**Do You Really Love Jesus?**

“If You Love Me, keep My commandments.” (John 14:15)

As we approach what is often referred to as the holiday season, I find myself looking forward to our traditional Thanksgiving celebration more than Christmas for a number of reasons. During Thanksgiving, many look back with a heart full of thanks for where God has brought them. Their hearts are filled with such gratitude that they want to share their blessings with those who may not be as fortunate. They reach out to others who may not have a place to gather and invite them over for dinner. It’s a time when many volunteer to feed the hungry and the homeless. Some will visit the sick or shut-ins. In the spirit of thanksgiving, others lend a helping hand in any way they can to those in need.

However, we forget all about the purpose of Christmas. It was meant to be a time when we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus, the Christ. Instead, it has become a time when we look forward to purchasing items we do not need or to buy gifts for those who, for whatever reason, feel entitled. Some have said that Christmas is for children. No sister, no brother, Christmas is not about children and the gifts they receive on that day. It’s about Jesus’ decision to rid Himself of His glory in heaven, take on human flesh, and be born of a woman whom He created. What was meant to be a celebration of Christ has turned into man celebrating himself.

Remember John 3:16 which teaches that God gave His Son as a gift to this world. Shouldn’t we follow His example and give ourselves away? Let’s carefully consider Jesus’ teaching during this season. The following are some of the teachings Christ has left for those who are His followers:

**Matthew 25:35-40** “For 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.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“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.’

Sister and brothers, Christmas is not about us and what we can accumulate. It’s about Jesus! Do you really love Jesus? If so, He said to keep His commandments, and the greatest of them is to love God and one another.

Merry Christmas!

Elder Shirley Freeman

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