



Pastor David's Weekly Devotional

Odd. Bizarre. Surprising. Perplexing. Disconcerting. Disheartening. I must admit, it is difficult for me to find the right word. Frankly, the perfect word may not exist or, more likely, it may just be one of the countless words missing from my limited English vocabulary. In either case, I am struggling to find the right word to describe what I saw and heard. Years ago, while in China adopting our daughter Elizabeth, my family and I were staying in Guangzhou. This very large city, found in the southern part of China, is home to millions of people. It is a beautiful city with evidence of both wealth and poverty everywhere. Thus, Guangzhou is anything but a rural city, located in some remote countryside of China. It is a vast metropolis with skyscrapers and smog as far as the eye can see.

So this is where my elusive word comes in to play. Perhaps the best word to use is a simple word like unexpected. For as I wandered through this Provincial Capital, I certainly did not expect to see and hear the sights and sounds of Christmas. As I walked around this massive city, I saw signs that read "Merry Christmas" instead of "Merry X-mas", "Seasons Greetings" or "Happy Holidays." I heard songs declaring the birth of Jesus Christ rather than a reindeer's red nose or Santa's jello-like mid-section (although we heard those too). I also saw depictions of the baby Jesus in a manger, as opposed to Santa in his workshop. This was unexpected.

As I write this, I realize many would contend that this is nothing more than a political front or religious façade strategically placed for tourists to see. Others are quick to declare that this is evidence of a growing influence of Christianity on Chinese culture. And still others would undoubtedly say that both are true. But my intended aim is not a political target. Nor am I attempting to bolster up religious sentiment or stir-up holiday zeal. My purpose for writing this is much grander and more important.

For as nice as it is to see Christmas decorations that highlight Jesus Christ and hear Christmas songs that declare the birth of our Lord, I was reminded yet again that the heart of a true Christmas celebration is not found in any Christmas decoration or song. The true heart of Christmas is found in the heart of the one who truly receives and reveres Jesus Christ as the Savior sent from God. It's fully embracing the miraculous birth of the Son of God. This was the divine prophesy given to the Virgin Mary by the angel who said to her, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God*" (Lk.1:35). This was also the divine message given to Joseph when an angel said to him, "*[Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins*" (Matt.1:21). And this was the divine proclamation given to the shepherds by the angel who said, "*Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord*" (Lk.2:11).

Allow me to re-phrase my point into a personalized question: What makes it Christmas for you? Is it snow on the ground, or the lights up on the house? Is it the first drink of eggnog, or the last drink of Sparkling Cider? Is it opening your most wanted gift, or opening a lot of gifts? Is it Christmas decorations, food and traditions? Or, is it the recognition of and rejoicing in the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ – the one and only Son of God and one and only Savior of the world? Oftentimes, if we are not careful, Christ can be edged out of our Christmas celebration. Let me encourage you this Christmas to take time to read through the Christmas story – the real Christmas story from the Bible (see Matthew 1:18-2:15; Luke 2:1-21) – and make this Christmas all about Christ!

Together in and for Christ,
Pastor David

Scripture Readings for the week (Monday – Sunday ~ Week #52):

Deuteronomy 32-34; Esther 6-10; Psalm 149-150; Song 7-8; Revelation 18-22; Acts 27-28; Jude

Recommended Reading:

"Treasuring God in our Traditions" by Noel Piper

Calendar of
Events:

December 25

Office's Closed

December 28-31

High School Winter

Camp

January 1

Office's Closed

January 3

The Sanctuary Play

Group

January 12

Men's Breakfast

Looking Ahead....

January 28, 6:00pm

Annual Business

Meeting

For prayer requests,
email Amy Woodruff
at prayer@sbcnb.org
or call 541-404-0547

We're on the Web!

See us at:

sbcnb.org

Growth & Study.....

Men's Group Studies

Mondays ~

6:30pm "On the Christian Life" by John Calvin
w/Jeff Etzel

Wednesdays ~

6:30-7:30am "The Christian Walk"
w/Pastor David

8:15-9:30pm "Zechariah"
w/Pastor Josh

Thursdays ~

6:30-7:30am "Let Us Pray"
w/Pastor Tim

Fridays ~

6:30-7:30am "The Murder of Jesus"
Begins January 12th
w/Pastor David

Adult Group Studies

Sundays ~

6:30-7:30pm "The Sermon on the Mount"
At the Woodruff's Home (541-756-3311)

Young Adults

Thursdays ~

7:00-9:00pm At Skyline
w/Pastor Tim 541-756-3311

Women's Group Studies

Mondays ~

6:30pm "Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians"
w/Renee Middleton (541-297-2500)

Tuesdays ~

6:30-7:30am "The Sermon on the Mount"
w/Loy Huntzinger (360-607-0022)

8:30am "Isaiah, the Lord Saves"
w/Beth Wallstrom (541-404-0112)

9:00am "Graceful Living"

w/Lois-Elaine Rencehausen (541-267-3106)

7:00-8:15pm "Romans"

w/Barb Young (541-404-6242)

Wednesdays ~

9:00-10:30am "Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians"
w/Amy Woodruff (541-404-0547)

10:00am "A Woman of Wisdom, Proverbs"
w/Jeanette Murphy (541-266-7575)

6:30-8:00pm "Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians"
w/Amy Woodruff (541-404-0547)

Connect & Encourage.....

High School Winter Camp ~ December 28th to 31st

The "Snow Jam" High School Winter Camp will be December 28, 2017 to December 31, 2017 at the Big Lake Youth Camp in Sisters, Oregon. The cost is \$95 and the last day to register is December 26th. Transportation to and from Skyline is provided. You can find a registration form on line at sbcnb.org or outside Pastor Josh's office.

Church Directory ~ It's time again to update our church directory. If you have any changes or if you'd like to be added or removed, please email us by December 27th at: office@sbcnb.org.

"The Sanctuary" Play & Fellowship Time ~ January 3rd, 9:00am

Moms & little ones are invited to come enjoy a time of fellowship and play in the Sanctuary on the first Wednesday of every month from 9:00am to 11:30am. Everyone is welcome with little ones from birth to age 5! Contact Anna Kintigh with questions 541-914-8013.

Men's Breakfast ~ January 12th, 8:30am

Walking in the truth. Men, that is what we do as we follow Christ in our marriages, with our children, in our jobs, etc. That is our life. Join us at 8:30am, as we continue to learn together to walk in the truth!

Annual Business Meeting ~ January 28th, 6pm

Please email your annual commission report to office@sbcnb.org by January 12th for it to be included in the 2017 annual report. Contact the church office for more information.

Children's Ministries.....

AWANA – The calendar and registration are available online at www.sbcnb.org. Book time listeners and leaders still needed. We can't wait to spend this year growing in the Lord with your kid(s).



Youth Ministries.....

Youth Group ~

High School youth group ~ Sunday nights 6 to 8pm.

Junior High youth group ~ Wednesday nights 6:30 to 8pm.

High School Winter Retreat ~ December 28 to 31, 2017

Serve.....

Church Kitchen Supply Shopper Needed ~ We are looking for a volunteer to order & re-stock our kitchen with supplies. This would include checking the supply levels once a month and before special events, and re-ordering as necessary and within the limits of the church budget. Please contact Pastor Tim or the church office for more details.

The Church Elders for 2018 are:

Jim Carr
Rocky Cummings
Jeff Etzel
Dave Foord
Jim Harter
Roger Langlie
Jeff Murphy