

Good News Told Four Ways



The Stories of Christmas

Mark 1:1-4

I don't know if you're like me, but I'm really, really excited that December is here. The countdown to Christmas is on! I'm the guy who loves Christmas lights and Christmas decorations. I countdown to when Thanksgiving is over, I love going into the attic, I love getting all the Christmas lights, and I love getting a ladder and climbing on the roof of my house and trying to throw boys in different places to get different lights because I love the whole thought of Christmas! I want everyone who drives down Redbud Road to see, just in case you missed it somehow, that Christmas is coming! All over my house, everyone is like, "Christmas is here!" I'm just that kind of a guy. In talking to my buddies and other people, I've realized not everyone is like me, not everyone loves the decorations, going to the attic, or filling the house with decorations or putting lights on the tree. I've usually found two different categories of people. There are those who love Christmas decorating, and those who we will just say do not like Christmas decorating. I haven't found the in between group that can just take it or leave it. It is usually either you love it or you despise it. You're either grumpy or cheerful when it comes to putting Christmas decorations up. So I just want to do a little poll. I want

to just see which group you categorize yourself in. are you the one who loves to put up Christmas decorations? You are counting down the moments until you can get into the attic and get the lights out, or are you the other person, who when your spouse or friends, or you know it's just that time, "Oh, I've got to do this. I will, but I don't like it." Or you just refuse to, "I'm not even putting things out because I just don't like it at all." If you're like me, the first group, you love putting up Christmas lights and putting out decorations, very proudly go ahead and raise your hands. Yes, alright...those are my people. Now, for the rest of you, we're going to have a little shameful confession moment. This does not mean you don't like the birth of Jesus, ok. You're not confessing that you don't like Christmas; you're just saying I can do without all the decorations and hoopla; let's just have the day of celebrating and get on with it. If that's you, shamefully raise your hand if you're the person who doesn't like Christmas decorations. I see a lot of nudging, wives to husbands. Usually that's the case; there are people who love it and people who don't like it very much, but I'm the guy who just loves it because I want everyone to just see and know that Christmas is coming.

We're in a series called The Stories of Christmas. We're actually telling the Christmas story four different ways using the four different gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It's kind of interesting because they all tell the Christmas story a little bit different. They all agree that God becoming a man changed everything. They're all on the same page there, but they tell the Christmas story a little bit different. We're going to start out with a guy named Mark this morning and we're going to see how he tells the Christmas story. It's going to be a little bit awkward because Mark is not like me; he's not a Christmas lights guy. He doesn't put up his tree and he doesn't decorate for the holidays. In fact, Mark actually skips Christmas. He doesn't even mention it. So today, we're going to start the Christmas story from a guy who doesn't tell it, from a guy who skips it, a guy who just says I'm not going to talk about the manger, the shepherds, the angels, Mary, Joseph, none of that. We're just going to go straight to full-grown Jesus and take off running. Mark is a guy who skipped all the decorations, he didn't put out Christmas lights; instead, what Mark is doing is to introduce Jesus and run as fast as he can to the cross because Mark wants us to

know that it's not just a manger scene, but the manger scene was ultimately about a cross. Mark doesn't want us to miss that. He wants to make sure our eyes are on the cross, so he speedily gets to the cross in his gospel. But what Mark does in the very beginning of his gospel telling is to footnote a guy named Isaiah, a man after my own heart, a guy who loves some Christmas decorations, a guy who over and over again, all throughout the book of Isaiah, tells us all about the coming of Christmas. He decorates his house and his tree, he puts up the lights, and he wants everybody to know that Christmas; it's coming. If you go by Isaiah's street, his light is lit up even though Mark's is not, Isaiah's is.

So, how do we put these two things together and make sense of what we're going to try to get to this morning, because I think there's a little bit of a tension? The tension is those of us who don't like Christmas lights and decorations. I think the reason you don't like them is because you might feel the story of Christmas has been hijacked a little bit. All the Christmas movies, when you go into Wal-Mart, when you go into the mall, when you hear all of the black Friday stuff, it doesn't seem to be about Jesus; it seems to all be about other stuff. You feel like the story has been hijacked, so for you, I want to remember the bigger grander story of Christmas and remind you that what all those stories should point to is ultimately the coming of Christ. For those who are like me and love the Christmas decorations, we have a tension too because I think sometimes we can get so focused on the manger that we make the Christmas story too small and we don't realize that the Christmas story is actually a lot longer than what we tell. What we do is concentrate so much on the manger that we forget to tell others and remind ourselves that the manger is not just about a baby; the manger is about an empty tomb and a cross. For those of us love to decorate, Mark is going to say great job, but don't forget the cross. Talk about the manger, but take them straight to the cross. Isaiah is going to say hey, don't forget the manger. So we are going to put both these together, Isaiah and Mark, and here's what I want you to be. I want you to be a crazy light person. That's what I want for us. As a church, this month, I want us to be known as the crazy light people. You've got the neighbor, right, or you are the neighbor. They've got the blow ups in the front yard you can't miss...Christmas is here. It's going to last probably through

Valentine's Day, I don't know, but it's out there. I want that to be us. I want us to be the crazy light people, but I don't want us to stop at a manger. I want us to be the crazy light people who illuminate the cross. That's our goal as our church this Christmas season that we be the crazy light people who don't stop at a manger. No, we tell about the manger, but ultimately the light we shine, the generosity, kindness, the goodness, the life we live, the attitude we have, let our light shine so that ultimately as we're the crazy light people, we illuminate the cross that has saved us and the cross that we live through. If you have your bibles, we're going to go to Mark chapter 1. We are going to read how Mark introduces the Christmas story by simply skipping it.

Scripture

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

"Behold, I send my messenger before your face,

who will prepare your way,

the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord,

make his paths straight,"

John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."

(Prayer)

Father, I pray this morning You would help us to see both Isaiah and Mark. In seeing both of these men, we would be the crazy light people who ultimately illuminate the cross. We pray this in Jesus good name, amen.

We see in the very beginning of Mark's gospel, Mark starts out, "In the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." He starts off saying I'm telling a story, here's the beginning of the story. All stories start

with a beginning and Mark's starts here, but he doesn't start with a manger; he goes straight to Jesus Christ. Now, Christ is not the last name of Jesus. Jesus last name was not Christ, Christ is a title given to Jesus. Christ actually means the Messiah, the Anointed One, the coming King. It was talked about all throughout the Old Testament. There was a Christ coming, a Messiah coming, and what Mark opens up his gospel and says the Christ, the Anointed One, the coming King is here. His name is Jesus. Not only is the King here and His name is Jesus, but the King is actually also God's Son. He explodes the good news. Here's the good news: the King has come and the King is God's Son. That's Mark's very, very beginning. But then notice what Mark does in the next verse. He doesn't just say this story happened to be out of thin air. No, it was how Isaiah wrote about. He says as it was written in the prophet Isaiah. He then quotes Isaiah chapter 40 that talks about how when the Christ comes, there will be one coming before Him coming out of the wilderness, crying that the crooked paths are going to be made straight. Mark says that person has come. That forerunner has come; it was John, and what John did was proclaim that behind me comes the Messiah, behind me comes the King, and you guys had better get ready. What is Mark doing? He's tying Christmas, tying Jesus, tying the story to the completion of the older testament that began in the garden when Adam and Eve sinned. There's been this unfolding story that a rescuer is coming like the promise we read around the candles. There's a promised One coming. All throughout the older testament, we get this picture of a promised One is coming; a Messiah is coming. Israel get ready, your Savior is coming. Then Mark enters the scene and says the promised One is here. He has come. Your King is here and His name is Jesus. What Mark does in his gospel is say I want to tell you here is the completion of the story. All of God's promises in the older testament have come true in Jesus, and now what Mark does is to go straight to the cross. He runs as fast as he can to get to the cross because the cross is what matters so dearly to us because there is a big problem between us and God. We are in our sins. We are unholy, and God is holy, holy, holy, so we can't be with God. So how is a holy God going to be with unholy people? The answer is the cross if Jesus Christ. That's why Mark rushes us there as quick as he can. As he throws his footnote about

Isaiah, he says I don't want you to miss Christmas; I'm just not going to talk about it. What we're going to do since he brought up Isaiah is to use Isaiah as our crazy light person. We're going to go back to Isaiah's book and chase down some of the things Isaiah said so that we know when we get to this cross, who the person on the cross is, and what it truly means for us.

We start out in Isaiah's book in chapter 7 first and see the promise of Christmas. Isaiah 7:14 is a very familiar Scripture text that says, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." That is one of those famous Christmas verses, so Isaiah is putting out the first Christmas light. He is saying hey Israel. They were in exile, things weren't going good, they weren't obeying God like they should, they weren't experiencing the life God intended them to experience, and so Isaiah says there is One coming. There's a sign, I want you to pay attention, watch for this sign. Here's the sign, a virgin is going to have a baby son. As you know, that's an impossible thing. Virgins don't give birth to babies, yet alone baby boys. That doesn't happen; that's an impossibility. So what Isaiah says is you are going to look for this sign, this impossible thing is going to happen.

Then of course, we see the other gospel writers are going to go into great detail about this is the scene we see with Mary, the virgin who gives birth to Jesus, the incarnation, that God becomes a man, that God is His Father, Joseph is not. We see that the Son of God takes on flesh and born into our human existence through the virgin birth of Mary. What can we say about the baby Mary is holding in her hands? We'll call Him Immanuel. What does Immanuel mean? It means God with us. So Mary can hold the baby in her hands and say look, this is God with us; He's here. God has visited us. This is Him, the One that Isaiah spoke of. He's here; He's humble, lying in a manger. We will see Luke is going to go into great detail with that, but Mark skips it, so we're going to move on, but we have this promise coming that a virgin is going to give birth to a son and we know from the New Testament that son is ultimately Jesus Christ.

But who is the person of Christ? Who is the person of Christmas? Isaiah 9:6-7 gives us a little bit more of the details. Here is what we see. Isaiah writes this:

“For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.”

We learn the first thing about this coming One, who is going to be born of a virgin, who is the person of Christmas, He is the King. He's the one who comes from the line of David. He's going to take over the throne of David. That's king language. So we see in David's case, David was a king who died. Solomon was a king who died. All the kings throughout the Bible die, but the difference is Isaiah is saying there's a king coming who's going to be a forever king. He's not going to die. Here is one of the realities; we as people, we ultimately need a king. That's what Judges tells us. In Judges, everyone did what was right in their own eyes and it didn't go well with them. People aren't really good at self-governing. It always has a lot of hiccups and a lot of bad things happen, so what we see in Judges is we need someone to rule over us. Then we see 1&2 Samuel and 1&2 Kings show us here is a king, here are many kings, but guess what? All the kings are bad kings. Judges tells us we need a king, but Samuel and Kings tell us that all kings are bad kings. All kings, when they get into a place of power, rule for themselves. Ultimate power corrupts ultimately. We see that through history. We feel that. We know that. So what is Isaiah prophesying? A king is coming because you need a king. That's the reality. We think we're very good at leading ourselves and making our own

decisions. I can do my own life and live it however I want. I can create all my own rules and do my own thing, but the reality is we make really poor decisions for ourselves. We follow our heart in really dark places and it leads us into a lot of destruction. What we need is a king to rule over us that we can fall under, come under, and follow. Isaiah is saying that king is coming, and he is going to be a forever king. Not only that, but he is also going to be a good king.

That's what we find out in this next prophecy of Isaiah. This king is going to be a righteous king. We see this in Isaiah 11. It says, "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord...Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins." So we need a king...all kings are bad. Isaiah is saying there is a king coming who you need, he is a forever king, but here's the good news. He's a good king. He's perfectly good. He's always good. All the other kings wore a belt of unrighteousness, did unrighteous things, and led the people in unrighteous ways. Here, King Jesus comes with the belt of righteousness and leads His people in pure ways, in perfect ways, in holy ways. His loins will be truthfulness. All other kings led by truth, but also by lies. Jesus will be our king who never lies, who is always truthful and leads us in the truth. The reality is we need a king, but we ultimately need a good king, a king who loves us and is merciful and just, and will have our best interest at heart, and that is exactly who King Jesus is. 1 Peter 2:22 says there was no deceit found in His mouth. He had never committed sin. He was righteous. He was holy. He is the forever King, the good King that we need.

Not only that, Isaiah says in chapter 28 that Jesus will also be our cornerstone. We don't just need a king, we don't just need a good king we also need a cornerstone. It says, "...therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'" So we see we need a king. We don't just need a king we need a good king, but also we need a good king who is our

cornerstone. A cornerstone is the thing that the foundation is built on. It is the very starter, that one piece that everything else is built on. The reality is that we need Jesus to be our cornerstone. If He's not, we will find other cornerstones to build our lives on. We do it all the time. We might take family, which is a good thing, and we make it our cornerstone. So we're going to put all of our hopes, all of our dreams, and all of our emphasis in our family, our family is going to be everything, and when that happens, you're standing on your family. What happens when your daughter or your son don't turn out like you thought they should? What happens when they make bad decisions? It's going to be hard to love them well because you're going to be so filled with wrath and anger because they were your idol, not your kid. What happens when that family member passes away, or does something that is wrong against you, what happens when the cornerstone of family actually starts cracking and crumbling? If family is your everything, then you will have nothing. Your life will fall apart. What about when the cornerstone is your job, your career, and you get that sense of purpose and ultimate value out of what you do? As long as you're doing that, everything is good, but what happens when the market turns or your labor is no longer needed; you're fired or you retire? Either one of those things is going to be destruction to you because your whole life is built on that thing that you did. Maybe it's a team, a hobby, or a pleasure; it's something that you put as your cornerstone. What happens when that thing doesn't deliver what it's promising you? What happens when that thing is no longer available to you? Your whole world will come crashing down. Some of you have experienced that. Some of you have felt that. Some of you don't know that right now the thing you're standing on is already beginning to crack, but you can't see it yet. It's not going to take much longer until that cornerstone splits in half, your whole world is just going to be demolished, and you're going to have nothing left. What is Isaiah trying to say? You need Christ to be your cornerstone. You need Him to be the one that you stand on, that you build your life on, because He is the one that truly can satisfy the deepest desires of your heart. He is the one that can hold the weight of your hopes, joys, dreams, and fears. He can actually hold it, you can jump up and down, you can stomp, and you can kick, and guess what. He's going to be there. He will not crack. He

will not shake. Your world might crack and shake a little bit, but the thing you're standing on, when all else fails, you will still be standing because Christ is your great cornerstone. That's what Acts chapter 4 will tell us. Peter is telling the religious leaders He is the stone you rejected, but He's the cornerstone that God used to build everything. You don't just need a king, you don't just need a good king, and you need a king who is your cornerstone, who is your rock, who you're standing on. When all the things of this world happen, when all the storms come, you're standing because Christ is your king and your rock. Isaiah is telling there is a cornerstone coming. That's what Christmas is about. Don't build your life on sinking sand, but build it on the rock who is Christ.

Not only is He our cornerstone; He is also our good shepherd. Isaiah 40:11 will tell us this, "He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young." We see that Jesus, the coming Messiah, is not just a king, He's not just a good king in a palace somewhere, He is a shepherd who walks along inside of us and loves us, leads us, cares for us, and He leads us by still waters. In John 10, Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd who lays down my life for the sheep." That's who Jesus is. He's a good shepherd for us.

I live across from mom and dad, and it's a cattle farm so we see fences and cows. What I've noticed living on a cattle farm where I have to participate some, but I'm more of a spectator, I see that daily cows need farmers. Cows are not very good at taking care of themselves. They constantly need hay. They constantly need water broken or water found. They constantly need moving to the right pasture because they're just not smart enough to figure out things for themselves. They constantly get out and stand in the middle of the road, and they need a farmer to put them back in the pen. Back in the biblical days, they had sheep, and sheep are even worse than cows. Sheep could not even care for themselves at all. They would fall over and couldn't even get back up. So shepherds had to constantly be with the sheep and care for them, lead them, and love them. The sheep were helpless without the shepherd. Isaiah was saying whether you know it or not, you really, really need a shepherd. You really need

somebody to lead you and to guide, to lead you by still waters, to pick you up when you fall over. You need a good shepherd, and Jesus is the good shepherd. He is a good shepherd who loved you enough to die for you. That's what Christmas is telling you. There's a good king who is your cornerstone and your shepherd. That is the one who was born in the manger. That's the person of Christmas. He's king, cornerstone, and shepherd.

But what is the purpose of Christmas? Why did the king, cornerstone, shepherd come? What was the purpose? What was He trying to accomplish? Isaiah gets to at least three things. There are more, but I'll just share three.

1. He came to break the curse.

He was the curse breaker. Isaiah 35:4-6 says, "Say to those who have an anxious heart..." Is that any of you? Do any of you have an anxious heart right now? You're worried about something. You don't know how something is going to turn out. You're just anxious about even leaving here because you've got to face a situation that's really heavy. Listen to the words, ""Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert..." Isaiah is saying I know you feel the weight of the curse. I know you can feel it. There are blind people and deaf people, but not only that; there are spiritually blind and deaf people. There are places where you can't find water. There are droughts, famines, wars, pestilence, and all these things. There are curses everywhere. You can feel it I know it, but there is a day coming when there is a curse breaker coming. He's going to come and break the curse. What do we see Jesus doing in the gospels? He makes the blind see, the deaf hear, and He brings water in the deserts. That's what Jesus comes to do. In Luke chapter 7 when John the Baptist says, go ask Jesus if He is the Messiah because we're not really sure. Jesus says you go tell John that the blind see, the deaf hear, and the good news is preached to the captives. He's quoting this verse to say yeah, I'm the Messiah and

I'm breaking the curse right now in a small way. But when the eschaton happens, when my second coming happens, the full curse is going to be broken. There will be no more sin or no more curse. I'll come as far as the curse is found. It will be reversed. Jesus is the curse breaker. That's what Christmas is about. He's coming to break the curse.

2. He is the death killer.

Here is what we see in Isaiah 25. Our greatest enemy is death. None of us can escape it. It's all coming for us, but the good news of the gospel is there is a way to escape death, and it's through Jesus Christ. Isaiah 25:8 says, "He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken." He says a coming one who is going to swallow up death. He's going to wipe away the tears of everyone, and we see in Revelation that's exactly what Jesus does. He swallows up death. He wipes our tears away. There is no more death or remembrance of death forevermore. That's what Christ came to do. You and I desperately need that because we're all under the curse of death. We've all sinned and we all deserve to die, but Jesus came to swallow up death for us so that those of us who believe in Him will pass through death into eternal life. We won't be separated from God; we'll be connected with God forevermore.

3. He is the favor bringer

Isaiah 61:1-2 says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God..." This is what Christmas is about. Jesus is proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor. When Jesus shows up at the synagogue in Luke 4, they hand Him the scroll. He unrolls it and He reads these verses, but He stops at the Lord's favor. He rolls it up and hands it back. He said today that's been fulfilled in your hearing. Today, I've brought the favor of God. Whoever comes to Me, whoever walks with Me, whoever follows Me and believes in Me, they will have the favor of God. They will live with Him forever. Their sins will be

forgiven. He is the favor bringer. That's what Christmas was about. That's what the cross and the empty tomb are about, God offering you His favor. If you will trust in His Son, you will have His favor. Notice the rest of the verse, "...and the day of vengeance of our God." You're in the year of the Lord's favor right now. That's what Christmas is about. That's what the empty tomb is about, but there's also the day of vengeance is coming. When is that? That's the second coming of Christ, when Christ will bring the full favor of God, where the curse will be wiped away. Sin will be wiped away, but also, sinners in that. Those who believe in Christ who have their sin forgiven, those will experience the favor of God forevermore. Those who have not had their sins forgiven will be swept away and be apart from His favor forevermore, under His wrath because God is coming to have vengeance on those who are disobedient. So we see Christmas is about His favor, but the second coming is about His vengeance is coming.

So what's the word? Repent now! That's what the empty tomb says, repent now and you can have His favor rather than His wrath because the wrath is coming just as Isaiah said. Isaiah has put up Christmas lights. He has them all over his house, saying I want you to know what Christmas is about. Yes, God came to bring favor, but Christ is coming back to bring wrath. I don't want you to miss that. I want you to see it so that you can turn your car around in repentance and turn back to Him instead of running away from Him.

We've seen the promise of Christmas, the purpose of Christmas, and lastly, we see the present of Christ. It is Isaiah 53. We see a Savior who brings salvation. That's the present of Christmas. You've been gift wrapped in salvation. It says in verse 6, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." That's the truth. We have all went astray. We've been bad sheep that haven't followed our shepherd. We've sinned and we know it. We feel guilty and we have shame about it. We ran away, but here's the good news of the gospel and the present of Christmas; Jesus lived the life you couldn't, He died the death you deserve, so that if you believe in Him, you can have everlasting life. He will take your sins away. In His body, on the tree, He bore the wrath of God for our sins, and He says anyone who

believes in Me, who makes Me their king and Lord, their sins will be forgiven because God's wrath fell on Me and not them. That's the gift of Christmas. So I just ask...have you actually accepted that gift? It's what Christmas is all about. There's not just a manger; there's also a cross and an empty tomb. The cross and the empty tomb says here is the present; Jesus did for you what you can't do for yourself. If you believe in Him, if you repent of you being in control of your life, and you turn to Jesus as Lord and Savior, then you will be saved, sins forgiven, reconnected by God, and you will have His favor forevermore. That's what the message of Christmas is about. So I ask...have you accepted that gift? Jesus, He's your king, but not just king, your good king. He's your cornerstone. But not just your cornerstone, He's your shepherd, and He's the curse breaker, the death killer, and the favor bringer. He's doing all that to give you a gift to say if you will accept Me, you can be reconnected with God. That's the good news of Christmas. That's why I like to be a crazy light guy. That's why I'm all about it. I light up my house, so if you go down Redbud Road, you see oh yeah, Christmas is here. What I want for us as a church is to be crazy light people. I don't mean just decorate your house. You can do that. I encourage that, but you don't have to. What I mean is what Jesus says; let your light shine before men so that when you go to work tomorrow, home today, or go do your hobby, the light of Jesus shines through you. You have kindness and generosity. You don't get mad at somebody when they say Happy Holidays instead of Merry Christmas. You just buy them a gift card and write Merry Christmas on it and give it to them, and say I love you. You bless when somebody curses. When you're offended, you give grace, kindness, love, and generosity. You let a light shine that the world is not used to, a light that finds its illumination at the foot of the cross that says my life is different because Christmas really changed my life. I want us to be the crazy light people that with our lives, our attitudes, and our actions, people see there is something different. But we are not just like Isaiah being the crazy light guy, we are also like Mark, we let people see our light, but then we run them straight to the cross. What our light is about is not just about a manger. It is also about a cross. We are light. We're the crazy light people who illuminate a cross. We want people to see a cross. It's the cross that saves us, and it's the cross that the manger is all

about, the cross and an empty tomb and our Savior reigning on high. We want people to see the lights and the manger, but we want them to see the bigger story. We want them to see the manger is about a cross, and that's why our light is shining. It is not just because there was a manger, but because there is also a cross and because we have went to a cross. We've been crucified, and in Christ, we live and we shine. We want to use the manger to preach the gospel. That's why Mark just skips over it. He says I'm going to give you the footnotes, go back and check it out, but I want to get to the cross. I want us to be those crazy light people who use Christmas and celebrate Christmas, the wonderful thing God did by becoming a man, we celebrate and love that, but we don't forget Mark. In the back of our ear, we hear Mark saying yeah, but run to the cross. Yeah, the manger, but run to the cross. So let's, as a church, use this month to be the crazy light people and let our lights ultimately illuminate the cross.