

ADVENT CONSPIRACY #3: "WHAT WOULD JESUS BUY?"

Review

- "Advent" is the 4-week period before Christmas that is used to prepare for the celebration of Jesus' "coming" ("advent). "Conspiracy" is our combined efforts to undermine the secular version of Christmas and to substitute Jesus in its place. It's summarized by: "Worship fully", "Spend less", "Give more", and "Love all".
- To "spend less" we must recognize the threat of "consumerism" - the belief that we need stuff to be happy.

Why Spend Less?

- Jesus is our Lord – and he's lord over our money. As Christians we know that money and stuff can capture our hearts - so we guard our hearts by staying close to Jesus.
- Why spend less? We may be uneasy in this economic climate; we may have lost income from a job. But these aren't our reasons here.
- We're talking about spending less at Christmas: + Because we want to celebrate Jesus more; + So our happiness won't be tied so much to gifts as it will be to Jesus; + So we'll have more to give away to the kind of people Jesus would give to.
- Let's assume that gift-giving and gift-receiving will be some part of the way you celebrate Christmas this year.
 - ♦ And let's assume that your primary motive to give Christmas gifts is to serve as a reminder of God's gift to us in his Son.
 - ♦ And let's assume that you're making it a priority to give gifts to Jesus first (since, after all, it is his birthday!).
 - ▶ *Matthew 25:34-40* "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." . . . "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"
 - > Jesus considers a gift to the needy a gift given to him. He thanks you! (Note: So some of us may "spend more", not less!)

"What Would Jesus Buy?"

- ▶ 1 John 2:6 "Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did."
- But we're children of our culture. To what extent should we identify with our culture – or separate from it? If Jesus came to America, how much would he adapt to our culture? (Sandals? Robe?)
- What would Jesus ask for? And what would Jesus buy for others?
- 1. Principle of True Need.** We're not to worry about what we eat and drink and wear. "For the pagans run after all these things, and your

heavenly Father knows that you need them" (Mat. 6:32). 1 Timothy 6:7-8 - "For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that." So Jesus would buy/give for core physical health needs.

- 2. Principle of Contentment** (Phil. 4:10-13). To be content is to know the difference between a "need" and a "want" – and to use those words intentionally. Contentment is being happy when our physical needs are met because our true happiness comes from God and his gifts and our relationships with others.
 - 3. Principle of Love.** How can I buy something for myself that can be used for the good of others – for love. Or, how can I buy something for someone else that will contribute to their good? Love sees money as a tool to bless others – especially according to their needs. (Note: They may not "need" a particular gift, but they may "need" to know we care about their happiness.) But to truly love is to consider a person's good – especially how that gift might benefit them spiritually, or equip them to serve God more fully in their lives.
 - 4. Principle of Time Stewardship.** (Note differences in middle eastern vs. western values!) Would Jesus walk here in America and not use a car or a plane – or would he adapt to our culture and use money to "save time? If we use our time for God-pleasing tasks, that would seem to possibly be a good purchase. But sometimes slowing down is good for our spirit and prayer. And sometimes taking longer is good because of what happens during those times.
 - 5. Principle of Celebration.** Celebrate nature (like with camping supplies and flower beds); family, friendships, laughter and love (trips together); abilities, music, creativity, beauty (buy instruments, science kits, fishing rods, paintings, soccer balls). Celebrate what it means to be human on this earth for the glory of God. ▶ Deuteronomy 14:26-27. However, this isn't a "need" – so use caution in how much and often we celebrate this way. And sadly, we often get addicted, and lose all sense of proportion. We bow at the altar of pleasure and self and fail to practice the principles of contentment and love – and worship.
 - 6. Principle of Justice.** This has to do with how our purchase was produced and how the people who made it were treated. Just because it's happening on the other side of the world doesn't mean we have no responsibility for it. See the "fair trade" movement at www.tradeasone.com.
- Also, Jesus would probably buy things from consignment and second-hand shops. And he would sometimes not try to find the best deal, but spend more \$ to support the people who are making or selling it.
- ➔ **In the end this is about worship!** And if we can't do it right on Jesus' birthday, how are we going to do it right every other day of the year? God loves us – and our response to that love is what this is all about.