



Rockwood Church of Christ

The Proclaimer

December 17, 2023

P.O. Box 416
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Rockwood, TN 37854
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Elders:

Kendall Bear
Dana Carter
Don Chandler

Deacons:

Larry Brackett
Aaron Evans
Larry Hill
Steve McCreary

Minister:

Dale Barger

Service Times:

Sunday

Bible Study 10 am
Worship Service 10:45 am
Worship Service 6 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study 7 pm

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Thoughts About the Grace of Giving

This time of year, many don't think twice about volunteering in a food bank, in a soup kitchen, or in taking a neighbor some extra peanut brittle made for an office party. This time of year, it doesn't take much prompting for someone to drop some pocket change into the rounded-metal canisters sitting near to those folks who ring the hand bells incessantly as you enter your favorite stores. This time of year, everyone seems eager to want to give just a little bit more to ease someone else's burden. Everyone seems a little more cheerful and wanting to make someone's day a little brighter. This time of year, one might argue that the world gets a small, albeit, misguided taste of what it is like inside the church year-round.

It is a beautiful thing to know that regardless of circumstances, the church will be there for each other. Jesus said it beautifully when He said, "*and everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life*" (**Matt. 19:29**).

When the first congregation was established in Jerusalem, they counted all things common to one another and gave sacrificially for one another when brothers and sisters needed help (**Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-37**). Later, in other cities, the early church gave to brethren they had never even met simply because they heard that they needed help (**2 Cor. 8:1-2**). They gave urgently and willingly (**2 Cor. 8:4**). They gave, the Bible says, because "*they first gave themselves to the Lord*" (**2 Cor. 8:5**). Thus, Paul could hold congregations up (like Macedonia) as examples of the grace of giving.

Have you thought about how you will grow in the grace of giving this coming year? Have you made a commitment to give to the Lord more sacrificially in the work of the church? In a season of giving, why not purpose for the coming year to trust God more with your money?

Andy Baker
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Searching for Jesus

One of the verses most heard at this time of year is found in **Luke 2:11**, “...for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” And as familiar as this verse is, the immediate reaction to the verse may be more important. “The shepherds began to say to one another, ‘Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us’” (**Luke 2 15**). So, after hearing the “good news” proclaimed, the shepherds searched out the baby to confirm the angelic proclamation.

A similar result is recorded in **Matthew 2**. The magi from the east had seen the star and came to worship the King of the Jews. When arriving in Jerusalem, they repeatedly asked the location of the King of the Jews. They wanted to know His location so they could worship Him. Herod sent them on the way to Bethlehem to “search carefully for the Child;...” (**Mt. 2:1-8**).

There are two other individuals who were spoken of as “looking for the consolation of Israel” and the “redemption of Jerusalem.” They were Simeon and the prophetess Anna (**Luke 2:25-38**). Both were in their later years of life but longing to see the Messiah.

There is another group of individuals mentioned in the narrative of the visit of the magi that has drawn more of my attention—the chief priests and scribes (the people who should have been attuned to the prophecies of the Messiah and awaiting His coming!). They were quick to respond to Herod and the magi regarding the prophecy of Christ’s birthplace, but Scripture is silent as to whether or not they searched out the Messiah for themselves. Why?

At this time of year, much of the world celebrates the birth of Christ. Focus is on the baby Jesus and the joy of the announcement at His birth. We sing “*Joy to the World*” commemorating His birth and the joy of the Savior. But how many truly seek out the “good news” of Jesus Christ and the true joy He brings to our lives through His death, burial, resurrection and promise to return one day to take us to be with Him in heaven (**John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 3:13-17**)?

Perhaps that should be of no surprise, because even today there seems to be a lack of concern for searching out the “good news” of Christ. Have we grown tired of the story of Christ? Not just His birth, but the climax of His death, burial and resurrection? Let us be like the shepherds and magi, earnestly seeking to know the Christ—the way, the truth and the life!

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