

GROWTH GROUPS

December 9, 2012

Matthew 6:10; Malachi 3:16-18; and Hebrews 11:13-16

Conversation Starter: Have you ever heard a person say that they weren't going to be able to have Christmas this year because of hard economic times? What goes through your mind when people say this? How do you measure the success of a given Christmas year? Do you look at the number of presents or how nice the presents are to judge how well the Christmas went?

Understanding: This advent season we are using the theme, Turning Christmas Upside Down. The four sub-themes are Worship Fully, Spend Less, Give More, and Love All. This week we are looking at Spending Less. On the surface this just looks like a way to spend less and save money but in God's way of doing things it is not. At the heart of spend less is this week's lesson are the words from the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be Done." Jesus seeks to turn the world of religion and Christmas upside down or rather right side up by helping people look at their "world view" or outlook on life. He seeks to help us become kingdom of God people who live out a different lifestyle and set of values than the world displays. In God's economy, spending less can be more as people choose to invest in the eternal kingdom of God, the Word of God, and in the lives of people around us. God invites us to bring value, love, faith, compassion, the gift of who we are to the people around us. So to God spending less is not just about saying no...but rather it is about saying yes to God and to the relationships we are in so that we see that they are not about the stuff we bring but about what we give of ourselves to those around us and to God.

Questions

1. How does "God's kingdom coming and God's will be done" turn Christmas and the world upside down? What do you think that Jesus would like for his birthday this year? How could you be a part of such a gift?
2. Why does spending more and giving more gifts not really bring happiness and satisfaction in life? What does turning Christmas upside down look like in your world?
3. What might happen if the world began to see the Church celebrating Christmas in a different way than everybody else does? What if the Church gave a witness to the world that showed a Emmanuel-God with us attitude? Would that change anything? What if this different way of celebrating were accompanied by the feeling that the Church was a loving, compassionate, forgiving, healing, life changing place?

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