

**Title: Not Enough**

Text: Romans 3:19-20

Date: December 11, 2011

Place: Decatur Church of God

Theme: Romans

Tonight we gather for our Christmas musical. Every year we have guests who attend to celebrate the Christmas season with us.

Did you know that music was an early feature of the Christmas season and its celebrations? The earliest hymns were Latin works intended for use during the church liturgy, rather than popular songs. The 13th century saw the rise of the carol written in the vernacular under the influence of Francis of Assisi.

In the Middle Ages, the English combined circle dances with singing and called them carols. Later, the word carol came to mean a song in which a religious topic is treated in a style that is familiar or festive. Christmas carols in English first appear in a 1426. Music in itself soon became one of the greatest tributes to Christmas, and Christmas music includes some of the noblest compositions of the great musicians.

During the English government under Cromwell, the Rump Parliament prohibited the practice of singing Christmas carols as pagan and sinful. Like other customs associated with popular Catholic Christianity, it earned the disapproval of Protestant Puritans. Cromwell prohibited all celebrations of the Christmas holiday. This attempt to ban the public celebration of Christmas can also be seen in the early history of Santa Claus.

The Westminster Assembly of Divines established in 1644 legally abolished Christmas. Its celebration was declared an offence by Parliament in 1647. Puritans of that day generally disapproved of the celebration of Christmas — a trend that has continually resurfaced in Europe and the USA through the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

When in May 1660 Charles II restored the Stuarts to the throne, the people of England once again practiced the public singing of Christmas carols as part of the revival of Christmas

customs, sanctioned by the king's own celebrations. Singing carols in church was instituted on Christmas Eve 1880 (Nine Lessons and Carols) in Truro Cathedral, Cornwall, England, which is now seen in churches all over the world.

It amazes me how laws are created that affect even the great celebrations of the church. Could you imagine what it would be like today were it against the law to celebrate Christmas?

What are laws supposed to accomplish? Are they supposed to make us feel guilty?

### ***Romans 3:19-20***

*Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup>Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

You read these two verses and you say to yourself. "WHAT?" What did we just read? I'm not sure I understand. Let's try it in the MESSAGE.

### ***Romans 3:19 (The Message)***

*This makes it clear, doesn't it, that whatever is written in these Scriptures is not what God says about others but to us to whom these Scriptures were addressed in the first place! And it's clear enough, isn't it, that we're sinners, every one of us, in the same sinking boat with everybody else? Our involvement with God's revelation doesn't put us right with God. What it does is force us to face our complicity in everyone else's sin.*

- The shepherds on the hillside watching their flocks did not understand this when the angels came to them and sang from the heavens.
- The wise men, having traveled from afar, didn't grasp the significance of this new baby's birth.

## I. God's law is meant for revealing.

\* It's like a good flashlight with functioning batteries. It can show us the way through the most overwhelming darkness.

A. The law shows us that we are guilty before God.

### *James 2:10*

*For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*

\* A hot new trilogy on the book market begins with a book called "The Hunger Games." In this futuristic tale people live in an atmosphere of real oppression where almost any act of individuality or self-awareness is a crime against the nation.

The law that Paul writes about doesn't keep us from failing but rather reveals our failures.

B. We are accountable to God and the law reveals our shortcomings.

\* Like the rich man who comes to Jesus asking for affirmation we are embarrassed when he asks the revealing questions. The rich man left in great sadness because he was enamored with his own riches. What is it that we hold so dearly that the law reveals? Is it our lack of compassion, our bias and prejudices, or our attitude of stubborn rebellion?

## II. God's law makes it clear that we are sinners.

\* Edward Dantes, of "The Count of Monte Cristo", struggled with this notion in the dungeon of the Chateau D'If. What have I done to deserve such punishment? Am I not a good man?

A. Basically good or basically evil?

Most of us believe that we are basically good people. Compared to the trash of our world, we're not so bad.

B. We are not guilty of any serious sins.

And then the light shines on our thoughts and actions. The law reveals our deepest secrets.

### ***Galatians 2:16***

*Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*

### **III. God's law doesn't make us feel good.**

#### ***Hebrews 7:19***

*(For the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.*

A. How can this guilt be called "Good News?"

B. Knowing the law doesn't give us an edge over others.

\* When the shepherds returned from visiting the Christ Child they were not warmed by the words of the law but by relationship with the baby.

### **IV. God's law does make us aware that we are all in this together.**

A. We will all face God's judgment.

\* We tell our children that Santa knows if they are naughty or nice and that his gifts are given based on our placement on his list. He knows.

Is the almighty God less capable? We must all face God's book.

***Galatians 3:19***

*What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator.*

***Romans 8:2***

*Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*

***Romans 10:4***

*Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

B. We all need God's forgiveness and His righteousness.

The law makes us aware of our needs. Our heavenly Father gave us a gift that meets those needs.

His plan included the birth of a child in Bethlehem. That child, Jesus, was God incarnate, or God in the flesh. He came not only to represent God, He was God. We need God's forgiveness and through the gift of Jesus at Christmas and Jesus on the Cross, we are granted forgiveness.

Conclusion: If the law were enough we wouldn't need Christmas. Oh, sure, we all enjoy another holiday and the gift giving is a nice touch but it wouldn't affect our moral compass or our eternal destiny. But the law isn't enough.

\* I read recently about the arrest of a Christian who read his Bible at a California DMV office.

An assistant pastor and two leaders from Calvary Chapel of Hemet, California were recently at a regional DMV office before it opened, when Mark Mackey began reading from the Bible aloud. A security guard confronted him and told him to stop. Ten minutes later, a highway patrol officer arrived, snatched the Bible from Mackey's grasp and arrested him.

When the two men with Mackey asked what law had been broken, the officer inquired if they were also preaching. Shortly after, another officer arrested them both.

Compare that with Michael Jackson's doctor that was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter. Amanda Knox accused of murder in Italy and after years of jail time was acquitted. And how about Casey Anthony in Florida that was accused of killing her child?

Every day we read of shootings and stabbings in Fort Wayne and Indianapolis, and occasionally right here in Decatur. Banks are being robbed, children are being molested, spouses are being beaten, and schools receive bomb threats. The jails are so full in California that some convicted criminals in the state receive no jail time.

What do you think? Is the law enough?

Morally and spiritually has the law provided us with peace and security? Are you satisfied with the boundaries provided by Old Testament law, church policies, and governmental pronouncements? Do we need something else?

We sure do! We need Jesus! And Christmas is the gift that brought his presence into our lives. If Jesus lives in your heart, celebrate with me!

Thank you, God! Thank you, God!