Merry Chaos

Gift-Wrapping, Sand-Bagging, and God

December 14, 2025

Today* we're talking about *Clausmas, Christmas,* and *catastrophes* … and *true comfort.

And we're gonna *take* a *breath* – since all *Scripture* is *God-breathed* – and *try* to *rest* in the *midst* of the *chaos.* Because, I was in the *midst* of the *busyness* of *shopping* and *wrapping* and *stringing lights,* when I was *reminded* of the *dangers* of what I call *Clausmas.* And the *next thing* I *knew,* I was *waterproofing* and *stacking furniture* and *evacuating* my *Christmas-lit house* because of the *dangers* of what I call *drowning!*

So: **Have you *got* your *wrapping* done? Not your *gifts.* Your *mind* and *heart.*** Cuz we can *quickly* get *wrapped up* in all the *frenzy* and *flurry* and *fatigue.* And ***how* about your *begging?* Not *sand-bagging. Begging.*** As in *pleading* with *God* as the *rain falls* and the *rivers rise?* Well, just remember:

> *This* is the day the Lord has made; [so] let us *resent* and be *mad* in it.
> – Psalm 118:24 NIV

Wait. ***Not* a *Scripture!*** Though it's *easy* to *live* as though it *is.* But:

> This *is* the day the *Lord* has *made;* [so] let *us* [who *trust* Him, *do* our *best* to] *rejoice* and be *glad* in [*spite* of] it. – Psalm 118:24 NIV

Not a *suggestion!* Though it's *easy* to *live* as though it *is.* But it *isn't.*

> For we walk by *sight*, *not* by *faith*. – 2 Corinthians 5:7 NKJ

Oops, I got *that one* a bit *backwards* – but I *sure* hope *you* don't. Cuz we're getting' *hit* from *both sides* this Christmas, by **the *pull* of *Clausmas* and the *pain* of *catastrophe.*** But:

> The Lord sits *enthroned* over the *flood*; [and] the Lord is *enthroned* as *King* forever. [Cuz according to Psalm 22:3, He's *enthroned* in *praise;* and *thereby*] The Lord gives *strength* to His *people*; [and] the Lord *blesses* His *people* with *peace*. – Psalm 29:10-11 NIV

But *that peace* comes with a *price tag* of *faith, trust,* and *obedience.* We just went *over* this in my last message, with *Paul's letter* to *Lydia* the textile lady.

> Do not be *anxious* about *anything*, but in everything, by *prayer* and *petition*, with *thanksgiving*, present your requests to God. And the *peace* of *God*, which *transcends* [surpasses] *all* understanding, will *guard* your *hearts* and your *minds* [from *Clausmas* and *catastrophes*] *in* Christ Jesus. – Philippians 4:6-7 NIV

So, *why* does His *peace surpass* all understanding? Because *He does!*

> Now to Him who is able to do *immeasurably more* than *all* we [can] *ask* or [even] *imagine* … [be *glory*] *in* Christ Jesus – Ephesians 3:20-21 NIV

And if you *trust* that – *really, actually* trust that – and *regularly pause* to *remind* yourself that you *trust that,* you'll have the *peace* of *mind* and *heart* that can *only come* from *trusting* an *all-loving, all-powerful, all-purposeful plan* that's *beyond* our *ability* to *understand.* **"I can't *trust* something I can't *understand*." Then you *can't* have the *peace* that *surpasses understanding.***

> "If *only* you had *paid attention* to My commands, your *peace* would have been like a *river* … [But] There is *no peace*," says the Lord, "for the *wicked*." – Isaiah 48:18-22 NIV

> For thus says the Lord: "Behold, I will extend *peace* to her like a *river*, and the *glory* of the *nations* like an *overflowing stream*; and … I will *comfort* you – Isaiah 66:12-13 ESV

But those who *refuse* to *trust* that He's *unimaginably purposeful,* will be *stuck thinking* that He must *not* be either *loving enough* or *powerful enough* to *stop* our *suffering.* But that's like *thinking someone* could *design* and *build* a *house* from *scratch,* but then *not* be able to *change* the *light bulbs.* **Catastrophes *force* us to *consider God's plan* and *our purpose.*** Especially at *Christmas.*

I *loved* Noah's *Un-Grinching* message last Sunday. *Chuck Jones,* the *animator* of the *original Grinch,* once said: **"Everybody *hates* Christmas a *little*."** But he's *confusing Christmas* with something *else entirely. After* Christmas, *most* people are gonna ask, "What'd you *get*?" But I'm gonna ask: **"What'd you *celebrate?*"** Or should I say, *celebrate most?* Because **for believers, *two simultaneous celebrations occur.* One *sacred*. One *secular*.** And we've *created* an *incredibly odd* yet *charming fusion,* and often *confusion*, of the *two.* So, ***what* are you *most focused* on *this day: Christmas* or *Clausmas* or *catastrophes?*** I have to *admit,* I *love* Clausmas. Twinkle lights. Evergreens. Bing Crosby. Ugly sweaters. Sugar cookies. It's just adds a *ton* of *fun* and *festivity* to the reason-for-the-season. But it's *precisely because* Clausmas is *such* a *significant* part of Christmas, that we *must just chill* and …

> "Be *still*, and *know* that I am *God*" [*literally*] – Psalm 46:10 NIV

> Meditate *within* your *heart* on your *bed*, and be *still* … and *put* your *trust* in the Lord. … [And say] Lord, [in the *midst* of the *lights* of *Christmas*] lift up the *light* of *Your countenance* upon us. You have put *gladness* [of the *eternal*] *in* my *heart*, more than in the [*temporary*] *season* that their *grain* and *wine* [*earthly securities* and *pleasures*] increased. [Therefore] I will both *lie down* [on my bed] *in peace* [with *gladness* in my *heart* and *trust* in *You*], and *sleep*; for You *alone*, O Lord, make me *dwell* in *safety*. – Psalm 4:4-8 NKJ

Come *hell* or *high water,* as they say. **It's *not* that God's *against common fun.*** *He's* the *One* who commanded *seven* annual *feasts* and only *one fast* for *Israel.* But **His *concern* is *when:***

> They have made no *distinction* between the *holy* and the *common* … and they have *disregarded* My *Sabbaths*, [a.k.a. those *be-still*-and-*rests*] so that I am *profaned* [as in *polluted* and *diluted* and *dishonored*] among them. – Ezekiel 22:26 ESV

But Ever say, like, "Christmas *already?* I'm still *recovering* from *last* year!" You're thinking of *Clausmas.* Clausmas is *typified* by clogged malls, backed up traffic, piles of packages, and irritable crowds. While *Christmas* is characterized by *soothing stillness spent* with our *Savior,* and *shared* with a *true* Christmas *Who:* the ones we love, who love the *Lord.* But **it's just *so easy* to let that *stillness* get *swept away* in *rising rivers, mandatory evacuations,* and a *sectacular tsunami*** of *snowmen* and *reindeer* and *elves,* until it seems as if the *only one* saving *anything* is some *guy* named *Ernest.* But *that's Clausmas* for ya! And **we gotta be *earnest* and *deliberate* about making a *distinction* between the *holy* and the *common.***

> "An *ox* knows its *owner,* and [even] a *donkey* its *master's manger,* but … My *people* do not *understand*." … [Because] They have *abandoned* the *Lord* … they have *turned away* from Him. – Isaiah 1:2-4 NAS

But not *us!* **We're *deliberate* about *teaching* our *kids* to *discern* the *difference.*** Cuz *Clausmas* is about the *mall,* and the *mall* is about *sweaters* and *trinkets* and *toys.* Whereas *Christmas* is about the *manger,* and **the *manger* is about the *miraculous gift OF God.*** As in: *from* God *and was* God. And ***Christ* came to *bear* our *sin,* and *free* us from *guilt* and *shame.*** Whereas, *jolly* as he *is,* ***Claus* comes *bearing guilt* with a *clause.*** Cuz y*ou gotta* be *good enough* to get on *his list.* But God's *free gift* is to *one* and *all* by *His grace* through *our faith* in the loving *presence* of the *Gift Himself.* So, ***come* what *may,* it's *still Christ's day*.** Cuz at its *core* it's *still* the *time* that we *adore* God's only *Son – love's pure Light,* **who came into the *heart* of *darkness* on a *strategic suicide mission,*** to *free* us from *sin*, and to *save* us from *death*, and to *make* a way to *carry* us *home.* Jesus said:

> "Everyone who *comes* to Me and *hears* My *words* and *puts* them into *practice* … [is] like a man building a house, who *dug* down *deep* and laid the foundation on *rock*. [And] When a *flood* came, the torrent *struck* that *house* but could not *shake* it" – Luke 6:47-48 NIV

But *did* you *notice* that the "*flood came*, and the *torrent struck* that *house*"?! Because, **to *fully know* the *worth* of your *anchor,* you got'a *face* your *fears* and *go* through the *storms.***

> "I have told you these things, so that in *Me* you *may* have *peace*. [Cuz] In *this world* you *will* have *trouble*. But take *heart*! I have *overcome* the *world*." – John 16:33 NIV
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> [For everyone] *born* of *God* overcomes the *world*. And *this* is the *victory* that has overcome the world—our *faith*. [I mean] Who *is* it that overcomes the world *except* the *one* who [*truly*] *believes* that Jesus is the *Son* of *God*? [*No one*!] – 1 John 5:4-5 ESV
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> [And] *We* have this *hope* as an *anchor* for the *soul*, *firm* and *secure*. – Hebrews 6:19 NIV

So you *see,* **sometimes He *calms* the *storm.*** And then, **sometimes He *calms* the *soul.*** And *guess* which one has *far more eternal value!* But either way, the *storms reveal* – mostly to *ourselves* –our *chosen foundation.* Because, ***peace* isn't *found* in the *absence* of *pain,* but the *presence* of *Christ.***

Every storm *tests* what we've *built,* and *provides* us with a *moment* to see to what *degree* we *actually, really, truly, trust* the Lord, *by* the *peace* we have in the *midst* of the *chaos.* Therefore:

> Let everything that has breath *complain this Christmas*. – Psalm 150:6 NKJ

That's *not* a *Scripture!* So let's not *act* like it *is.* In fact, let's *do* the *polar-express opposite.*

> Let everything that has breath *praise the Lord*. – Psalm 150:6 NKJ

In the *midst* of *Clausmas* and in *spite* of *catastrophes.*

The little Lord Jesus received His *first* gifts that *first* Christmas. ***Mary* gave her *trust. Joseph* gave his *obedience;* the *shepherds* gave their *testimony;* and the *wise men* gave their *time* and *treasures* and *true worship.*** And you know *what?* **Jesus *never outgrew* those *gifts*.** They're *still* His favorites. Still *exactly* what He *desires* and *deserves most* from *us. Stillness.* Or you *could* just:

> *Conform* to the pattern of this *world*, and do *not* be *transformed* – Romans 12:2 NIV
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> [And] Let your *hearts* be *troubled* and be *afraid*. – John 14:27 NIV
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> For if you *forgive* others when they *sin* against *you*, you're a *chump*. – Matthew 6:14 NIV

Not Scriptures! So don't *act* like they *are!* **How *hollow* the *holiday* without *hope*** – filled with *festivity* without the one *substantial, meaningful, eternal centerpiece* to *aim* it *at*, and *focus* it *on*, and *build* it *around*. And **how *crushing* the *catastrophe* without *Christ.*** As *Paul* puts it:

> [God] made His *light* shine in our *hearts* … to show that this *all-surpassing power* is from *God* and *not* from *us*. [And so] We are *hard pressed* on *every side*, but *not crushed*; [and *yes*, we are *often*] *perplexed*, but *not* in *despair* – 2 Corinthians 4:6-8 NIV

Because He does immeasurably more than all we can ask or even imagine. And in the *midst* of the *chaos,* we're *here, together, praising Him. Go team!* Cuz *rivers rise* and *rivers recede,* and *Clausmas* comes but *once* a year and *fades fast.*

> But [come *hell* or *high water*] *this* I *call* to *mind*, [when I *lie still* and *recall* the *trust* I have in the *One* in my *heart*] and therefore I have *hope:* The *steadfast love* of the Lord *never* ceases; [His presence is 24/7/365; and] His mercies *never* come to an *end;* [in fact] they are *new* [not just *Christmas morning,* but] *every morning* – Lamentations 3:21-23 ESV

Now *that's* a *Scripture!*

So, **don't *allow* the *urgent* to *drown out* the *deeply significant.*** Especially at *Christmas* and in the *midst* of *catastrophes.* Because, ***chaos* is a *choice.***

And if *you've* been *overly focused* on *Clausmas,* or *overwhelmed* by the *catastrophe, never fear,* **the *day* the Lord has *made* is *still* right *here* … just *waiting* for *us* to be *still* enough, *long* enough, to *sit back,* and *settle in,* and *practice receiving comfort* from the *Prince* of *Peace.***

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.