

**THE  
BON AIR  
PULPIT**

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**December 24, 2000**

**Scripture: *Matthew 16:16***

**Sermon: *Thou Art the Christ***

You are very familiar with the passage of scripture I want to read first which is from the book of Luke and part of the Christmas story. It is in Luke 2 and I am going to begin to read in verse eight and then we will turn over to the book of Matthew and read from verse sixteen. I wanted you to hear again what the angel said and then later I wanted you to hear what the first disciples began to say. Luke 2:8. *“There were shepherds living in the field near by watching over their flock by night. An angel of the Lord appeared and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were terrified. The angel said unto them do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord.”* Turn to Matthew 16 and fast forward about thirty years. Jesus is talking to his disciples and he gives them a test. This is the test. Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi and He asks His disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” They replied, “Some say you are John the Baptist, some say that you are Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” Then Jesus asked the most important question. That is, “Who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter then said, “You are the Christ, you are the Son of the living God.” You see, it really doesn’t matter what the angel said, if you and I don’t say the same thing. You are the Christ. You are the Son of the living God. Have you ever noticed how many of the big words in our faith have the word Christ in it? For example the very name of our religion is Christianity. If you are a follower of Jesus you are a Christ man. You are a Christian. On this day that we come to celebrate our most Holy Day in our faith, we call it the mass of Christ or Christmas. All of the great turns of our faith seem to have at the first, the word Christ. Yet it is amazing how many individuals don’t even know what the word Christ means. Some people, when they become very exasperated and want to almost border on profanity say Jesus Christ. They almost think that Christ is Jesus second name. In reality the word Christ is a title and it would be better for us to understand it in English that I said, Jesus the Christ. He is the Christ, not a second name, but a title. The question you need to ask then is what does the title mean. The title means anointed one, chosen one, selected one. Then the question comes, selected to do what. That introduces you to the basic message of the Bible.

You just turn to the third chapter in the book and it says that God created everything for man and gave him every provision that a man could want. He created for us a paradise. Then God said I have only one prohibition. The one prohibition is that there is a tree in the garden and you are not to eat. You recall that the first people said we do not care what God said. We are going to do what we want to do. If we want the tree, we will eat the tree. When they reached out and touched that which God prohibited, out of that has come all of the tragedy and all of the sorrows for all of mankind. In our own life, it produces emptiness, guilt and loneliness. It produces misplaced priorities and then in our relationship to others, they were broken and out of that come crime, violence and war.

Tomorrow, on the great day of peace for Christians, there will be sixty-seven wars going on around the church and it is estimated tomorrow that in those sixty-seven wars that no less than ten thousand people will be killed in violence on Christmas day. Out of that came all of the sorrows, all of the heartaches that you and I know today. At the close of that tragic story, God came and He said I want to give you a promise. It is the first one in the Bible and it is found in Genesis 3:15. This is the first promise but He is going to give three thousand more later. This is the first one and this is what He said. “Somebody is going to come who is going to crush the head of that snake who tempted you to do evil. He is going to bite the heel of that child.” The first couple, Adam and Eve had a child. Eve looked at that first little baby and said, “I am

going to call him Cain.” The word Cain means one who is sent from God. The first woman, holding the first baby, looked at that little child and said maybe this is the one. This is the one that the promise was that the seed of the woman is going to come and crush the head of that snake. You understand that wasn’t the one but every mother began to look at the fact of that little child and said, “Maybe this is the one, this is the one.” Then God said, “I’ll tell you what I am going to do. I am going to give you an objective standard so that everybody will know that when the one comes, this is the one.” You see it would be easy for a person to come and say, “I have been out in the desert and God has talked to me and I am the Christ. I am the one sent from God.” God said to eliminate any misunderstanding, I am going to give you all of these criteria and when the one fulfills all of those, then you will know, that is the Christ.

About seven hundred years before He was born, He said I will tell you where he is going to be born. He is going to be born in Israel and He is going to be born in a little town called Bethlehem. I can tell you He is going to come and spend part of His life in Egypt, and I can tell you He is going to be raised in a town called, Nazareth. About six hundred years before He was born, He said this one is going to come and when He comes it is going to be exactly four hundred and ninety years from the time Cyrus gave the edict to build the wall in Jerusalem. He is going to die a violent death and when He dies, He is going to have wounds in His hands and wounds in His feet. When He dies they are going to give Him gall and vinegar to drink and they are going to bury Him in a borrowed tomb. Then when that one came and fulfilled all of these prophecies then you will know, this one is the Christ.

The reason that is so important is that anybody could say that. I remember I had not been in Richmond very long when I was talking to a man about committing his life to Jesus. He said, “Oh, I don’t believe in Jesus.” I said “Well, why don’t you?” He said “Let me ask you a question. Suppose a man appeared on Main Street in Richmond and said I had a touch from God and I am the one you have been looking for. I am the Christ. Why wouldn’t you worship him just as much as you worship this man born two thousand years ago half way around the world?” I said “Oh, there is a difference. The difference is the one who was born in Bethlehem, two thousand years ago, had been prophesied seven hundred years before that that is where he would be born. Even the year he would be born. How he would be born and how He would live. If there had been a book that had been inspired by God that said in the year 1982, in the city of Richmond, Virginia, and then gave three hundred prophecies about him, if that child had fulfilled all the prophecies, I would have believed in him.

You know you raised that story, there is actually an incident in my life that relates to what you are saying. In my home town, at the end of Third Street which is the main business street, is the old state capital. On the old state capital is a statue and every Sunday morning you could go down and there is a man who appeared every Sunday morning dressed in a white robe and he carried a cross. His basic message was this. You have been looking for the Christ and you have found him. I am the one. I said if you go back to my home town today, there is not a building ever built to his name, no song written about him, not a poem ever created to talk about his virtue. There is not anything ever marked he was there except if you go to Potter’s Field and there is a marker with the date he was born and the date he died. I said, what you are saying is anybody could do that and that is the reason exactly that God gave the message, that said this is the way you will know. When one comes to fulfill all of these prophecies, you will know then, that this is the one.

You see we have heard this story so much, we just take it for granted. Let me tell you how difficult this is. Someone put it on the computer one day and he said the odds of a person fulfilling exactly three hundred thirty prophecies is the same odds as if you would take quarters and you would get enough quarters to cover the state of Texas. On one of those quarters, you would make an X. Then you would say to your friend and say go to Texas and find that quarter marked with an X. If he would walk into Texas and march out and find the quarter marked with an X, that is the odds of one man fulfilling three hundred thirty prophecies. That is the reason that when you hear them speak, Jesus turns to Simon and he said tell me who do you think I am. Simon said, “I know who you are. You are Christ.” You are the one we have been looking for all through history. You are the Christ. When you begin to hear the first preachers preach, this is what they said. They began to tell people that Jesus was the Christ. He is the one. We have come today in great faith to accept that Jesus is the Savior of our life. Let me tell you, this is no leap in the dark. This is not some, what you believe and what I believe. It is the criteria that God has given to be able to help us

to understand that we can put our faith in Jesus Christ. Once you begin to understand that, all kinds of truth begin to flow out of it.

Let me tell you one of the most wonderful. You remember the angel. You remember he said, "Here is born in the city of David, a Savior, He is the Christ," but he said, "He is the Lord." I want you to listen just a moment and if you don't shout on the inside, please go see your doctor. That promise back in Genesis 3:15, the Jewish people studied that and wondered about it forever and they said somebody made a mistake because this is what it said. "The seed of the woman shall crush the head of the snake." They didn't know a lot about biology, but they knew enough to know, women do not have seed. It is the male who has the seed. They looked at that and they used to struggle and all the rabbi's would sit down and say, "How could the seed of a woman crush the head of a snake. Let me tell you what happened. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, that wasn't the first day of His life. Jesus did not begin living in Bethlehem. If Jesus had begun living in Bethlehem, then what would have happened was this. He would have been a good man telling us about God. But the wonderful story of Christmas is, it is true the seed of a woman because the Bible says one came from heaven, not created by a man and a woman but had never been created and He came through a woman using her body. He didn't pick some good man telling us about Him, He came Himself in the form of His Son. Now you will understand, I have come to be the Christ. When you sang a moment ago, *Oh, Come Let Us Adore Him*, you are not adoring a good man who had an enlightenment and told us about God. We adore Him because He is Christ the Lord. God has come Himself to meet the deepest needs of our life. He came because you and I had a problem that we couldn't work out ourselves. A problem so deep, so entrenched, that in spite of every thought of man, he couldn't work it out himself. Our only hope, the hope for our own life, the hope for this whole world, is that God Himself had to come in the form of Jesus the Christ, to meet our needs.

One of the things you have got to give away on Christmas, is trusting in yourself, that you feel like if you could just work on it hard enough and a little bit longer, you are going to work out every problem in your life. One of the presents we give to God is ourselves. We say to Him Lord, around this day we understand that we can not live like you want us to, we give you our selves and we trust that only in you can we meet the needs of our life.

Let me close this Christmas eve morning by reminding you the first sermon ever preached. The first sermon that was ever preached was preached by Simon Peter. He told the story of what I have just told. He ended up just the way I started and he said I want to tell you Christ is the Lord. This Jesus is the Christ. Then he took out of his arsenal, he took out a sword and drove it in everyone's heart. This is what he said, "But you have crucified Him." You mean to say Simon, we have been looking, praying, hoping, wondering, questioning, when He would come and He came and we put Him on the cross. That is what you did. That is the reason the Bible says they were smitten in their hearts and they fell on their face and said, "What can we do to be forgiven."

There are people around the world today who have never heard the name of Jesus. God will treat them more kindly than people who are here today. You can't get off the street without passing twelve churches. You see all of these buildings and all of the songs, all of this about Christ, and yet you keep writing Him out of your life. You say I don't care the plan of the ages, I don't care what God has done, I don't care that He came in love looking for me. I am still writing Him out of my life. My dear friend, if you can walk out of this building today and not give your heart and life to Christ, I don't know what ever hope there is for you because this is what it is all about.

Let me give you a final illustration. You are on the side of a mountain, you have gotten separated from your party and it is cold. The wind is blowing and you realize that if you don't get some heat, you will freeze to death. You reach down and realize you have one match. Let me ask you, if that match was the difference between life and death, how would you strike it? Would you just take it out, wind blowing, and put it on the side of a mountain and strike it. Then say, I think I will go find me some wood. Oh no! You would protect it to make sure no wind got to it. You would go find yourself some dry kindling. You would put your body against it and the wind. You would put your hand over it and very carefully light the match. You would make sure the flame was lit so that you would live. One match. There is one Christ. There is one Savior. Actually a part of God Himself came so that you would not have any questions. *I give you all of these promises so that when I come, you will know I am the one.* There is just one. The question is, how

are you going to treat Him? Surely, today you would want to say I want to give my life for Christ. I want to give my life to the God who has come looking for me.