Christmas memories sermon

 I’m glad to be here this evening. I hope to not bore you but no promises. I can promise you that I’m not good but I’m fast so the glass is half full.

Let’s start with a quick word of prayer,

Dear God, Thank you for this day. Thank you for the opportunity and freedom to gather here in your house with our family. I hope that our worship is pleasing to you and I don’t mess it up. Amen

 This time of year, brings a lot of traditions and memories, Christmas memories are some of the best memories. There’re quite a few traditions that I don’t understand. Starting with the Christmas pickle. Don’t know how it got started. Christmas caroling, nothing like standing out in the cold to serenade some strangers. Fruit cake………doesn’t look, smell, or taste like cake. Then you’ve got the 24-hour marathon of a Christmas story, inspecting the chimney for the 1 time a year we use it, Secret Santa gift exchanges, white elephant or yankee swap whatever you call it. The secret Santa gifts from the school Santa shop. One year I got 11 flashlights. It was great, as the morning progressed the pile of mag lights just kept growing and growing. My favorite Christmas tradition is complaining about Christmas music starting before I’ve even came up with excuses for getting out of family thanksgiving.

 It seems that all my Christmas memories are tied to life lessons. Like the time I told my dad I was bored 2 days after Christmas. I was laying around the house and Dad asked me what I was doing, I said “I’m bored and there’s nothing to do”. I got the privilege of taking down the Christmas tree and then the fun started. I was given a hatchet, a trash bag and told to make sure the Christmas tree all fit in the bag. That was the last time I ever told my dad I was bored.

 I can remember when I was growing up in Lowell, we had an apartment with a big glass window that looked right into our living room. We had a neighbor who was older, and to be honest a little nosey. She would slow way down and stare into our window. This drove my mom nuts. Mom liked open windows and privacy. A bit of an odd combination. But every year there was a glimmer of hope. Snow in a can. Do y’all remember this stuff? It was about the size of a WD-40 can but held enough of this shaving cream looking stuff to block out the sun. My mom would buy a few cans of this stuff and block out our giant 5x5 picture window. I don’t know what it was about that perfectly whited out window but I could not keep from drawing in it. She’d get all shades of red yelling about how I kept drawing in it. But mom loved the fact that it gave her some privacy.

 I always thought it was a weird tradition as a kid though as I’ve gotten older I’ve definitely come to understand it. That need for privacy from prying eyes. But there is one problem there’s no such thing as privacy any more. When I was a kid I wanted privacy, there was freedom in it. Chance to make mistakes, chance to grow. When I got married I wanted privacy, I went from living alone to having someone there 24/7. When my kids were born I wanted privacy, but there is none when you have kids. Yall know what I’m talking about? You ever have this one happen to you? You hop out of the shower only to see some tiny sticky fingers sticking out from under the door? It happened once and I still watch the door every time.

 As Christians we know what it’s like to be watched constantly, and to need that privacy to let our guard down. Unfortunately, there’s no privacy now a days. With our schedules packed so tightly and things like facebook, twitter and Instagram it can feel like your whole life is on display. This daunting feeling of always being watched can be overwhelming but it has an upside too. We get to set the example for those watching. We get to be that guiding light showing them the way to the narrow gate.

Hebrews 12:1-3Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **2**fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **3**Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

 Since we can’t use snow in a can to block out the world, let’s set the example of how the world should behave.

 Another of my favorite Christmas memories that has turned into a tradition is giving socks. Growing up things were not always as glamorous as I wanted. Money was always tight. We didn’t have that big ol dream house with the white picket fence or the latest and greatest but we always had enough and always had a great Christmas. Big tree with bubble lights, lots of tinsel and presents. The presents weren’t always the newest PlayStation or most expensive thing on the market. They were usually things we needed. As a kid I hated getting clothing, you could tell just from shaking the box that it was going to be an itchy sweater maw maw had picked out. I got socks every year. Not something I wanted but it was something I needed. As I’ve gotten older I’ve come to love getting socks for Christmas. Is there anything as fun as new socks? I’m 35 and still to this day if I put on new socks I’ll sprint through the house and slide through the kitchen. One day I’ll break a hip doing that but it’ll be worth it. The tradition of giving socks keeps me humble, reminds me of what’s really important. Reminds me that I don’t need the latest flashiest thing.

 This takes me back to Jesus teaching the disciples about the widows offering in Mark 12:41-44. She put in 2 small copper coins. All she had to live on and it meant more than all the others. While others gave out of wealth she gave out of poverty, she gave with faith and trust. She gave with what truly mattered. And this doesn’t just apply to gifts but also our prayer life. If we flip over to Matthew 6:5 Jesus teaches us that when we’re praying to not be like the pagans babbling on, but God already knows what we need.

 God will take care of us, it may not be what you want but it will be what you need.

Matthew 6:31-33

New International Version

**31**So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32**For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33**But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

 We have a lot of traditions in our house, like listening to veggie tales Christmas carols while putting up the tree. Me avoiding putting up Christmas lights till the last minute or I used to pick up both boys so we could put the star on the tree together until they got to be gigantic and my back started getting old. But my favorite tradition comes right after the getting trampled at 6am, monkey bread, reading from the Gospel of Matthew, and opening up gifts. It’s that calm that comes over you as you sit in a sea of ripped wrapping paper and clutter. That moment when all your work of preparing for the holiday season has come to fruition and there’s just peace. Unless you forgot to pick up batteries. That 2 minutes of quiet before we have to get ready to travel to in-laws and different families is the best part.

 Our Christian walk can be a bit hectic from time to time also. So, keep these verses in mind to help us stay focused on the right things.

Matthew 11:28-30

**28**“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **29**Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30**For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Psalms 46:10 be still and know that I am God

And finally,

Philippians 4:6-7

**6**Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7**And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

 We get to have that level of peace all the time, that want for nothing in this world, level of contentment. As long as we keep God as our priority everything else will fall into place.

As we get closer to celebrating the birth of our savior, when those memories and traditions start flooding back into our life make sure you share them with your families, build them on bible lessons and keep them going. One day your kids and family that grumbles about it now will grow up like I did. They’ll look back with a new-found appreciation and start some of their own.

If you’re ready to start your journey today, to start setting that example, focusing in on the right things, and getting peace like a river, please feel free to come forward or catch anyone of us to find out how to start that journey. Everything is ready the only thing missing is you.