

25/12/21

Sermon: 'If Santa were a Calvinist' by Ben M.

Reading: Matthew 1:18-25



I saw a cartoon the other day entitled 'If Santa was a Calvinist'. Traditionally, if you've been naughty Santa will give you a lump of coal. If you've been good you get a present. In the cartoon the Calvinist Santa gives everyone a lump of coal. 'Everyone is on the naughty list'

Calvin was a French theologian who ministered in Switzerland in the 1500s. He had a set of theological perspectives that have become known as Calvinism. They are summed up in the acronym **T. U. L. I. P.**

Total depravity, (Because of their nature, people are incapable of pleasing God and therefore cannot save themselves)

Unconditional election, (If we are saved it's not because of our merits)

Limited atonement (Christ's death provides atonement for everyone who puts their trust in Jesus. His death is enough to have all our sins forgiven)

Irresistible grace, (God's sovereign work is irresistible. He brings us into the kingdom by a wonderful act of mercy and grace)

Perseverance of the saints (God has saved you so you will never be lost)

The reason that Santa is depicted as handing out coal to everyone is because no one is worthy of any good thing. Our natures are hostile to God. If we cannot please God then we cannot be good so we get coal from Calvinist Santa. The point is that the cartoonist has fundamentally misunderstood Calvinism and by association and more importantly, the gospel. If Santa were a Calvinist he wouldn't be handing out coal to everyone. He would be handing out presents because the incredible grace of God provides things for us despite the fact that we in our own natures can't please God. If Santa were a Calvinist he would be handing out all these nice things to everyone because the grace of God is towards us all because of what Christ has done.

Does anyone here get good gifts? Life, health, the sun rises, lovely food, a roof over our head. If we have good gifts it cannot be because we are good. God keeps giving and giving and giving and giving; even giving his only son to us. He keeps showing us his grace. The only reason can be because someone else is good enough to receive all these good gifts. That one person is Jesus the Son of God. He receives all God's good gifts which he freely passes on to us. It is not because we have earned them or deserve them. They are not rewards. They are tokens of his love. The things that we have are because God loves us and he loves us through his son Jesus whom he has given to us. "Every good gift comes down from the Father of light." (James 1:17) So, as we open our gifts and enjoy our food let's remember in everything to give thanks to the Lord.

Ben's Christmas Quiz

1. Spell the name of the governor of Syria and Judea at the time of Jesus' birth.
2. Which priestly tribe were the Magi from?
3. Where did Mary and Joseph stable their donkey in Bethlehem?
4. Who is the first prophet to be quoted by name in the New Testament?
5. What is the walking distance (according to google maps) between Nazareth and Bethlehem?
6. Spell the name of the third gift given by the Magi.
7. What is the name of the first prophetess to be named in the New Testament?
8. What tribe did Anna come from?
9. Which prophet first foresaw a star in connection with the Messiah?
10. What does the name Jesus mean?

- Answers:
1. Quirinius
 2. Persian
 3. No donkey in the Christmas story
 4. Jeremiah
 5. 90 miles
 6. myrrh
 7. Anna
 8. Ashur proving that all the 12 tribes of Israel were in Jerusalem when Christ came
 9. Balak in Numbers 24:17
 10. the Lord saves