

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon Title: Jesus, Sorry We Missed Your Birthday, Various Scriptures

Date preached: December 27, 2015

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INTRODUCTION: Have any of you ever missed someone's birthday? If so, you probably felt terrible for forgetting. It's kind of difficult to think we would miss Jesus' birthday, isn't it? I mean, think about it, no other birthday carries with it a global celebration. But, I'm afraid all that celebration might actually supersede the purpose of the holiday.

It's easy for us to forget Christmas is set aside to commemorate the birth of Jesus. We know some of our holiday traditions have nothing to do with the birth of Jesus. We could get so caught up in holiday parties and traditions that we completely forget the purpose of the holiday and therefore can honestly say, "Jesus, sorry we missed your birthday. We forgot to include gratitude in our prayers on Christmas Day. We forgot to read the Christmas story to our kids and our grandkids. Jesus, we're sorry we missed your birthday."

I know of a company that brought in a pastor to talk with the employees about holiday stress. It's hard to believe how worked up people can get over Christmas.

ILLUSTRATION: I was talking to someone recently who was in a store and saw a woman just go off the deep end because the Joseph figurine she bought for her nativity scene was not what she thought it would be. And, she made a scene right there in the store. Think about the irony right there.

So, my message today isn't so much about missing Jesus' birthday. It's an introduction to the topic of missing the point.

ILLUSTRATION: A former CBS news anchor in Los Angeles said she missed much of her child's first years, their first steps, first day of school, and other things. And, then one day, she was fired without explanation and says it was one of the best things that ever happened to her. She says, "I may not be making as much money as

I used to, but with a restructuring of values, priorities, and needs, I am much happier. And, I no longer miss the most important moments in life.” [Suzanne Rico Dubrow, Former CBS News Anchor]

Another person talks about how she was missing the point terribly. She spent so much time at work, she missed her friend’s wedding and a family funeral. She just didn’t feel like she could get away from work.

Sometimes in life, we miss important events because of circumstances beyond our control. Military friends of mine, as well as I, have missed important events because Uncle Sam’s wishes took priority.

Many of you know exactly what I am talking about because many of you have missed important events due to extenuating circumstances.

But, many times important events are missed because we fail to see what is really important at the time. If we are not careful, we’ll let lesser priorities dominate our lives.

ILLUSTRATION: When I was a teenager, I worked at Wal-Mart in Gallatin. One day, a man came in and fired the manager, called the store employees together, and told us he was the new manager. He told us Wal-Mart was the most important thing in his life, and his family was second place. At the time, I thought how horrible it was for a man to say such a thing. In the weeks that followed, I realized he meant it. I didn’t work there much longer because I didn’t want to work for a man like him. Later, I heard his marriage fell apart.

And, a lot of pastors miss the point by ministering to everyone’s families but their own.

I’d like for us to look at some people in the Bible who missed the point. My list is nowhere near exhaustive. There are so many people in the Bible who missed the point, it would take several months of Sundays to take a look at all of them. Today, I’ve selected only eight.

First, IN GENESIS 3, ADAM AND EVE MISSED THE POINT.

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 3:1-5 ¹*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”*

²*The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,*
³*but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”*

⁴*“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman.* ⁵*“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*

And, a few verses later, Adam misses the point by blaming Eve for his wrong doing.

EXPLANATION: The point was for them to be obedient to God, and they missed the point.

Second, IN GENESIS 16, ABRAHAM AND SARAH MISSED THE POINT.

God told Abraham he would have a son in his older age.

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 16:1-2 ¹*Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar;* ²*so she said to Abram, “The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.”*

And, we know what happened from there. The situation became a mess and eventually Hagar and Ishmael left on their own. Later, a son named Isaac was born.

EXPLANATION: The point was for Abraham and Sarah them to trust God, and they missed the point.

Third, IN THE BOOK OF JOB, JOB’S FRIENDS MISSED THE POINT.

A lot of terrible things happened to Job. He lost his family, his livestock, and his health. Three friends named Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, came to comfort him, mourn with him, and then they tried to figure out why all these things happened to him. They believed Job must have done something wrong. A lot of space in the book is derived from their judging of Job. In Chapter 42 of Job, we read the Lord's rebuke of them.

SCRIPTURE: Job 42:7-9 ⁷ *After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz ^mthe Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. ⁸ Now therefore take ⁿseven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."* ⁹ *So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the LORD had told them, and the LORD accepted Job's prayer.*

EXPLANATION: The point was for them to comfort and support their friend through his trials. Instead, they misrepresented God.

Fourth, NEXT A MAN NAMED JONAH MISSED THE POINT...TWICE!

SCRIPTURE: Jonah 1:1-3 ¹ *The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: ² "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."*

³ *But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.*

EXPLANATION: When Jonah finally repented and went to Ninevah to preach, the people believed his message and repented. And, God spared the city. Jonah missed the point again, because he hoped to see the city destroyed!

SCRIPTURE: Jonah 3:10 ¹⁰ *When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.*

SCRIPTURE: Jonah 4:1 ¹ *But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry.*

Fifth, IN LUKE, A WOMAN NAMED MARTHA MISSED THE POINT.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 10:38-42 ³⁸ *As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"*

⁴¹ *"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

EXPLANATION: The point was to spend time with Jesus. And, Martha missed the point.

Sixth, JUDAS MISSED THE POINT.

In Matthew 27, Judas went and asked Jesus' enemies what they would do for him if he gave Jesus over to them. They counted out 30 pieces of silver. Now we see Judas missed the point entirely of being a loyal disciple, but he missed the far greater point. Read with me in Matthew 27—

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 27:1-5 ¹ *Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. ² So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor.*

³ When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. ⁴ “I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.”

“What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.”

⁵ So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

EXPLANATION: Here’s the point Judas missed: That Jesus would have forgiven him.

Remember, the prodigal son? The father forgave his son.

Seventh, IN LUKE, JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED BETWEEN TWO THIEVES. ONE OF THEM MISSED THE POINT.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 23:32-43 ³²Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³ When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

³⁵ The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.”

³⁶ The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷ and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

³⁸ There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

⁴⁰ *But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”*

⁴² *Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.^[b]”*

⁴³ *Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

EXPLANATION: The thief who ridiculed Jesus missed the point. Jesus would have forgiven him of his sin.

Eighth, IN ACTS CHAPTER 5, ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA MISSED THE POINT.

They sold a piece of property and lied about what the land sold for. They both fell over dead.

EXPLANATION: The point was being honest, and they both missed it.

CONCLUSION: And, so now I return to my message title, *Jesus, Sorry We Missed Your Birthday.*

Were you so busy this holiday season that you missed Jesus altogether? Did you completely miss the point by focusing on other things? It would have been easy to do.

But, let me ask a larger question. Did you miss Jesus in 2015? Did you miss him in your sickness, in the problems you faced? Did you miss Jesus in your good health and in the joys of everyday life?

You see, living for Jesus means more than just singing *Happy Birthday Jesus* once per year. As 2015 comes to a close and as we move onward to 2016, let’s not miss the point.

Jesus wants us to trust him. He wants us to be faithful to him. He wants us to follow him wherever he leads us.

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