in Galilee, and bump into this young guy, let's say 26, and bump into him and say, excuse me, and he would say, excuse me, I didn't mean to bump into you. And they were talking to God in the flesh and didn't know it.

Just think, God in the flesh was right there in front of them, just bumped into their shoulder and they didn't know it. Just think how blind we can become. How Jesus can be so close to us and we don't even know it.

He was born humble. He was born a non-entity. He was born a no one.

He came in in the still of the night. He came in unannounced to the world. Caesar was not notified.

King Herod was not notified of what happened that night. No, some shepherds, another low-life job. Humble, unnoticed, and then revealed to the public at 30 years old.

How's he coming the second time? Oh, he's coming with angels. He's coming with fire. He will be revealed with angels and fire.

Every knee will bow. Every tongue will confess. All the smart alecks who mock Christianity, they will kneel when he says it's time for them to kneel.

They will kneel. Before they're cast away into their judgment, they will kneel. But everyone will kneel.

God's gonna honor his son after what his son did on the cross for us. Every knee will bow. Every tongue will confess.

All his enemies are gonna just shudder in fear. But he's coming with great glory. He's coming in immense manifestation.

We don't know how it all works and how every eye will see him, but this will be no secret coming, no manger. Nobody's ever gonna touch him again and put a nail in his hand. He still has the nail prints.

In his resurrection body, there are still nail prints and there's a mark in his side. He still has that. So that in eternity, like seven billion years from now, he'll lift up his hand and we'll just see it and we'll start praising him again.

But no one's touching him when he comes again. A crown of thorns? Are you kidding? That's one time only. Nobody's putting a crown of thorns on him.

People are gonna run from him. His enemies are gonna run into the caves and say, rocks, fall on us and hide us from the wrath of the lamb. Because he's coming different.

His second coming is totally different than his first coming. It will not be hidden and secret. It's gonna become, it'll be the end of time.

It'll be the end of the earth. The earth will end. Peter says, everything is gonna be consumed by fire.

You think global warming is real or not real? There's a real global warming coming according to Peter. Not by water, it's gonna be all destroyed by fire. Your house, all your clothes, all your gadgets, all your TVs, everything you own is gonna be destroyed like this.

Look, like this. The earth, the elements in the earth, destroyed, gone in a second. God's gonna say in some way that only he knows, enough is enough, it's over.

How about people who don't know him? When he came the first time, he chased after sinners. He gave parables like the 90 and the nine, the one lost sheep. He talked about the shepherd going after the one lost sheep.

That sheep is wandering and the shepherd goes after the sheep like he's going after some of you. You know, you're in church today, but the truth is the Lord's on your case. I counsel enough people here and I learn what's going on in their life.

And as I said to a woman yesterday, don't you get it why you're here today? And you've been going off and on to church most of your life. Don't you know why you're here today and why you're crying and why the Holy Spirit is speaking to you? Because you're the one lost sheep that he's after because he loves you so much. And you're practicing things and doing things that hurt you, that hurt you.

Not only offend him, it's hurting you. It seems right, but it leads to destruction. And you're doing it.

And just like in Jesus's day, he would go after people and say, come and follow me. And they would say to him, get out of my face. I'm gonna live my life my way.

And for some of us, I don't mind going to church once in a while, especially around Christmas, but nobody's running my life. And then if you don't want anyone to run your life, you'll never have an experience with Jesus. Because he's not coming in to help anybody.

He's coming in to run the show. This is why so few people know his power in their lives. He only comes to run the show.

You think he died and rose again? He's the son of the living God. And he's gonna live in some position, little compartment that you and I put him in? Impossible. He's coming as, let me take over.

Haven't you messed up enough? Jim, haven't you wrecked and ruined your life enough? Give the reins to me and I'll show you how to live. I'll live through you. So he came the first time beseeching people, parables, the prodigal son, the one lost coin, the one lost sheep.

Oh, he went over Jerusalem. What did he do over Jerusalem? Anyone know? He wept over Jerusalem. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how many times I would have gathered you? Like a mother hen gathers her chicks and I would have comforted you and I would have protected you, but you didn't want to know about me.

And now you didn't know your day of visitation. And now it's too late. Jerusalem was gonna be destroyed in 70 AD, about 40 years after he died on the cross.

That's how he came the first time, providing a sacrifice for sinners and chasing them all over the place. Although I must admit, some people got so hard, he didn't even talk to them. King Herod, he never said a word to King Herod.

King Herod had killed John the Baptist. King Herod had all this light and he had rejected it. And in the presence of Jesus, Jesus never said even hello to him.

He just kept silent. How's he coming the second time? If you're not a Christian, you're not gonna be asking anybody anything. It's gonna come to judge the living and the dead.

It's gonna come to destroy and punish those who don't obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. Pastor Semble, I really didn't come to church on Christmas time to hear this message. What do you want me to do, lie to you? I'm asking you a question.

You want me to lie to you or you want me to tell you what the Bible says? Do you want a baby Jesus and then you wanna stop there? Or you just want a Jesus on the cross, loving everybody? Or do you wanna know the full Jesus? How many wanna know the full Jesus, right? The full Jesus is there. All of that is true. And we're living now in that big comma period, right? Where he's pleading with people.

He's pleading with people. Why do you go that way? What will you do in the end? Now he's coming to punish those who will not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. God's gonna say, what? I gave my son, he died for your sins and you didn't want him as Lord and savior of your life? Okay, time is up now.

There is that moment coming, brothers and sisters. That's not emotionalism. That's not legalism.

That's the word of God. We are gonna cut this Bible in 118 pieces if we're gonna take out all the promises of Jesus coming again. But do I want you and I to live in denial? What are we gonna live in, denial? We're gonna live like Jesus is never coming again? You wanna live like that? You wanna make believe like it's always gonna go on? This is one big party? It's not.

The same one who was born in a manger, the same one who died on the cross, he's coming again. He's gonna take us home. I'm gonna go home.

I was born on a hospital not 12 blocks from here. My first house that I remember as a baby was on South Portland Avenue right off of Fulton Street, a little tiny apartment above a liquor store sign. And then I moved to Parkside Avenue where I lived a long period of time.

Went through junior high school, grade school and all of that. That was my home. I know that turf, but that's not my home.

That's my home. I'm not from America. I'm from heaven.

I'm not from Trinidad, Tobago, Jamaica. I don't wanna hear about any of that. Why would you brag on a country if you're going to heaven? We don't wanna talk about a country.

Talk about heaven. That's where you're going. Everything else is gonna be destroyed.

There's that side to the story. So now what are we gonna do? Christmas is hard for some people. This Christmas is hard in a lot of ways for a lot of people.

If you're a Christian and you're hanging on to Jesus and you're trusting Him, and if you're going through a hard time right now in some way, you hang on. We're going home soon. Just hang on.

Just go day by day and trust Jesus because maybe before Christmas comes, this all will end. Now, there will be mockers who will say, yeah, but they've been preaching messages about the coming of the Lord for a long time, and I don't see Him coming. Oh, the Bible knew that you would have that thought and others would say that, but God's not slow.

He's patient. He's giving you and me one more day to get it right if it's not right because then when it's over, it's over. There's no erasers.

I'll tell you something that transformed my life. I've only had three, maybe four dreams, probably just three that came from the Lord. Don't talk about them much.

I haven't talked about this one in a long time, but I had a dream from the Lord. It's the best I know. I had a dream after I got married and I saw my first child in a dream.

Knew it was a girl. Woke up my wife, told her that, and little Chrissy came along, was exactly what I dreamed. Well, I was in Jamaica about 17, 18 years ago on a vacation.

Never been to Jamaica. On a vacation, we went. Someone helped us to go.

My wife and I were enjoying this nice place. I went to bed one night and I had a dream. The dream so unnerved me that I shot up when the dream ended in my bed.

My wife thought I had a heart attack and woke up and said, are you okay, are you okay? That's how that dream ended. And in the dream, I was in Brooklyn. I was walking down the street.

I could tell you the street. And I realized that my walking down the street was a symbol of my life and our lives, that we were all like going through something. And as I was walking on the street, suddenly a cloud started approaching me and I realized to keep walking straight, I had to go through this cloud.

But it was a nasty cloud, brothers and sisters, ladies and gentlemen. It's the nastiest cloud. It was purple.

It was brown. It was black. It had a terrible smell to it.

But I realized somehow I knew I have to walk through that. We have to walk through some clouds. If you're gonna follow Jesus, you gotta walk through some dark things.

If you're gonna follow Jesus, it doesn't always smell good. And I just knew I have to keep walking. So I'm walking and I'm walking.

And suddenly I came out of the cloud. It was night and the stars seemed like to be 10,000 stars in the sky. And there were apartment buildings like there are on the street that I was walking in Brooklyn.

And suddenly I saw the windows flying open. And I saw people, in fact, one person who comes to this church, her head come out. She started screaming and everyone was screaming.

These believers were screaming who happened to open their windows and they were saying, he's coming, he's coming. It's now, he's coming. And I just heard them get so loud and cheering and I didn't know what.

And suddenly all of us who were shouting and me walking, I was lifted up and I was moving like 10,000 miles a second going straight up vertically. In a matter of like two seconds, the earth looked like so insignificant. It was just like this little ball.

You know, when the Lord comes, this earth is not gonna look so important. And I'm being lifted up and they're all there and I hear everyone yelling and we're looking at each other. We're so happy.

And I realized we're being elevated. Is this the rapture? What is this? But I mean, my heart was pounding and I'm just like that. And suddenly I looked up, I got the courage to look up.

And then I saw this ball of glory, fire, presence, I don't know. I don't know, but we were all going there and we were being lifted up. I mean, we were moving, ladies and gentlemen.

We were moving. We're gonna move out of here one day and it's not gonna be a local train. This is the express we're going on.

We're gonna leave. And I was going up as we're getting closer and closer. I just saw this light, but now we're getting closer and this is a massive light.

This is like a humongous, ginormous cloud of what glory, light, presence, magnificence. And now my heart is pounding because I'm thinking, this is wonderful. We're all heading there, but I don't know if I can endure this.

What is in there? And as I'm approaching it, we're all getting closer and you're with me. Somehow it dawns on me, he's in there. He's in there.

He's either on the other side of that or he's in the middle of it. But that is just the magnificence of his presence. It's not even him.

It's just the glory. The Bible says, he's gonna come in great glory. What does glory look like? I'm not telling you, this is thus sayeth the Lord.

I'm telling you my dream. But I'm telling you, I thought I would die. In fact, as now we're approaching it and I'm realizing we have to go into that.

But it was like wonderful, but it would be, can I live through this? Do you understand what I'm saying? In other words, I know this is right and this is God, but this is so awesome. Can a human live through this? And just as I'm being pulled up, I woke up. Just woke up.

And you can ask my wife. She said, what happened? What happened? Did you have a heart attack? And I said, no, I had a dream. And I got up and I walked around the room, went outside the hotel room.

And for the next two days, you can ask her, I was like in a daze. And I'm not a melodramatic person. I'm not one having a dream every other 15 minutes.

But Jesus is coming again. For those of us who know him, we're going home. For those of us who are afraid of his coming, those of us who are involved in something, just think he's going to come and you're involved in something that's evil and that he died for.

Do you want that? Do you want to roll the dice on that one? I don't think so. And for those who have never been born again and don't want Christ to rule and reign over them, this is the full Christmas. I gave you the full Monty.

I gave you the full picture today. I didn't give you just the baby. I didn't even give you just the cross because that's not the full picture.

He's going to come again. Let's bow our heads. I'm asking the Lord just even for one, one person who will say, Pastor, that was for me.

I want to start Christmas week in a new relationship with Jesus Christ. I'm tired of running or I'm tired of being in a sleep. I'm tired of, oh, I'm so tired of the same old, same old.

I'm tired of coming to the Brooklyn Tabernacle. I need something more than that. I need Jesus big time in my life and not mañana, ahora, now, today.

Is there one of you I can pray for? And when he comes again, you're going to not be on the wrong side you're going to be on the right side. Anyone here not even sure if you have a scintilla of doubt whether you're ready for the coming of the Lord. Just come up here and get it right.

You don't have to climb a mountain. All you have to do is say, have mercy on me, Jesus, help me. Anyone here, just get out of your seat and walk right up here and I'll pray with you.

If you're the only one, you made my day. Come on down from the balcony. No passing emotional vibe.

No religious feeling. This is, we're going to do business now. He came born as a baby, born in a manger, died on a cross, rose again, went back to heaven and he's coming again.

And you're going to be waiting for him. You're going to go vertical with the rest of us. Every eye closed.

Please listen to me. Catholic church won't do it. Protestant church won't do it.

Your parents raising you, dedicating you won't make it. It won't, it doesn't cut it. You must be born again.

You got to be ready. You got to be full flight with Jesus. If you're not like that, get up out of your seat.

Humble yourself. You're going to let your pride keep you back from the beautiful blessing God has for you today. Ah, whoever humbles themselves, I will exalt, God says.

But whoever exalts themselves, I'll bring them down. Except you become like a little child it's easy for children to say, help me, help me, daddy, help me, papa. Except you become like a child, you can't enter the kingdom of heaven.

Come on, young men. Step right up here to the edge. Come on.

How old are you, son? 12, how old are you? Nine? I'm glad you came. You can be nine. You can be 12, 29, 49, 69, 89.

Anybody want to come? Just come, get out of your seat. You're not joining the church. I don't want your money.

I want to be able to pray over you and say, God, save this soul. Get this life in order now, Jesus. Anybody else want to come? You come.

Come on, congregation, help me. We're going to pray now. You pray out loud with my friends.

Folks in the front, you repeat after me. And try to, even though it's my words, try to pray from your heart, okay? Dear God. Thank you for your love.

Thank you for sending your son. Jesus Christ. Born in a manger.

But he died on a cross. And he died for me. I believe that with my heart.

His blood was shed for me. Because I am a sinner. I've made a lot of mistakes.

And I ask you to forgive me. And I ask you to forgive me, God. I'm going to talk straight to you, God.

I need a savior. I need someone to make me a new person. To think differently.

A new heart. A new mind. I believe in my heart.

And I confess with my mouth that Jesus is Lord. You brought me here today. I heard your word.

It was for me. When you come again, I'm going to be ready. Washed in the blood.

Forgiven of my sins. A born-again Christian. All because of your mercy.

Thank you for your love. I love you, God. I praise you, God.

I worship you, God. And I look forward to what you're going to do. In my life.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Can the whole church put their hand together? Come on, everybody clap your hands with me.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24060.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jim-cymbala/the-christmas-calendar/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net