



*Jolly Old St. Nicholas:  
Meet the REAL Santa Claus!*  
**“St. Nicholas: A Committed Christian”**  
2 Timothy 1:5-7; Colossians 2:6-7



**First Time:** November 29, 2015

**First Place:** Enola First Church of God

### **Introduction**

Maybe, just maybe, a “Year Without a Santa Claus” would be a very good thing. After all, it is Santa Claus who causes a severe case of the “gimme-gimme’s” in children all around the world. If it weren’t for Santa Claus, we may not have people stomping all over each other at malls and big box stores on Black Friday. Maybe Santa Claus is just plain bad. But then again, maybe not. Take a look at this:

### ***[View Video: Cliff Snider Part 1]***

Wow! Give me a Santa Claus like that! I have good news for you. The real, historical St. Nicholas of Myra was a person very much like the Santa you saw in that video—He was a Committed Christian! His life’s testimony is an inspiration to Christians today and is the much of the focus of this message series: Jolly Old St. Nicholas: Meet the REAL Santa Claus! So are you ready to meet the REAL Santa Claus? Let’s do it!

### **1) Be Enlightened About St. Nicholas – A Committed Christian!**

-We’re going to take a trip back in time to the first century. Around the year 55 A.D., Paul the Apostle was nearing the end of his third missionary journey and stopped at Patara, a town in the southern part of what is now the nation of Turkey. You can read about it in Acts 21:1. In time, a community of Christians, a church formed there, possibly due Paul’s influence. Let’s fast-

forward a little more than 200 years.

-The year is now 270 A.D. Christianity is growing in Patara and other parts of the known world, but it is still an illegal and persecuted faith.

-A very wealthy couple in that community of Christians in Patara gives birth to a baby boy on March 15. They give him the name "Nicholas" which means "Victory for the People."

-And one very important thing that these parents did for young Nicholas is something that all Christian parents should do for their children: From the beginning, they raised Nicholas to grow up to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

-He was taken regularly to church there in Patara.

-From the senior members of the church, he learned the saving message of Jesus; about his birth, ministry, death and resurrection

-He joined with his parents and his church family as they gathered to share the Lord's Supper.

-And he knew the Scriptures.

-Unlike the modern-day legendary Santa Claus who chows down out on cookies and hot chocolate, Nicholas probably ate fish from the sea along with grapes, figs, lentils and olives.

-Being from a wealthy family, he received an excellent education in primary school and privately from a "secondary teacher."

-Everyone knows that Santa Claus is chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf. But as he grew into adulthood, Nicholas was probably a slender man with an olive complexion, reflecting his Turkish ancestry.

-He grew up to be man of prayer, and like his parents, never strayed from the church. He embraced the Christian virtues of compassion and generosity.

-St. Nicholas was, by all accounts, a Committed Christian! In this series, we will look at the various ways Nicholas put his Christian faith into action.

-He was not a perfect man, but a Committed Christian.

-He went home to be with the Lord on December 6,

343.

-The legend of today's Santa Claus evolved from St. Nicholas probably due to the fact that he was a generous man and his death is remembered every year on December 6 during Advent.

-But the thing I encourage you to remember today is this: His life's story inspires us to also be Committed Christians. Let's look at the Scriptures and talk about that!

## 2) **Be Excited About Being a Committed Christian!**

### a) Continue to live in Christ - **Colossians 2:6-7**

Living in Christ means maintaining a lifestyle patterned after His. 1 John 2:6 says, "Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did."

-This is one time that it's perfectly acceptable to be a copy cat.

-It's like playing Simon says with Jesus Christ being Simon. We do as he says, we live as he lived.

-Fortunately, the Colossians passage gives us some ways to get a little help in being excited and passionate about doing that that:

#### i) Remember your:

##### (1) **GROUNDING** in the faith

"rooted in Christ" – literally, "having been firmly rooted." It is a past action that has continuous application. -Like a tree with deep roots in rich soil, believers have been **firmly rooted** in

Christ. That eternal planting took place at salvation.

#### **Illustration**

*I was watching a group of roughnecks try to dig a tree stump out of my grandfather's yard. The one guy looked at the other and said, "Do you think a quarter or half stick of dynamite would get it out?" Come to think of it, that might not have worked because those roots were so deep.*

-Nicholas' grounding came through his family

and his church. When were rooted in Christ—what’s your story? Remember it! It will help you to continue in Christ and be a committed Christian!

(2) **GROWTH** in the faith

“Built up in Him” - literally, “now being built up in Him.” That indicates a process of being more and more like Jesus Christ

**Illustration**

*This town we are in—Enola, PA. Were any great men or great women born in this town? The answer is NO. Only babies. Some of those babies born in this town did grow up to be great men and women. How? They grew.*

-Throughout his life as a Christian, Nicholas grew in his faith. How have you grown in your faith? What are some of those spiritual growth spurts in your life? We heard testimonies last Sunday of folks who had a growth spurt through our Revival. That’s great! Remember that! It will help you to live in Christ and be excited about being a committed Christian!

(3) **GRIT** in the faith

“Strengthened in the faith”

Being firmly rooted in Christ and growing in Him results in believers being established in their faith.

**Illustration**

*There’s one more thing you should know about St. Nicholas: A terrible tragedy occurred in his life when he was 18 years old: His parents died. Being an only child, this was a very difficult predicament for the young man Nicholas. But did he give up? NO! In spite of the tragedy of losing his parents, Nicholas went on to become a leader in the church of Jesus Christ. He was a Bishop—an office recognized in many churches as an*

*overseer of other churches. That's grit!*

-The Santa Claus (Cliff Snider) that you saw in the opening video also lost his father at a young age. But what did he do? In his father's honor, he began a ministry where he prays for people as Santa Claus!

Remember what Pastor Warner said during our revival? The storms come to both the man who built his house on the sand as well as the man who built his house on the rock. But the man who built his house on the rock, that is Jesus Christ, withstood the storm due to his grit in the faith! He was rooted in the faith and grew in his faith, anchored to the rock and so he withstood the storm.

-Think about the storms of life that God has seen you through. That will help you to continue in Christ and be excited about being a committed Christian!

ii) Report your:

(1) **GRATITUDE** for the faith

"Overflowing with thankfulness." This is the only clause in the active voice. It is a response to the other three. Believers who are firmly rooted in Christ, being built up in Him, and established in their faith, will overflow with gratitude to God.

-Say thank you to God often; not just on Thanksgiving Day, but every day. That will help you to continue in Christ and be excited about being a committed Christian!

b) Fan your gifts into flame – **2 Timothy 1:5-7**

-Timothy was a young pastor that the Apostle Paul had a tremendous amount of confidence in! He had a good grounding in his faith in part due to his mother and grandmother.

-When Paul commissioned Timothy to be a pastor he layed his hands on him and God imparted a special blessing on him to serve that church. Paul's

word to Timothy was to fan that gift into flame!

-St. Nicholas was passionate about being generous to others, upholding the truth and fighting false doctrine and idol worship. He had a special passion for sailors.

-What are your spiritual gifts and passions? What are you naturally good at? What has God given you a special ability to do? Take those things and fan them into flame! Don't sit on them or throw a bucket of cold water on them! It will help you to continue in Christ and be a committed Christian!

-Some of you may be asking, "What does all of this have to do with Christmas?" Well, actually, there is a Christmas connection!

### **3) Be Encouraged About the Christmas Connection!**

-Often in the Advent Season, in addition to the birth of Christ, we look at the story of the birth of His cousin, John the Baptist.

-John was born to two parents who were devoted to God's service. His father Zechariah was a priest. His mother Elizabeth was a godly woman. Originally, they couldn't have any children but God took care of that: they had a baby boy and named him John.

-The Bible tells us that as a child, John grew and became strong in spirit. He grew up to be a prophetic voice for God.

-Ultimately, He paved the way for the ministry of Jesus Christ! You talk about someone who was committed to his faith. HE WAS!

### **Conclusion**

-Yeah, I supposed too much of Santa Claus in our time can make you obsess over shopping, eating cookies, Rudolph, rigging up the lights and all of the other holiday trappings of our time.

-But the story of St. Nicholas, the REAL Santa Claus, a Committed Christian, serves as a reminder to follow God's word—to be live like Jesus, to be Committed Christians.