Thank you Father.

**SCREEN: Who Needs Christmas? Logo**

As Father mentioned, we’re in week 2 of our Advent Series, Who Needs Christmas? During this series, we’re taking a look at the ways in which we need Christmas.

Christmas is one of my favorite seasons of the year. I think it’s in large part due to the amazing traditions that my parents had we were growing up. They did a great job of blending the secular aspects of Christmas with a focus on the birth of Jesus.

**SCREEN: Santa kneeling at the manger**

Perhaps, that’s why this is one of my favorite Christmas image. Santa kneeling at the manger. For my family, how the world celebrates Christmas and our faith were never at odds with each other. Rather, they were two parts of the same story. And that’s something that I try really hard to make sure that I convey to my son.

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And that’s not a simple thing to do. With the busyness of the season it can be so easy to get caught up in all the parties, and baking, and shopping, and decorating and, AND…..AND.

So often we’re doing these things because we feel like we HAVE to, that we’re jipping our kids if we don’t do all the things. And the world is all too ready to lay on the mom guilt the moment we slack off a little and say no to that 4th cookie trading party. And it’s overwhelming.

And when we’re stretched too thin, we start to give into temptations like comparing ourselves to others, not focusing on what’s truly important and forgetting about the true reason for the season – the birth of our Savior. We give into sin, the very thing that Jesus came to free us from.

Let’s talk about the name *Jesus* for a second, shall we?

**SCREEN: Jesus**

 **Yeshua**

 **Joshua**

Jesus is a . . .

Latin translation

From a Greek word

Having to do with the Hebrew name Yeshua.

Latin to Greek to Hebrew: that’s a mental handful, I know!

Now the Greek and Hebrew languages don’t have the letter J. So while we say *Joshua,* they say *Yeshua.* A little confusing, but stay with me here.

To understand the significance of Christmas, it’s important to understand that the name *Jesus* was really *Joshua*.

From what we know based on Old Testament accounts, Joshua was a warrior—a military man. He led the ancient Jews after Moses. He delivered his people from enemies and oppressors.

So how did Jesus get the name Jesus in the first place? For that, we’ll have to look at the Gospel accounts leading up to the birth of Jesus.

In the Gospel of Matthew, after the angel visits Mary to tell her that she will be the Mother of God, an angel also visits Joseph. Here’s what the angel said:

**SCREEN:**

**“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her.** **She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”**

“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

*‘Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home…’*

In a small village in ancient times, everybody knew everybody’s business. They didn’t need social media or text messages to learn about the latest gossip. This was a controversy in the making! So it makes sense why the angel told Joseph not to be afraid . . .

*‘For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her.’*

Now, put yourself in Joseph’s shoes for a second. Think of the questions you’d be asking . . .

*Why me?*

*Why can’t I just get married and have a son the normal way?*

The angel continues,

*‘She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because….’*

Now, Joseph wouldn’t have even needed the angel to complete that sentence. (Although, does anyone ever interrupt a talking angel?) As a people that had been oppressed for centuries the need for Joshua, a “warrior king,” was blatantly obvious.

The angel continues,

*“ . . . Because he will save his people . . .”*

This makes sense. The ancient leader Joshua drove out enemies. So undoubtedly, Jesus—if He was the Messiah—was going to do the same thing – save his people.

But, the angel’s not done with his monologue:

*“ . . . Because he will save his people from their . . . ”*

Now, if you’re Joseph, this is an easy sentence to finish. Oppressors. Invaders. Enemies. Any synonym will work. His son, Jesus/Joshua, is going to restore Israel to its glory days. Exactly what the Messiah is supposed to do!

But then the angel threw Joseph a curveball . . .

*“ . . . Because he will save his people from their* ***sins****”*

Wait a minute. They already had a religious system to save them from their sins. That part was covered. People wanted to be saved from the Romans. “Sins” wasn’t supposed to be priority #1 for the Messiah.

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Now, Advent / Christmas may seem like an odd time to talk about forgiveness of sins. I mean we expect it during Lent and Easter, but somehow this part often gets pushed from our focus during this time of year.

But according to the angel, that’s why Jesus came. To save us from our sins. From the very beginning of Jesus’ life, his purpose was to save us.

Now, if Jesus came to save us from our sins, than why do we still sin?

Well, it’s because of free will. God didn’t make use robots, even with Jesus saving us, it’s still our choice.

If you’ve ever felt, *“I shouldn’t, but yet I’m going to,”* that’s allowing sin to be our master. But because of Jesus, we no longer have to let it be.

Christmas was a gift—not just for the forgiveness of sins, but freedom from the power of it! Through Christ, we can have a new master! Simply put,

**SCREEN: Christmas is for people who need freedom.**

Christmas is for people who need freedom. And here's the best news. God has freely given us this gift, the best gift ever.

When we put our faith in Christ, the Spirit of God is in us.

**We can say no to sin any time we want!**

Sin is not our master.

Lust is not our master.

A lack of self-control is not our master.

Alcohol is not our master.

Gossip is not our master.

Anger is not our master.

Jealousy is not our master.

Habits are not our master.

That doesn’t mean it’s easy. Temptation is real, and we will fail. That’s why we’re blessed with the Sacrament of Reconciliation. But know that you do have the freedom to say no to sin. That freedom was given when God sent Jesus into the world at Christmas.

Now, what does all this have to do with how we live out Advent during the next few weeks and how we celebrate Christmas?

For me and my family, it means doing things that help us to keep Jesus the priority.

**SCREEN: Toy Clean out image**

A super practical way we prepare is by doing a huge toy clean out. I know that my kids are blessed by generous grandparents, aunts and uncles – as well as Santa. And that can lead to major clutter and the kids being overwhelmed by it all, and not really playing with any of it.

So during Advent, we’ll do a huge clean out of our toys and look at what the kids are really playing with and what we need to give to others who would use them. And we involve our kids in that process – they make choices about what toys they want to give to those who might not have many toys of their own. And we talk about how sharing what we have been given is part of following Jesus, that giving to others as a reflection of God’s gift to us.

We also keep the focus on Jesus, by making Christmas Mass the center of our celebrations.

**SCREEN: (Christmas invite card back side with Mass times)**

St. Pius has many Mass times for you to choose from this year. On Christmas Eve we have Mass at 4, 6:30 and 9 pm. And then on Christmas day we offer Mass at 10 am. These times are available on the invite cards at each of the Church entrances.

And I would challenge you to not just make plans to come yourself, but invite someone to come with you. And not just family who are visiting from out of town – although we love seeing them too!

This year, consider inviting someone who doesn’t have a church home. Someone who needs to hear the message of Christmas, who needs a place like St. Pius where everyone is welcome, because everyone matters.

**SCREEN: Who Needs Christmas? Logo**

The world needed Christmas. And God needed it to demonstrate His love for us. But it’s also for anyone who needs freedom from sin. In the announcement of His birth, we see that Jesus was given His name because He is the One who will save us from the power of sin in our lives!

During these weeks leading up to Christmas, know that Jesus wants to be with you. He is here today, just as real as he was in that stable in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago.

So who needs Christmas? The whole world. You do and I do too.