

Jesus Came to Save Sinners

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[0 : 00] I would ask you to turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 1 and to just one verse that really describes the reason for the season that we celebrate this time of year in Western culture.

It's verse 15. The saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am foremost. Pray with me.

Father, we come to you and we come, Lord, pleading that you would grant us deep internal understanding of this passage of Scripture.

We pray, Lord, that you would break through the clutter in our minds and the clutter in our lives and that you would minister to us by your spirit this morning, showing us how profoundly we need Christ and what he has done to grant us salvation.

And so we pray, Lord, that you would exalt the Son today, that you would encourage our hearts to believe in him, to embrace him, to trust him, to cast ourselves on him.

[1 : 29] We ask these things for Christ's great glory. Amen. Paul begins this brief statement about the incarnation, assuring his readers of the truthfulness of what he has written.

This saying is truthful, he says, and deserves full acceptance. We live in an era, as you know, of pervasive cynicism. People don't believe much of what they hear.

We are accustomed to that. We're accustomed to hearing things and not being so sure that we're being told the truth. We're inundated each day by spin and hype.

And there's not much out there that is trustworthy. Fake news. And so we're all worried about whether or not we're hearing the truth and whether there's not much that we can depend upon.

Even young children in our culture reflect this kind of cynicism. You hear children say, yeah, right. And they're reflecting the cynicism that so much marks this age.

[2 : 37] And Paul says here in this passage that there's something that is trustworthy. Something that can be depended upon. Something that is undoubtedly true and will always be true.

Something that you ought to believe. This is a message that is true and trustworthy and reliable. It's true and reliable because it's of divine origin.

Men didn't make this up. Remember how an angel came to Zechariah and said, don't be afraid, Zechariah. For your prayer has been heard and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you will call his name John.

And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go before the Messiah, before the Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners.

He'll go before the Messiah in the spirit and power of Elijah and turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

[3 : 44] You remember, of course, how the angel came to Mary. Don't be afraid, Mary. For you have found favor with God.

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and will bear a son. And you shall call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.

And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there will be no end.

And, of course, the angel came to Joseph, you recall, in a dream. And Joseph, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For that which is conceived of her is of the Holy Spirit.

She will bear a son. And you will call his name Jesus. For he will save his people from their sins. It's a message of divine origin.

[4 : 42] It's trustworthy because it's not something men made up. It's something that God revealed. And remember how Paul, when he argues for his own apostleship and the validity of his apostleship, and defends himself, he reminds the church that the message of the incarnation is not a human production.

He says, For I received from the Lord that which I delivered to you. Remember how in Galatians 1 he says, For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that I preached is not man's gospel.

I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it. But I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. So the message of the incarnation, this message that Paul talks about here in 1 Timothy chapter 1, is a trustworthy message.

It can be believed. Because it's not of human origin, it's revealed by God. It's a message that you could only know by revelation. God had to reveal this truth.

And it's a message that can be commended to the consciences of mankind, to the consciences of every one of us here today in the presence of God. It can be commended to our consciences because it is true and it deserves to be accepted.

[6 : 05] And of course, that message that deserves to be accepted is, Christ Jesus came into the world. He came into the world. Can you imagine, can you imagine the stir that would be produced by the arrival of an extraterrestrial alien who arrived from outer space?

I mean, we're fascinated by the idea of extraterrestrial intelligence and people wonder and speculate about whether or not there are extraterrestrial beings, sentient beings like us who exist someplace out there.

Surely this isn't the only planet on which such life could exist. And this is not just the stuff of science fiction. As you know, it's serious science. And even now, as I speak to you, there are probes going out into the distant galaxies known to humanity with signals that would display intelligence, hoping that there will be some response from someone somewhere that will respond to those probes and indicate that there is intelligent life somewhere else.

And can you imagine the excitement that would be generated by such news? I mean, if there was just some little response of some answer to our probes, some mimicking of the sequences of our probes that came back to us from the depths of outer space, can you imagine the excitement?

I mean, there would be TV programs and panels of experts telling us what it means or what they think it might mean. And I mean, can you imagine what would happen if some extraterrestrial character or creature was found who could speak to us?

[7 : 55] I mean, if you've seen the movie E.T., you've seen Hollywood's cinematic portrayal of the fear and buzz and excitement that any extraterrestrial being would produce.

And our text tells us that someone from outside, has come into our world. Someone has invaded our planet who is not part of it, who came from outside of it.

He was not of this world. This one who had an eternal existence in a dimension of reality that we can only imagine. And in the incarnation, that's what happened.

Jesus Christ came into this world. Now, he didn't come into existence in the incarnation. He eternally existed in the presence of God forever.

He had an eternal identity as God. He was eternally the only begotten Son of the Father. He was the one by whom all things were created.

[9 : 09] He was the one through whom all things were made. He was the one who, in all the years preceding the incarnation, had held the stars in their courses. He lived eternally in this fulfilling, satisfying life of his own triunity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, eternally existing, full of joy and planning and love and acceptance and fellowship and delight from all eternity.

But in the incarnation, this one who had no beginning as the eternal Son became something that he eternally was not.

without losing any of his identity as God, he became a man. And that's what the text is telling us. He came into our world. Remember how Jesus speaks of this in his prayer in John 17.

He says, Father, Father, they know that I have come from you, and they believe that you have sent me. The glory that you gave me, I've given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, that the world may know that you sent me and love them even as you love me.

Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundations of the world.

[10 : 48] This one who was all glorious, who existed from all eternity with the Father, took the form of a servant.

Now he could have come demanding the full dazzling glory of his beauty as the eternal sun.

He could have demanded, I will go, Father, but I will only go if there's an archangel in front of me, if there are trumpets sounding, if there are heralds heralding my coming.

But intent, he was content to come into this world with his glory veiled. His glory was veiled by his humanity. His glory was veiled by the fact that he looked like you and me.

He didn't have a little glow over his head like the medieval paintings have. He looked like an ordinary human being. And such is the mystery of the incarnation.

[11 : 56] An incredible mystery. We can't wrap our minds around it. It shouldn't surprise us. We have a God who's infinitely glorious and we're trapped in our finitude. So obviously we're going to bump up against things that we can't understand and fully grasp.

But we can grasp what God has revealed at least somewhat. And the mystery of the incarnation is that the infinite becomes finite. The eternal one entered into a time referenced world.

The unchanging became subject to change. The invisible became visible. The creator became part of the created order.

The sovereign became a servant. The sustainer of all things became dependent.

the almighty God was subject to infirmity. And all of that is summed up in Paul's statement.

[13 : 06] Jesus Christ came into the world. And the thought of that is stupendous. It's an incredible thought because it means that there is the joining together in one person all that it means to be human and all that it means to be divine.

Everything that is entailed and possessed in full manhood was present in Jesus and everything that it means to be fully God was also present in this same being.

And it would have been if you think of it it would have been an incredible humiliation for Christ to have come into this world as a man even under the most ideal circumstances because the discrepancy between the creator and the creation is so great.

The discrepancy between the majestic being and the lowly status of even the most dignified of human creatures is such a wide gulf.

It would be a breathtaking plunge from exalted heights to come to this earth and the lowliness of created manhood to be the exalted Lord of glory and come to the earth as a servant is staggering.

[14 : 31] It's wonderful and it's overwhelming. But that's the incarnation that took place is actually more stupendous than that because he came into this world not just into an ideal world not into the Garden of Eden before the fall not into a world that was good in every way but he came into this world this world of sin and misery this world of depravity he came into our world this world of degradation and filth he came into a world in which he experienced the full effects of the fall he was despised and rejected by men he was acquainted with suffering men hid their faces from him in disgust he was disfigured more than any other man according to

Isaiah 52 Hebrews 2 tells us that he suffered when he was tempted Hebrews 4 reminds us he is able to sympathize with us in our temptations because he has experienced those same temptations Christ came into this world he wasn't like a stone that you can skip across a body of water and it never actually breaks the surface tension of the water it just skips across he came into this world he experienced life in a fallen world Paul says elsewhere in Romans chapter 8 he says he was found in likeness of sinful flesh he was made of a woman he says in Galatians 4 later in 1st Timothy in this same book he says he was manifested in the flesh the son of God came into this world in a nature in which in all other instances is sinful he came into a world that was consistent with his supernatural person so that his or in a way that was consistent with his supernatural person so the sinlessness of himself was preserved but he came into this world in a manner that retained his genetic and organic connection with all of humankind who are inherently sinful even the one who bore him his mother

Mary was sinful and afflicted with human depravity that tracks with all of mankind he came into this world in the closest possible relationship with sinful human beings without himself being sinful he came into the world with a human psychology fully human flesh like ours human affections human feelings human sensitivities human emotions human ways of making decisions human ways of learning he learned things by asking questions who touched me where have you laid him have you any bread and he didn't come into a garden like the garden of

Eden he came into this fallen world where men tricked him and tried to catch him up and tried to throw him off a cliff he came into our world where he knew loneliness and fear he came into a world where he was mocked where he experienced physical pain where he was misunderstood even by his own family he's out of his mind they said at one point he knew spiritual pain even abandonment from God so he cries out on the cross why why have you abandoned me it's not wrong to ask God why Jesus asked why why he was in situations where he wondered can I handle this he was in situations where he he has asked himself where is

God why has he allowed this why has this happened to me see we have a savior who is touched in every way with our infirmities he pitched his tent in the valley of the shadow where young men crucify other men where people blaspheme and gamble where hypocritical men cast a young woman at his feet who's been caught in sin and they're ready to heave large jagged rocks on her and stone her to death he came into a world where there's sickness and disease in a world like ours where you wonder sometime about that strange lump is that lump growing what's going to happen if it gets bigger what might it mean a world where people gossip and enemies attack you and friends betray friends he came into a world where people worry about their bills and experience fears and are victimized by malicious and unfounded accusations into a world where a desperate and confused woman like the one we heard of last week jumps off of a parking garage carrying with two little babies because she's concluded that they would all be better off dead this broken world and he lived in our world he lived as a man to whom the spirit of

[21 : 28] God was given without measure and he lived in the power of the spirit of God and in the power of God as a man he resisted temptation he always did the will of the father but I want you to realize this morning that when our passage says Jesus came into the world it's about something more profound than just him occupying the same space we occupy he came into the world in which he experienced the same brokenness that we experience the same disappointments we experience the same hurts we experience the same fears the same doubts the same anxieties he experienced all the things that we experience all the brokenness of humanity he experienced it Jesus Christ came into the world to save he didn't come into the world on a vacation he didn't come as a tourist he came on a mission he came as a warrior he didn't come just to be an example of the love of

God I mean as much as he is a powerful example the most powerful example of the love of God but he came as a prophet to tell us things we need to know and although he was the word of God and the voice of the prophets he was more than just a prophet he wasn't just here as a prophet he came to save he came to accomplish a purpose he came to save and he was very self conscious about that in his ministry remember how he talks about it you know in John chapter 10 but when we see these pictures we see at this time of year of baby Jesus adored by the shepherds and giving receiving gifts from the three kings we should not just think of a sweet tender child meek and mild we should think of a warrior who's come to save he's come on a mission he came into the world to save and he was self conscious of that we read that in John chapter 10 remember he says

I've come that they may have life and they may have it abundantly I'm the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep I'm the good shepherd I lay for the sheep my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me I will give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand he came on this saving mission he came to lay down his life for the sheep to bring all that the father had given him to the father he came to save not just to make salvation possible but to secure salvation for the sheep he says I lay down my life for the sheep in John 10 13 I call my sheep they hear my voice I give them eternal life they will never perish no one can snatch them away from me these words describe a saving mission they describe a savior who's come into the world to accomplish something to accomplish salvation remember he prays about it in

John chapter 17 he says father I've manifested your name to the people you gave me out of the world yours they were you gave them to me they have kept your word for I have given them the words you gave me and they have received them and have come to leave that you sent me I'm praying for them I'm not praying for the world but for those you have given me for they are yours all mine are yours and all yours are mine and I'm glorified through them could he make it more plain he came to save and I'm afraid that much that parades itself around is the gospel is not a message of accomplishment of a saving accomplishment but it's a tentative message of saving potential it's a gospel in which none are actually saved but saving is made possible for everyone that's not what our text describes

Jesus Christ came into the world to save and having come as a sin bearer he bore the agonies that his vicarious enduring of life in this fallen world brought to him he experienced unparalleled agony he experienced reproach shame curse all that is due to those that he came to save he endured mocking and torment and humiliating dishonor at the hands of men he bore our sins in his body on the tree he even experienced the ignominy of death as a criminal as a sinner and he bore the separation from God because God is of pure eyes and to behold iniquity he bore the separation from God that you and I deserve for eternity he bore that for us when

[26 : 58] Christ went to the cross bearing our sins he the one who had enjoyed eternal fellowship and joy in the triunity of the God had experienced the father turning away from him I'm persuaded that the greatest agony of the cross wasn't just the suffering it wasn't just the Roman scourge and 39 lashes that tore open his back it wasn't just the crown of thorns that was pressed on his head joining together the pain of the thorns with the humiliation of the mockery the greatest pain of the cross was interpersonal the father turned his face away from the son he came to save he came to fulfill all righteousness by living a sinless life on our behalf so that we could be made righteous he came to die as an atoning sacrifice for our sins so that the guilt of our sins could be atoned for and the punishments that our sins deserve could be fully

Paul says it's a faithful saying it's trustworthy it's worthy of all acceptance Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am foremost he came to save sinners that's the problem in this world people are sinners people do disgusting things and degrading things to other people who are made in the image of God people are so fallen that people will lurk in the shadows and gun people down who they don't even know young men like I heard on the news last week will beat a man to death for a dollar for one dollar drug dealers will gun people down in the streets of Hazleton young young young men will shake their girlfriend's baby until the brain hemorrhages and the child dies children will dishonor their parents it's a broken world and think about how the Bible talks about the brokenness of humanity man surely we we experience it we see it we know it's true remember

Romans 1 says since they did not see fit to acknowledge God they were filled with all manner of unrighteousness evil covetousness malice they're full of envy murder strife deceit maliciousness their gossip slanderers haters of God insolent haughty boastful inventors of evil disobedient to their parents foolish faithless heartless ruthless Romans 3 Paul says there's no one righteous not even one no one who understands no one who seeks God all have turned aside together they become worthless there's no one who does good not even one their throat is an open grave their tongues are used to deceive the venom of asps is under their lips their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness their feet are swift to shed blood their paths are paths of ruin and misery the way of peace they haven't known there's no fear of

God before their eyes one more passage just underscoring this first timothy three people will be lovers of self lovers of money proud arrogant abuseful disobedient to their parents ungrateful unholy heartless unpeaceable unappeasable slanderous without self control brutal not lovers of good treacherous reckless swollen with conceit lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God Jesus came into the world to save sinners people can be described in those ways he came to save sinners people like you and me as you know you know the problem of sin is not just a problem that is out there somewhere we carry it with us don't we the problem of sin is a problem that is in here you and

I we are sinners I am a sinner you are a sinner you need salvation there are things about you that are ugly and perverse your compulsive self love the way everything is evaluated instantly by what is it going to mean to me the way in which it all turns in on me your dishonesty your willingness for people to think more highly of you than they ought to think your hypocrisy your ugly judgmentalism your hatred of God's right to rule you and to be God in your world you hate it and you rebel against it in hundreds of ways every day you're a sinner and you know it I'm a sinner and I have to say and you have to acknowledge too that we don't just sin out of weakness we sin out of badness we've done and said things that are wrong and reprehensible and degrading and wicked we have done and said things to other people we've done and said things in secret that we would be mortified if it would be displayed on a screen here in front of us all there are things that you've gotten away with that would be an embarrassment to you

[33 : 13] I remember talking to a man one time a Christian man about being a sinner and he got very indignant he said I'm not a sinner I used to be a sinner but I'm not a sinner anymore well that's not what the apostle says you know it's interesting in this passage he says it's a trustworthy saying and worthy of all acceptance that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I he doesn't say of whom I was chief now if he had written that if he had written of whom I was chief we would be able to make sense of that wouldn't we we would say yeah that's right he was the chief of sinners remember when Stephen was being stoned he was standing there holding everyone's cloaks so they could free their arms up to throw stones better and he was complicit in approving of the stoning of Stephen remember how he he would go from house to house dragging Christians out of the house and putting them in prison I understand why he was the chief of sinners wasn't he was a bad man but that's not what he says I mean we could make sense of that if that's what the passage says it doesn't say that it says of whom I am chief

Paul knew how to form the past tense of the verb if he meant whom I was chief he would have said that he is identifying himself the great apostle who's given us most of the script of the new testament epistles as the chief of sinners we can try to deny that we're as bad as the bible says that we are or we can face the problem head on and be grateful that even though we are as bad as the bible says we are Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners when you see the baby in the manger you have to think he came to save sinners the saying is trustworthy Paul says it's trustworthy this truth was apparently a saying in the new testament church we have sayings that people know and they say to themselves again and again phrases that we're familiar with no good news no news is good news each cloud has a silver lining when the going gets tough the tough gets going we have those sayings that we say they're kind of familiar cliches of our culture and Paul says this saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance apparently it was a saying amongst early believers there was a saying that they said

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners Paul says that's a trustworthy saying these are words of simple truth Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and faced with sin and failure when I feel like I ought to give up and thinking how can God ever put up with me for another moment this is a trustworthy saying Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners this is a trustworthy saying Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners when I look around me the obstacles seem overwhelming and everything seems hopeless it's a trustworthy saying

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners you and I need this one who came into the world to save sinners you need him you know you know that everything I've said this morning about you and me and our sin and the brokenness of this world you know it's all true you know it's true this world is a fallen world sin and degradation are at every hand and it's not only out there it's in here you also know that you're not just in the problem you are the problem you're a sinner you need this savior he's come into the world to save sinners and you're a sinner you're in that category of people that he's come into the world to save and he's calling you he's calling you this morning he's calling you to him this morning he's calling you to believe that Jesus

Christ came into the world to save sinners he's calling you to acknowledge that's me Lord I'm one of those that you've come into the world to save I'm a sinner I'm in that category of people that you've come to save and I need you he's calling you to repent and to believe and you might be saying to yourself Ted I've done it I have I've cried out to God in my neediness and my wickedness I've acknowledged my sin I've asked him to save me and I if you're saying that I want to say to you repent and believe again and again because repentance and faith are not just the initiation rite into Christianity they're part of the grace in which we stand and we need to continually be repenting and believing but I also know that there are some people here who've never repented and believed who've never acknowledged

[39 : 46] I am I'm a sinner and I need this savior how how can I how can I appeal to your conscience don't let this moment pass where God is speaking to you come to him now come to him this morning cast yourself on Jesus today everything I've spoken to you about that describes our condition and the world in which I live is true you know it's true you are in need of such a savior there is no hope for you not only in this life but in the life to come apart from this savior he's come into this world he's invaded our world to save how can I appeal to you don't leave here today without embracing this Jesus without repenting without believing without without once again embracing him once again casting yourself on his mercy if you've done it again even within yourself

Lord I believe this I I want your grace I want your salvation I want your forgiveness I know I've received it I want to live in it oh Lord help me Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners it's a trustworthy saying and worthy deserving of full acceptance Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am foremost let's pray together father father we come to you this morning with the words of this passage ringing in our minds and we we come Lord acknowledging everything here is true we are sinners it is a fallen world and how grateful we are that

Jesus Christ came into our world that he came as the man of sorrows to bear our sorrows that he came bearing shame and scoffing rude and stood in our place that he's coming again as the coming king and Lord I pray that everyone under the sound of my voice today would embrace this one who came into the world to save sinners I pray this for Christ's glory Amen