

CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

SERIES: JESUS

SERMON: JESUS - THE GIFT

12-22-24

OPENER:

I want to read from place in the scripture that you usually don't read from on Christmas, but it's a great Christmas verse.....

Romans 8:32 (ESV) He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

ILLUSTRATION:

It's at Christmas time that we give gifts. In fact, it's the only holiday in which we do all this gift giving. It's the reason why retailers are so happy with Christmas, in a way that they're not happy with Fourth of July, for example, or Easter, because at the other holidays, we don't give gifts. Even at birthdays and weddings and anniversaries, we all give gifts, but just to one, but at Christmas we give gifts to all. Why do we do that? It's a great custom because it acts out, the central event of Christmas.

**THE CENTRAL EVEN OF CHRISTMAS IS THAT JESUS
WAS NOT JUST BORN. HE WAS GIVEN TO US.**

Paul says.... he did not spare his own son, but gave him for us all. How will he not also along with him, graciously give us all things?

This is the one gift. If you have it, you have all the other gifts. That's what Paul's saying. This is the one gift if you reject it, you lose all other gifts. This is a theme of the Bible.

There are some other Christmas passages that talk about this....

>Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a Child is born,Unto us a Son is given.

>John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

>2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

ILLUSTRATION:

Jesus has many names. There's many metaphors used in the Bible to explain who he is, because Jesus is like a diamond. If you pick up a valuable diamond, and you turn it in the light .Its facets hit your eyes and flashes at you. You can turn it and turn it and go on and on forever and not see everything. Through every facet of a diamond, you can see the whole,

every facet shows you every other facet through the one, and then you can turn it and then you can see that facet through another one. So every time you look into a diamond you see it in a different way from another perspective and to really see the glory of of a great stone you need to keep turning it and turning it.

In this series, we have looked at Jesus as:

- > the God-Man
- > Our Mediator
- > He is a Window and a Mirror
- > Our Servant
- > Our Example
- > Our Substitute
- > He is our King, but also our closest friend

This morning I would like to look at Jesus as a gift from God. And by thinking about Jesus as a gift, I think we'll come to understand better who he is and how we should relate to him.

1. JESUS IS THE BEST GIFT

ILLUSTRATION:

Now, first of all, now I'm not saying all gifts have this quality, but the best gifts do!

Gifts are surprises

A good gift the best gifts are unexpected. They're surprise. Now, it doesn't mean that *all gifts* have to be a surprise and some great gifts are not a surprise, but the power and the delight of a gift is greatly enhanced when it's something you don't expect.

A person who's just been given a great gift is, "I didn't expect it. I wasn't even looking for it, but it's exactly what I need. It wasn't on my list, but why didn't I want it? Why didn't I ask somebody for it? It's perfect. Thank you so much! I didn't put it on my list, but now that I see it, it's exactly what I need and exactly what I want."

This is how you can tell the difference between a person who's had a true, transforming experience of Christ and how you can tell the difference between a person who just has formal religion. A person who's

characterized by moral niceness and not by a transforming experience in Jesus!

**PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED JESUS IN A REAL WAY ALWAYS FEEL
THE SAME WAY.**

**THERE HAS BEEN A TIME IN THEIR LIFE THAT
THEY CAN LOOK BACK TO.
IT COULD HAVE LAST WEEK.
IT COULD HAVE BEEN LAST MONTH - LAST YEAR-
LAST DECADE.**

**YOU KNOW..... THERE WAS DEFINITIVE TIME WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOU
KNEW ALL ABOUT JESUS.
BUT WHEN YOU MET HIM THERE WAS A REVOLUTION IN
YOUR UNDERSTANDING.**

**YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN RAISED IN CHURCH.
YOU MIGHT HAVE GONE TO SUNDAY SCHOOL ALL YOUR LIFE AND YOU
THOUGHT YOU KNEW ALL ABOUT HIM.
BUT A REAL DISCIPLE IS ALWAYS SOMEONE WHO'S HAD HIS
UNDERSTANDING REVOLUTIONIZED.**

**BECAUSE WHEN JESUS SHOWS UP, WHEN YOU ACTUALLY MEET HIM,
YOU SAY, THIS IS NOT AT ALL WHAT I EXPECTED.
THIS IS NOT AT ALL WHAT I WANTED AND YET NOW THAT I HAVE HIM,
HE'S EXACTLY WHAT I WANT.
HE'S EXACTLY WHAT I NEEDED.**

Yes. Jesus is a gift, so he always is a surprise. And the way you can tell you've met him is you've been shocked and surprised. our expectations shattered by him. Has that happened to you? If it has not happened to you, it's never happened to you, you have not met him.

2. THE GIFT OF JESUS WILL SURPRISE YOU

John 1: 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

When Jesus was here, he made a huge impact, healed many people, caused quite the stir. People lined up to have him lay hands on him and heal him. He was so popular by the way that he could captivate an

audience with his teaching and the wisdom that thousands gathered to hear him. His was so popular that the Pharisees were so jealous of him that they plotted a way to kill him.

Huge crowds followed him but not many people truly accepted Him. His last command, when he called all of his disciples and followers to gather together after he was gone in the Upper room, were only 120 of them. So by and large, he was rejected. Only a few really received him. Why? Because he did not meet the expectations.. They expected a certain kind of person.

THE REASON THEY MISSED HIM WAS BECAUSE THEY REFUSED TO BE SURPRISED.

THEY REFUSED TO SEE JESUS AS A GIFT.

THE GIFT OF JESUS WILL ALWAYS SURPRISE YOU AND WILL SHATTER YOUR EXPECTATIONS.

They expected Jesus to be a political leader. The Messiah had to be a person of power, a person with clout, a person who could really get things done. They were under the thumb of the Roman oppressors. They wanted someone who can get something done, who would attack the Romans by force and free them.

They expected a messiah to say, "Those people are the problem." But instead, Jesus comes along and says, "Repent." He refuses to become political.

He is born as a helpless baby to a poor family in the backwoods of the country. He doesn't have the right connections. He never becomes an influential person. He travels around and what does he say? If you read the gospels, you'll see the summarization of everything that he taught while he was on earth was "Repent. and everybody said, this is the Messiah, forget it. This can't be the Messiah. He is supposed to be the one who's going to save us. The one who's going to deal with our problems. It can't be him."

AND SO THE ONLY PEOPLE THAT RECEIVED HIM WERE THOSE FEW WHO WERE WILLING TO LET THEIR EXPECTATIONS BE SHATTERED.

WILLING TO LISTEN - WILLING TO ACCEPT HIM AND SAY," OH WOW THIS ISN'T AT ALL WHAT I EXPECTED, BUT HE'S EXACTLY WHAT I NEED!"

We start out this way too. Why did you start coming back to church? Why did you start coming to church? Why did you start seeking again? Why did you start reading your Bible and thinking? Why did you start asking life questions? Because you were looking for their kind of Messiah.

You said.....

> “My career is stalled, and I need someone with power who can get things moving for me!”

> I am lonely, and I need a wife, a husband, I need someone to really love me for me.

> I've got problems and I need someone who will come in and do something for me. There's problems in my life. I need someone to change some things.

> There are people who have abused me, people who have oppressed me, people who have kept me down. I haven't gotten promoted. I've got needs! I need a God who will come into my life and deal with these things.

But, you know, you're just like the people in Jesus' day that rejected him. They were looking for a Messiah with power with clout.

But here's what's so unexpected about Jesus. Here's what shatters us. We all think our problems are due to the people out there. They're the ones, see? We say, the have nots, are the problem. They're unproductive and they're lawless and they're dragging us down. Or we say the ones who have are the problem. You know, they open doors for each other and get each other into the right clubs in the right boardrooms and they won't share their power, they won't share the wealth.

So everybody thinks their problem is someone else. We need someone who will deal with that group or those outside forces, then things would be okay! But Jesus comes and says, “Repent.” He is saying to us the problems are not out there, they're in here. Your primary problem is you, not them, it's you.

**EVERYONE WHO HAS MET THE REAL JESUS
KNOWS THIS TRUE.**

**WE KNOW THAT THE REAL PROBLEM IN OUR LIVES AND THE REAL
PROBLEM WITH THE WORLD IS THE SELFISHNESS IN OUR OWN HEART.
IT'S THE SELF-CENTEREDNESS - IT'S THE FLAWS OF OUR OWN HEART.
IT'S THE SELF-DECEPTION - IT'S OUR SIN.**

CLOSING:

Now, if there's anybody here who says, I don't want anything to do with that kind of talk, that's primitive and that's old fashioned. Then I say you haven't met Jesus. That's all. This is all I'm saying, the real Messiah always comes through and shocks you, The difference between morally nice people and real Christians..... Real disciples are people who have met the real Jesus and he is revolutionized their understanding. He is not what they expected.

If you today don't think the repentance is the thing you most need in your life. And If you don't know that, then you haven't received the gift of Jesus. Because a true disciple, even years later, will say, I never realized it. It wasn't the gift I thought I wanted, but now I see it's exactly what I need.

Has that ever happened to you? Has there ever been this kind of, you know, change in your thinking about who Jesus is?
If not, you haven't met him. That's all I'm trying to say.

if you say, well, I like a lot of things he says, but I don't want to get too radical or crazy! No one who ever met the real Jesus had a casual reaction.

There were three responses to Jesus:

They either loved him and threw down their lives and did anything for him and followed him.

Or else they hated him and tried to kill him.

Or they were scared and they wanted to run away from him.

Jesus a surprise because he's a gift. He's the indescribable gift, as he surprised you.