

The present of a nativity set

I don't know what presents you got this morning or what you'll get this afternoon. I hope they are appropriate to who you are.

We got a present a few years ago. It's a nativity set, from Marianne's Uncle and Aunt. It comes out every year now, although this year we struggled to find it and locate where we had put it away. But it's out now, looks great and I love the whole nativity set concept. It's a great present because each time you look at it you remember - Yep I remember its Christmas time, I remember what Christmas is.

A Visual reminder of what happened on Christmas day.

There are lots of traditions around the nativity set.

Firstly, it was really a play. People portrayed the characters said the words from scripture and it was a physical reenactment of the events.

2ndly, Then people made little models to commemorate the event. Some fathers would make a new one each year with each one given to a child of the family and when all the children had been done they would make one for a poor person.

Then they became more elaborate. Some cast in iron, silver, bronze and gold.

I had the pleasure about 20 years ago to see one in Bungendore that was being carved. It was lifesize. Funny I thought Joseph would have been taller! The carver was in the process of making a nativity for some rich person from Canberra who wanted to put it in his garden for Christmas.

Then this year, we got a nativity set from our Carols In service on the first Sunday night of this month. {Phil Martin made them. They are cool. Look at it. Simple, to the point tells the story.

Great presents.

Thirdly, another aspect of the nativity story is that Christmas trees had 25 nativity decorations on them and much like a Advent Calendar, you took a decoration off and placed it at the foot of the tree to make the nativity scene. I've never done this but it sounds great. It also gets the tree ready to go out the door on boxing day.

But why these remembering tools? Why?

A visible reminder of Jesus birth.

2 Timothy 2:8-10 (NIV2011)

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel,
⁹ for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained.

¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

Interesting it tells us to remember Jesus resurrection. Isn't Christmas that important? Although it is kind of mentioned in the aspect of "descended from David. (Census and also Matthew 1 and it's genealogical listings.)

Well yes, when put into the perspective that Jesus was born to do God's task of getting people back to God. Remembering Christmas is useless if we don't remember the cross and the the tomb. If we don't remember why Jesus came and that was to live, die and rise again to affect our salvation. Jesus did all that to deal with our issues before God.

Christmas is part of the remembering process.

So is Easter

So is what we call communion

So is baptism.

Remember who Jesus is, what Jesus did and what that means to us.

Romans 4:8 (NIV2011)

⁸ Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them."

The Christmas memory is about prompting our memory towards the Easter memory and that allows us to remember what Jesus has done for us.

Interestingly, the birth is rarely mentioned, but the death and resurrection are major subjects in the new Testament. Look at this

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (NIV2011)

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.

⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,

⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

What's of first importance?

Christ died to deal with our sins.

Christmas, well it's part of the memory package, but Jesus death is what it leads to.

So where does this leave us this Christmas?

Remembering Jesus but deliberately remembering what Jesus was all about.

Getting people (that's us) back to God.

What will we do with our nativity scenes this year. Leave them out longer, leave them out till Easter (Another tradition) or leave them out all year.

I don't know, but we need to remember Jesus all year.