

LANDING

Walks onto stage with a bunch of beautifully Christmas packages, pulling various props out of the gifts as each one is mentioned:

- *Christmas Ornament for mentioning the trees*
- *A string of lights when talking about houses*
- *A large mug for the Hot Chocolate*
- *Hold one of the wrapped gifts when talking about Christmas morning*

I get so excited about Christmas every year. There are so many things I love about this season. I love setting up the Christmas trees, seeing the houses in my neighborhood lit up with Christmas lights. I love the smell of Hot Chocolate and spiced cider and the sound of carolers on the streets. I love all the parties and spending so much time with friends and family! I especially love the gifts that we get each year. Ever since I was very small, I remember waking up early on Christmas morning and sneaking out before anyone else in the house was awake because I wanted to see what was waiting there for me under that tree.

Let's face it everyone absolutely loves Christmas. I mean, look at the way we celebrate it each year. How many of us have tried to shop for that perfect Christmas gift for Grandma, even though she has everything she could ever want. How many of us have tried to throw one more Christmas party, even though we've already been to ten. I see you mom's raising your hands, and dads taking a big huge sigh (sigh). Kids, how many of your mom's make you wear that silly Christmas sweater and listen to Christmas songs until we're dreaming about Rudolph at night. We drink so much hot chocolate and cookies that we have to go on a diet. And parents you all know when this diet starts right? Every January 1st, New Years Resolutions.

Even though we celebrate in all these crazy ways, we do it because there is something so precious about the Christmas Season. In fact, there is something so special and important about creating Christmas memories that I bet that's why you're here tonight.

Perhaps this is why we start to believe that Christmas is really about the celebrations. However, those celebrations are really only there to point us in the direction of WHO Christmas is all about.

Put all of the packages and things down except for one, and walk away from them.

So, WHO is it about? Jesus. I want you to imagine with me the shepherds in that field so long ago surprised by thousands of angels! Talk about a celebration! Sure those shepherds knew that the tiny little baby was amazing and that he was a king. but I wonder if they realized the tiny baby they were going to meet that night in a humble stable was the only person who could save the world? Put yourself in their shoes. I'm not sure the shepherds truly understood the love that Jesus felt for each of them, even on the night of his birth?

You have an advantage over the shepherds and the wise men, because you can know the end of the story. You can hear that Jesus grew to be a man who chose to give up his life for you. All of us are a little bit like The Grinch before we learn WHO Christmas is all about - our hearts are missing something. We're missing the love that Jesus has to offer each one of us, and all we have to do is accept it.

Open the package and pull out one of the red Heart Ornaments.

SFX: John 3:16 slide

The Bible tells us in John 3:16, "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." In the moment that we accept the gift of Jesus, our hearts will change. (*Turn the heart over to so they everyone can see the word "Jesus" written on it.*) They will change because Jesus will have become our Leader, Forgiver and Friend.

Remember what it's like when Christmas is over? We take away all the trimmings and the songs, when the snow and hot chocolate leave, when the presents have been unwrapped? The whole world goes back to the way it used to be – normal. However, WHO we celebrate each Christmas is still there every single day of the year. Jesus is WHO Christmas is all about.

Maybe some of you are wondering how do you accept the gift that Jesus has to offer and what does accepting it look like? If these questions are important to you, following our service we'll have some of our staff members ready to meet with you about those next steps– together as a family or even individually. Just come meet us at the front after service.

PRAY