

Why Did They Come? Why Did He Come?

We have all come here this morning for various reasons, and whatever the case we are very glad all of you have come.

- Perhaps some of you have come out of habit, this is your church, and this is what you do on Sundays.
- Perhaps you come because you know you need the church and the fellowship and your great desire is to have your soul fed and refreshed by worship and the Word, you are hungry and thirsting for what you can't have alone
- Perhaps you enjoy the music and the Christmas spirit this time of year and have come for the Cantata.
- Perhaps some of you came because of a family member or friend at this church who invited you, perhaps you would not describe yourself as a "church person" but you do come on special occasions, or perhaps you're new to our church
- Perhaps you are a visitor here who came not because you know someone here but for other reasons ...
- Whatever prompted you to come, ultimately you are here by divine appointment, and we are truly glad to be with you on this day and we want to extend a special welcome to you and the love of Christ and the message of Christ as to why *He* came. That's my privilege now as we come to the Word

We have heard the Scriptures and beautiful music tell of those in who came to be a part of the original Christmas scene and story, that old, old story, the greatest story ever. There are also various reasons why people came to Christ then. Why did they come?

- Mary and Joseph came to Bethlehem because a decree went out by Caesar Augustus that all must return to their home town for a census (normally you wouldn't make a trip like that when nine months pregnant, but this was God's Providence)
- Mary and Joseph came to a stable, maybe more a cave than a barn, and Jesus came to be born there because there was no room for them in the inn (also God's fitting Providence)
- Angels came to shepherds in the field that night to give glory to God and to announce the Savior had been born
- The shepherds came to the manger to rejoice and praise Him
- Later, not that same night, but some time later when Mary and Joseph were in a house, wise men arrive from the East (the text doesn't actually say how many). Why did they come? They said *we saw His star and we have come to worship him.*

- Herod wanted to come as well, but for different reasons. He said to the men, “when you have found him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship him.” His motive was actually malicious rather than reverential. Not everyone came looking for Christ sincerely or for the right reasons.
- The soldiers came to Bethlehem ? Why did they come looking for Christ? Not to truly worship him, but because Herod wanted any rival Kings dead, so they killed all babies!
- During Christ’s life, people came to Him for various reasons. Some came to see the miracles, some came seeking signs.
- Many wanted physical healing. Some wanted free food that He was known for, feeding 4,000 one time, 5,000 another time
- Some came to Jesus hoping He would help them win an argument with a friend or to agree with their view.
- Many came to Jesus to debate Him or discredit Him. Judas came to Jesus in the garden that one night to betray Him.
- Many came to listen to Him, His amazing teaching, and they followed Him around in the crowd, but when Jesus started making personal demands for them to follow Him or repent of their personal sins ... they walked away from Christ.
- Some came asking the right question “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” but when Jesus didn’t give one rich young ruler the right answer that he wanted to hear, but He challenged him to compare his life to God’s law (to recognize his sin) and to be willing to give up everything to follow Christ ... he left
- Many came for awhile, but were never truly saved. Many even said the words “Lord, Lord,” but the Lord Jesus says of them that He never truly knew them in a saving relationship way.

There are a number of reasons why people came to Christ, and there are a lot of reasons today why people might want to be associated with Christ, not all of them good or right reasons.

- Some might view Jesus as some sort of celestial Santa Claus, who knows if we’ve been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake (hopefully we’ll do more good than bad before he comes to town). The problem is sin must be punished, none of us are good enough, our best deeds are filthy to God, and by His standard no one is truly good.
- Some preachers would teach that Jesus came to make us healthy, wealthy, and wise. Or others would phrase it differently, that Jesus came to give us purpose and make us feel fulfilled and to boost our self-image and relationships.

- In N.T. times, many Jews thought Jesus came to be a revolutionary leader Messiah who would wipe out their enemies and remove all problems and inconveniences. There is a basis in the O.T. for believing the Christ would wipe out His enemies (and He will someday), but they didn't realize their greatest enemy was in their own heart, their own sin is what needs to be dealt with before.
- Today many say "Jesus came to teach us good ethics and morals and how to be better." But it goes much deeper ...
- Others might say "Jesus came to be a good example and to inspire us." (result or reason?) *Why did Jesus say He came?*

When we look at the actual words of Christ, our Lord often had to correct and clarify ideas of why He came (TURN TO MARK 1):

- "I did not come to bring peace, but division" (peace will not be accomplished till 2nd coming; still much conflict till then)
- "The Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives"
- "Do not think I came to abolish the Law and Prophets"
- "I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me" (God the Father)
- "I have not even come of my own initiative; He sent me"

I went through every statement of Christ in the gospels with the word "come" and "came" and there are not only reasons why He did not come, but there is more than one reason He says He did:

- "I came that they [his sheep / believers] might have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10)
- How is eternal life possible? Jesus said He "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45, the many refers to believers, the truly ransomed)
- "I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me will not remain in darkness ... I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:46-47, context is believers of the world and His 1st coming; but there is a 2nd coming: He *will* come again to judge the world's unbelief later)
- Jesus speaks of His death in these terms and that He ultimately came to glorify God by His death. He came to die. He was born so He could die for God. Jesus said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified ... Now, my soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father glorify Your name" (12:23, 27-28)

- In His high priestly prayer before He goes to the cross, Jesus says “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your son, that the Son may glorify You ... I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given me to do. Now Father, glorify Me together with Yourself ... now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves” (17:1-4, 13)

As the angels proclaimed in that field so many years ago, “Glory to God in the highest” reaches its culmination when Christ comes, and there is good news of great joy for us as God is most glorified in His Son. Christ glorified God at the cross, that was the method for which He came – what was the message He proclaimed?

I want to just look with you briefly in our closing minutes at the gospel according to Mark, how Mark speaks of the good news and how Christ Himself speaks of His main message and why He came

Mark 1:1-4 (NASB95) ¹ **The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.** ² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; ³ THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘**MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.**’ ” ⁴ John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of **repentance for the forgiveness of sins.**

The way the road must be paved for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords is by the message of repentance. His Highness will not come before those who do not recognize their lowliness before Him, their unworthiness, their sins that fall short of God’s glory.

Mark 1:14-28 (NASB95) ¹⁴ Now after John had been taken into custody, **Jesus came** into Galilee, **preaching the gospel of God,** ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent and believe in the gospel.**” ¹⁶ As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, “**Follow Me,** and I will make you become fishers of men.” ¹⁸ **Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.** ¹⁹ Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. ²⁰ Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him. ²¹ They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and **began to teach.** ²² They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, ²⁴ saying, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? **Have You come to destroy us?** I know who You are—the Holy One of God!”

The demons had their own idea as to why Jesus came, though their immediate destruction was not why He came primarily this time, although there is an appointed judgment day – even demons acknowledge that, and only a foolish human says in his heart there is no God or no judgment of God

²⁵ And Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” ²⁶ Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. ²⁷ They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, “What is this? A **new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.**”

When Jesus commands, it is not optional to obey. He is the LORD and when He says “Follow me,” it is not a suggestion. The King of the Universe never gives suggestions that we are free to do with as we please – this call “Follow me” is a divine command with divine authority. I’ve read that Jesus repeated this command more than any other command, “Follow me.” The text says Jesus came preaching the gospel of God, which is an imperative “Repent and believe in the gospel.” This is not an option, it’s an obligation.

Repent *and* believe (v. 15) – trust in Christ *and* turn from your sins to God’s grace as your only hope, change your heart, turn from your sins to follow Him instead with all your heart, trust in Jesus as Lord and Master of your life. It’s all about Him now. Jesus came to preach this gospel of repentance and following Him (Acts 17:30)

³⁸ He said to them, “Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, **so that I may preach** there also; for **that is what I came for.**” ³⁹ And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, **preaching** and casting out the demons. Mark 2:1-2 (NASB95) ¹ **When He had come** back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and **He was speaking the word to them.**

Mark 2:13-17 (NASB95) ¹³ And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and **He was teaching them.** ¹⁴ As He passed by, He saw Levi the *son* of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and **He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he got up and followed Him.** ¹⁵ And it happened that He was reclining *at the table* in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. ¹⁶ When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, “Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹⁷ And hearing *this*, Jesus said to them, “*It is* not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; **I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.**”

In the parallel in Luke's gospel, it adds that Jesus said "I came to call sinners to repentance." This is the consistent message of our Lord. Repent is the first words we see Jesus declare in the N.T. (Mt 4, cf. Acts 2:38, 3:19, 17:30). And if you think you are healthy spiritually and don't need a physician, because you're a good person or religious person, you will miss the call of Christ entirely.

Jesus said He did not come to call righteous (self-righteous, people who think they've got it together). His call and His salvation is for sinners to repent, those who know they are sinners and in need.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost, those who know they are lost. Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me ... was lost ... blind (those who know they are, i.e., *amazing* grace)

As I've said before, Jesus is not Santa Claus, He's not just a Mr. Fix It who exists for you as a super-therapist, He didn't come to boost our self-esteem, or meet all our psychological needs or wishes, He didn't come to make us healthy and wealthy. He came to save those who recognize their utter sinfulness and hopelessness and who in humble repentant faith are trusting 100% in Jesus Christ ALONE as their Lord and Savior. It is only by grace, not grace plus what we do, grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, plus nothing, minus nothing. The only works that please God are the works of Christ in His life, death, and resurrection.

Jesus came to earth to preach, to proclaim to sinners that they need to repent and follow Him. And He also came to provide the provision for salvation in His life and death and resurrection, primarily for God's glory, but secondarily for our good and everlasting joy in Christ. Jesus didn't just come to live among us and be a good example; He came for the purpose of redemption, to seek and save the lost (who recognize their lost condition) and give His life a ransom for many who would repent and believe. And you have to recognize you're sinners in need of repentance.

Jesus is still calling sinners today with His words "Follow me." He said it in many ways in the gospel (deny yourself, count the cost, take up your cross, etc.). Jesus came to glorify God by living for and dying for sinners and calling sinners to repentance and a life of following Him. That's why He came, to seek and save the lost like you and me by His amazing grace, how sweet that sound!

If you have not already come to worship Christ as the wise men did, I pray you will do so today. If Jesus is saying to you “follow me,” don’t put it off like, don’t postpone, don’t pretend this message is not for you and that you’re not feeling the convicting power of God right now in your heart. The only appropriate response is like the ones we read in Mark’s gospel, who immediately followed Jesus, left it all, abandoned it all, for the sake of the call. When Christ commands to repent and follow Him, there can be no hesitation, no reservations, no negotiation, no deliberation, no equivocation. You’re either for Him or against Him, no decision today is a decision against Him.

As Steve Lawson said so well, you “must love Him more than anyone or anything else in life. There can be no competing affections. There can be no competing allegiances. Jesus Christ must be number one in your life or you cannot get in line and follow after Christ.”

I pray if you have never truly repented and come to Christ in humble faith begging for His grace, that you come today.

If He is number one in your life, you can experience the joy to the world that was sung 2,000 years ago, that the Lord has come, let earth (and your heart) receive the King. But He will only come as Savior if we let every heart prepare Him room, and as we do all heaven and nature will sing.