



Sunday, December 20, 2009: Christmas Laughter

Scripture: Genesis 18:1, 9-15; Luke 1:26-45; 22:63-65

Speaker: Scott Masson

Sermon Notes:

1. Jesus was born in desperate circumstances, and shortly afterward the powers of the state sought to take His life.
2. In Luke 22 the soldiers mocked, ridiculed and killed Jesus.
3. Jesus was abandoned by His friends and cursed by God.
4. This is our King, Jesus, who brought life and victory out of His death and suffering.
5. Sarah, Mary, and Elizabeth all laughed. The soldiers also laughed.
6. The mothers laughed, incredulous at God's *grace* in bringing life to the barren (in Mary's case to a virgin); the soldiers laughed out of contempt for God.
7. Sin was defined by Luther as being 'curved in upon ourselves' rather than being oriented toward God.
8. Other religions teach that we must achieve conformity to a moral code if we are to be accepted by God.
9. Christianity teaches that because of what Jesus did, we are accepted by God, and so we obey Him out of *gratitude* - not to earn His acceptance.
10. The problem isn't that our hearts are too small (like the Grinch's), it's that they are infected. We need a heart transplant, not a cardio workout (see Matt. 15:18-20).
11. The Hebrew word for 'heart' (lev) does not refer to the organ in our chests, but to the thoughts, which we would attribute to the mind, as well as to the emotions.
12. Even "climate change" is a religious worldview, demanding allegiance and labeling outsiders "skeptics."
13. Jesus solves the sin problem from the inside-out by cleansing our hearts, our essential thoughts, desires, wills.
14. God condemns the kind of religion that thinks self-righteousness can earn us acceptance with Him. Its 'heart' is still unchanged.
15. We need to be saved from our own self-righteousness, whatever form it takes.
16. Although they claim to avoid being judgmental, the agnostics' claim that it's impossible to know anything about God hypocritically places them in judgment on believers.
17. North American individualism claims to worship nothing, but actually worships personal freedom.
18. If we can't achieve our ambitions we are devastated because we have identified ourselves and built our identity upon them.
19. If you've made your role in your family your god, you'll be devastated if your family doesn't turn out the way you want.
20. If you believe support of the State is your highest good, you'll support crushing those deemed enemies of the state.
21. If you lose the god you've created, either through your own failure or that of others, you'll lose your life purpose.
22. Only the life story of Jesus testifies that we're so sinful that we needed to be saved from outside ourselves.
23. Mary laughed as one who rejoiced in God's gift of Salvation. The soldiers laughed too, mocking the One who made them.

Application Questions:

1. Is Christmas just about having a good heart and doing good things?
2. How does the way that Jesus solves our sin problem differ essentially from the way of salvation in other religions?
3. Explain the hypocrisy involved in agnosticism, i.e, in claiming that it's impossible to know if God exists.
4. How has Individualism shaped the human impulse to worship in our culture?
5. Is your false god the good of your family?
6. Is your god the good of your country?
7. Is your god your spiritual performance, or your morality?
8. What is revealed about my heart if I criticize others and secretly feel disturbed about my own impure thoughts?
9. How am I responding to Jesus, knowing that I can never achieve self-righteousness acceptable to God?
10. What sort of laughter will I have this Christmas?