

[walk out with wrapped present in hand]

Merry Christmas New Day!

It's so great to have you here with us - whether in person or online - for our first ever Christmas Eve services!!!

I hope you've enjoyed the live nativity, the hot cocoa bar, the beautiful decorations and the music - and we actually have more to come - but before we get to that I want to share briefly about the One we've gathered to celebrate - and that's *Jesus*.

Tomorrow we will all be opening presents. Some of you might pre-game it and open some tonight but for most of us - we'll be opening presents tomorrow morning.

This one here is actually for my wife and it's her "big" present this year. Every year I get her a handful of "small" presents and then one "big" one - and this is this year's "big" present. I literally cannot wait to give it to her because it's hands down the best present I've ever gotten her and I know she's gonna love it. And I only have wait another 12 hours or so to give it to her! I'm so excited!

Now tomorrow morning before I give this to my wife and before my kids open their presents, as I do every year, I will remind our kids that we give gifts at Christmas because Christmas is the time of year that we especially remember how God gave a wonderful gift to us.

I remind them of **John 3:16** which starts, "**For God so loved the world that he gave...**"

What did he give? The rest of the verse tells us: God gave, "**...his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.**" **John 3:16**

God has given mankind many “small” gifts - *beautiful* things for our eyes to see, *pleasant* things for our noses to smell and *lovely* things for our ears to hear - even the sun and rain needed to grow food and sustain life - but His “big” present for mankind is Jesus.

Now the question begs: Why do we consider Jesus a gift?

- Well, in sinning against God we have brought judgment upon ourselves.
- In the Garden of Eden God laid down the universal law that the one who sins shall die.
- In sinning we brought God’s sentence of death upon ourselves - for death is the penalty the law demands for sin.
- And long story short: Jesus is a gift because He makes it possible to escape this judgment and to instead inherit eternal life.

And what I want to do - real quick - is share how you can receive the gift of Jesus this Christmas (if you’d like to).

- Take a look: **Eternal life comes to those who ask Jesus to be their Savior and appoint Jesus as Lord (or King) over their life.**
- Asking Jesus to be your Savior gets your sins forgiven.
- And appointing Jesus to be your King is how you demonstrate saving faith.

You see - in the Bible there’s two kinds of faith.

- There’s dead faith and saving faith.
- Dead faith says “Jesus, be my Savior - because I don’t want to go to hell - but I’m gonna pass on You being my King - because I don’t want anyone telling me how to live - or not to live.” That’s a picture of dead faith.
- But saving faith is different.
- The person with saving faith says “Jesus, be my Savior *and Lord.*” That is, “Be my Savior but also my King - the one who has the right to call the shots and tell me how to live.”
- That’s saving faith.

- And it's harder than dead faith for sure - but though dead faith is easier - dead faith has never and will never save anyone.
- Only saving faith saves.

Now, when you appoint Jesus as King over your life, your life is going to change.

- Some people change seemingly over night while others change slowly but surely over time - but when Jesus is made King - your life begins to change - because when Jesus is King, you read God's Word - align your life accordingly - and that's what produces the change.
- And whether it happens seemingly over night or over a period of time - the one who has truly appointed Jesus as King will one day look back on their life and say, "I've changed so much you could say that I'm a new person in Christ."
- This is why some Christians say "I've been born again" or identify as a "born again Christian."

And this changed life - which is the evidence that you've appointed Jesus as King over your life - is so essential to salvation that Jesus said this in **John 3:3, "...Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

- Put another way - if you don't appoint Jesus as King and don't show the evidence of having done so - the evidence of a changed life - you will not be saved and will not live forever in the kingdom that God has appointed King Jesus to rule over for all eternity.
- Friends - there has to be a transformed life - that's so different from the life you had before Jesus came into the picture - that it can only be described as a *second birth*.

If you're joining us for the first time tonight - we've been in a sermon series over the last month [**show series graphic**] called HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING where we've been unpackaging the rich theology encapsulated in this very popular Christmas carol - originally written by a pastor named Charles Spurgeon.

Let's look real quick at verse 3.

- **Mild He lays His glory by**
- **Born that man no more may die**
- **Born to raise the sons of earth**
- **Born to give them **second birth****

This part of the song lets us know that Jesus didn't just come to be Savior - He also came to be King over our lives.

- And as He rules, our lives change - so much so that it can be said we've experienced a second birth.
- The old person is gone - a new person has been born and is ever being conformed to the image of Christ.
- But if there is *no* second birth - no *transformation* - it tells God one thing: You've asked Jesus to be Savior but haven't appointed Him to His rightful place as Ruler (or King) of your life - which means you have dead faith, not saving faith.

So do you see tonight? **Jesus is Savior and King or He is neither.**

CONCLUSION

- I can't wait to give this gift to my wife tomorrow. I'm *itching* to give it to her.
- I'm also itching to give presents to my kids.
- But you know Who's itching even more to give a present *to you*?
- God!
- By sending Jesus to die on the cross God has already taken His gift and extended it in your direction - like He's trying to give it to you.
- But only you can decide if you're going to receive it or not.
- For all who want to receive God's gift - the gift of eternal life - made possible through a saving faith in Christ - I want to invite you to pray with me.

Would you bow your head and close your eyes? And in your heart - not out loud - but in your heart - say...

- Heavenly Father

- For my sin and rebellion against You - for breaking your laws and for making myself king over my life - I deserve the sentence of death.
- But I thank You for Your great love - that motivated You to provide Jesus as a way of escape.
- Today I'm trusting Jesus to forgive my sins - and today I'm appointing Him King of my life.
- I know I won't be perfect, but I'm going to begin learning Your Word, and aligning my life with it accordingly.
- And I'm trusting You that in time I'll be able to say "It's like I've been born again."
- I want this second birth.
- And I thank You and praise You that because I do You are granting me eternal life today.
- Of all my presents this year - this one is most certainly the best.
- Thank You for making this possible through saving faith in Christ.
- It's in His name I pray.
- Amen.

Well congrats to all who prayed that prayer and let me say this - your next step is to begin learning how to follow Jesus and make Him King of your life - so I want to invite you to join us **[show slide]** Sunday January 2nd for the kick off a new series called Christ the King where we'll teach you to do just that! I hope you can make it out!

Now I know that it's Christmas Eve - and that you're probably itching to get home to be with family or friends - or maybe to do some last minute prep for Christmas. But right before you leave - as Andrew mentioned earlier - we have one final surprise...

[walk off stage]