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I have to admit that in the past few months, I have been very anxious. Because in our church, there are so many people with different cultural backgrounds, it is very, very difficult for us to form a single church. They had to walk around blind.

On the English side, our brother, Sue Hong, ran the PowerPoint, and he can't even read Chinese. We're going home. And even you all, joining in the worship.

The English side, we clap on two and four. You guys clap on one and three. You know, there are a lot of people to thank, but there's several that I want to just point out.

Brother Glen Britton spent hours, eight, ten hours, setting up everything, so that everything is coordinated, light, sound, stage. So I want to thank him. And I want to thank Pastor Choi, who played Isaiah.

He doesn't know it, but he's taking over now for this program. And I want to thank Christine and Luke for being a great mother and son. I'm not joking.

I really was praying this for the last month, so I just prayed, Lord, please don't let his voice change. And now that we're less than 20 minutes to finish, I can relax and move on in my life. Because the Kwans are going to go on our annual Christmas vacation.

In the past, we've gone to Disneyland and Legoland. But this year, we're going to the North Pole. Via the Polar Express at the Grand Canyon.

This book was originally written by a man named Chris Van Allsburg and made into a movie starring Tom Hanks. Our kids will be able to dress up in pajamas and drink hot chocolate on this trip. And they'll listen to the story that tells little girls and boys who don't believe in Santa Claus what the true meaning of Christmas is all about.

If you haven't read the book or seen the movie, it's a little girl tells a doubting boy what Christmas is all about. She says it's about jingle bells. About Christmas tree and Christmas lights.

She said about presents and elves. And one that we all can relate to in a Chinese church, good food. And of course, jolly old Saint Nick, Santa Claus.

As I pondered her words, I recalled the Christmases of my childhood. They were just like as described. Nice and cozy and lovely.

But what I think you all have seen, as wonderful as that sounds, this Christmas musical tells us the real meaning of Christmas. We know it's about the birth of Jesus, God's only son, and what it means for each one of us. And yet, the church has been battling for

decades, trying to give the world this message, and they're fighting back with a different understanding.

I'm dating myself, but even like 60 years ago, Charlie Brown and the Charlie Brown Christmas is disillusioned with Christmas. And so he asked Lucy, a practicing psychiatrist, what Christmas is all about. You see, medical costs have obviously gone up in the last 60 years.

She said, Charlie, it's not about giving, it's about getting. Lucy said to Charlie, it's about being busy and participating and getting involved. You know, 60 years later, things haven't really changed.

If anything, things have gotten worse. We've become more frenetic, crazy, anxious, busy. There is an infamous day, and it's called Black Friday.

Traditionally, it's the day after, Friday after Thanksgiving. And in decades past, it was traditionally the time we were supposed to think and begin to think about Christmas. It was termed in Philadelphia to describe the city's traffic congestion on the day where people were hurrying around.

But retailers called it Black Friday for another reason. For them, it was a time when they actually started to turn a profit. They would go from the red into the black.

There was a time in this country 300 years ago where Christmas was a spiritual experience for the pilgrims. But century by century, decade by decade, year by year, the true message of Christmas is being smothered over by this materialism. It is a time of year where we have bought into the idea of what retailers are telling us we must have.

Back in 1929, it was the Dunkin' Yo-Yo. In 1936, during the Depression, it was the game Monopoly. In 1959, girls were trying to gain her figure but never would.

It was Barbie. And every year, retailers came up with something that people had to absolutely have. We turned the corner in 1985 when everybody absolutely had to have a Care Bear.

A stinking \$10 bear. And the story is told of a man who flew to Paris to get one for his daughter so she would have it on December 25th. Cute sell, so we came up with Tickle Me Elmo.

And Furby. But the 21st century, we're much more sophisticated now. Now the big items are technological.

Game Boy. Xbox 360. And PlayStation 3. Retailers are smart.

They know you can get these games for \$100. Yeah, no problem. I can afford that for my kid.

But it's the \$50 cartridges that are killing us. And people are willing to pay 10 times retail just to have it by December 25th. And we ask ourselves, are we finally satisfied? And the answer is no.

Because in the 21st century, we've come and replaced Black Friday with Cyber Monday. The Monday after Thanksgiving was traditionally the day that we would do Internet sales. But now the Internet is moving into Black Friday.

In this country, there was a record 57 million hits on retailers to purchase goods on Black Friday. \$1 billion in sales, 25% increase over 2011. It's great.

I can spend money, and I don't even have to get out in my pajamas. I don't have to get out in the cold. It's awesome.

And what do local retailers do? Now we're open on Thanksgiving Day. Eat your turkey, and then go stand in line at Target to get your \$300 55-inch screen TV. We know that's not what Christmas is about, but why do we buy into it? Maybe it's our city, the city of Chandler, which gives us the tumbleweed Christmas tree.

Or the Anthem Outlet, which boasts to have the biggest, tallest tree in the entire nation. Maybe that's where we've gotten into this idea that Christmas is all about buying, buying, buying. But we heard the true message of Christmas this morning.

It's in this verse, Galatians 4, 4 and 5. But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of children. This is God's message of love. You see, it's not about getting more things, it's about receiving the Son of God, which is all we need.

It's not about giving more things, because the most important gift you and I can give is the message of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. This gift of the Son is not glitzy or fashionable. It's not eye-catching or practical.

It won't wow people like a new Kindle Fire or a 65-inch Vizio flat screen. It won't bring a smile on people's face like a \$100 Amazon gift card. The true message of Christmas won't entertain you in your family room.

It will not look beautiful on your ring finger. It won't help you to transport photos through cyberspace. And it won't entertain my kids for five hours on a road trip to the Grand Canyon.

But what the true meaning of Christmas will give us is life and happiness, joy, peace, and salvation. Personally, I think it's a no-brainer, but God gives us our right to choose, which we will take. Have you received the gift of Jesus Christ this morning? I hope you enjoyed the musical this morning.

We made a very strategic design choice. Did you notice that the cross is just barely discernible in the background? That's because the focus of Jesus' birth is ultimately leading to his death. And it is through his death that you and I can have life.

I pray you would appropriate that life today. Would you bow your heads with me right now? In the quietness of your heart, is there anyone who is here serving God? I would say, you know, I've never accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior, and I want to do it this morning. I understand the true message of Christmas, and I want to accept Jesus as my Savior this morning.

With your eyes closed, if that's your desire, would you just raise your hand to God? It's not to me, it's to God. Everybody, there's a moment for you. Anyone this morning, raise it to the Lord.

One last time, do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? Father, I trust that you have done your work, and that everyone has a relationship with you in some way or another. But I pray that those of us who embrace the Lord would share that good news, not only this season, but for the rest of our lives. We pray in Jesus' name.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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