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Pastor, Don't Get Cute this Christmas

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

Kevin reads from his article in The Gospel Coalition to encourage pastors to forego the cliché and cute and stick to preaching "the old, old story" this Christmas.

Transcript

[Music] Today I want to read a short article posted before, posting it again for this Christmas. It's aimed particularly at pastors, hopefully something here maybe would be helpful. It's entitled "Pastor, Don't Get Cute this Christmas." I know the feeling, Christmas comes around every year, the same songs, the same text, the same story.

Most of the time I love the familiar rhythm of Advent and the comforting routine of tradition, but as a pastor I also know that sense of desperation. How many more Christmas sermons in holiday homilies can I possibly come up with? And I rarely do a full four-week Advent series. The poor brother who does an Advent series every year for 40 years is going to preach 160 sermons on Christmas.

I sympathize with the temptation to novelty, but don't do it, pastor. Don't get cute at Christmas. Your people need regular meat and potatoes, not the newest eggnog recipe.

Stay away from props and video clips. Put to death the Star Wars tie-in you've been really excited about or Mandalorian or whatever's out there right now. Don't worry about preaching the same truths and the same themes, do it.

They don't remember last year sermon anyways. You hardly remember it. Go ahead and tell them the old old story one more time.

That means the Christmas Eve service should not be about the evils of shopping or the dangers of busyness. We can leave behind clever clichés like wise men still seek him or have yourself a merry M.A.R.Y. Christmas. There's no need to focus for 40 minutes on what exactly was the Star of Bethlehem.

If you're going to talk about the Magi, don't make it an academic lecture on Persian

astrology. Let's spare our people the usual harangue about how Protestants have ignored Mary for too long, even though I've heard that sermon and read those articles every year since I was a kid, so maybe we're not really ignoring her. Let's not get caught up in the dating of Christmas or debunking all the supposed parallels with Mithras.

Look, there's a time and a place for all of that. I've written on some of those things. I've talked about some of those things.

So it's not a waste of time, but when you come to that Christmas Eve service or that Christmas morning service, let's make sure we're keeping the main thing, the main thing. There will be unbelievers at your Christmas Eve service. There will be struggling saints, weary souls, wayward sinners, stragglers who have ventured into a church for the first time in a very long time.

They need to hear about Jesus, about the Word made flesh, about the only begotten Son from the Father, about the one who fulfilled ancient prophecy, about the one who came to save his people from their sins. Dear pastor, and I'm reminding myself as much as I'm reminding you, our people don't need us to find something new. They don't need empty spiritual bromides.

They don't need us to brandish our cultural bonafy days at Christmas. Our people need the gospel. They need the Trinity.

They need to hear about the miracle and the majesty and the mystery of the incarnation. But, hunker down in Matthew 1 or Luke 2 or Isaiah 9 or Micah 5 or John 1 or in any text that will lead you to lift high the name of Jesus. Don't be cute or clever.

Just preach Christ. Your people will be glad you did. And looking back, years later, so will you.

[Music]