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Series: Family Christmas
Message: A Christmas Glossary

Transcribed Message
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Well, as I said, this morning is going to be totally different. We're not going to do an exposition of a passage in the traditional way that we do it. We are going to do an explanation of what we are simply calling Christmas glossary, just terms and words of Christmas. There's a part of the Covenant family that loves jigsaw puzzling, and we've already had a jigsaw puzzle night a while back. Well, this is the crossword puzzle opportunity, all right? So, you have your bulletin, hopefully, before you there, and in your bulletin, there is a crossword puzzle, and we're going to work through that together. And as we do that, I'm going to give you a clue, and then we will let you shout that out.

Now, understanding that there's an element at Covenant that can be very competitive in these kinds of events, we're going to ask that you not dominate the whole morning. So, if you get an answer right, then maybe sit out the next one and let somebody else have a chance as well. And looking back, I wish I had added a few more words for some of the younger ones in our group. I kind of messed up on that. There's some in there, and I'll highlight those when we come to them, and maybe the adults can let the younger group see if they can figure out any of those as we start.

Christmas glossary 15. We're going to look at 15 different words. We're going to start with one down. One down is a word that starts with an I, and it means in the flesh. Starts with an I, and I heard the word incarnation, right? Incarnation. You know, one of the things that's kind of interesting as we go through this, incarnation simply means in the flesh, and it correlates to our study in the gospel of John that we've been going through on Sunday morning. Remember in John 1:14, John says, and the word became flesh. The word became incarnate. And that really is the essence of the Christmas story, isn't it? So, one down is incarnation.

Two across. Starts with an A and means coming. Advent, yes, advent. Starts with an A and it means coming. So Jesus is coming. This is the season that we think and celebrate that.

We go over to three down. Three down starts with either an E or an I and means God with us. Some low murmuring, but I didn't hear it. Immanuel, yes, Immanuel. Sometimes you see it spelled with an E, sometimes you see it spelled with an I. God with us. The very essence of the incarnation, isn't it? The fact that God would come, take on the form of human flesh, and be with us is just an amazing and startling thing.

So, we're going to stay on the down group and go to number four. This is a short form for Christmas, a short word for Christmas, Xmas. Xmas has an interesting reputation. There are people who are taken back, they're offended when they see the word Xmas because they feel like it's taking Christ out of Christmas, right? And while that might appear at first to be the case, it didn't start that way. It started with the idea because the Greek word Christos begins with a "chi", which is an X. Early on it was just a shortened form of Christmas. So, it doesn't necessarily indicate that somebody's trying to take Christ out of Christmas. In fact, it might be that they're using the very first letter in the Greek alphabet or the Greek word for Christos to indicate that celebration.

So, okay, five across. Last week's Mary's Song, this is a Latin word. Mary's Song in Latin was called the Magnificat, Mary's Magnificat. This morning you're going to get English, you've got some Greek, you just had some Latin, and you're going to be bilingual when we leave here this morning, all right?

Let's stay across and go to number six. Starts with an N and is another word for Christmas in French. So you guys are already bilingual. It is not bonjour. It is Noel. Noel is the idea behind that one.

Okay, number seven down starts with N, a word that refers to the birth of Jesus, Nativity. All right, you guys are all over this, Nativity, yes. That's the word that is often used to refer to the birth of Christ.

Eight across. Now we're going into another language group, Spanish for Christmas, Feliz Navidad. There we go. We better get that one with our ELL ministry, the two words for Christmas.

Number nine, we're going to stay on the across. Three Latin words the angels spoke. Three Latin words the angels spoke. A clue. We already sang it this morning. Did somebody say it? Gloria in excelsis Deo, right? We have the angels, which I didn't

know they spoke Latin, but evidently they did. No, that's not true, they did not speak. Well, they maybe did, I don't know.

Ten down starts with an A. What Gabriel's message to Mary is called. If we were playing Wheel of Fortune and you said, give me an N, there'd be four of them. Starts with an A, a word that starts with A, what Gabriel's message to Mary is called. Annunciation, annunciation. That's often the way that is referred to.

Number 11, across, now this one we should let the younger group try to figure out first. Starts with M, what Jesus was laid in. I see that hand, yell it out. Manger, yeah, all over the place, manger, way to go. All right, so Jesus was laid in a manger.

Now, number 12 down, a word that means listen. An angel's carol starts with an H. hark, right? The angels call us to attention, to listen.

Now let's look at 12 across. Two words. A theological term describing Jesus as the God-man, and as you see already, the first word starts with an H. That's when you've got to put your theological thinking cap on. There's two words. I don't really even know how to give clues to this one, except how about, I think this is also a word for a transmission. Hypostatic union, yes, hypostatic union. Mark, is there such a thing as a hypostatic transmission? Hydromanic, okay, close, starts with an H. Hypostatic union is a theological term that is used to speak of this miracle, the wonder of Jesus as the God-man.

All right, number 13, this one also the younger group could definitely help us out here. The one who Christmas is all about, Jesus. That's right. In Sunday school, you always know if you answer Jesus, you're probably going to give the right answer.

All right, last one, this one's a challenge too. We're going to end on a thinking note, right? Fourteen across starts with P and means first gospel. So, we have the word for first, starts with a P. You know it, you use that word often. When there's something that's produced for the first time, it's a proto. So, first gospel, *Proto-Evangelium*, that's right, who said that? *Proto-Evangelium*, yes.

When we look at that crossword puzzle, those last two words are what we want to focus on, *Proto-Evangelium* and Jesus. Now, that really reminds us that Christmas did not start in a manger in Bethlehem. Christmas started in a garden called Eden. And we know that because when we go back to the first book of the Bible, God's beautiful

creation of His world lasted only two chapters. So, you're reading the book of Genesis, and you read chapter one and chapter two, and then you get to chapter three, and sin enters the world, and sin ruins everything. And the consequences of sin, as God lays out the judgment, is there is going to be pain, and there's going to be suffering, and there is going to be a curse, and there's going to be death, there's going to be conflict. All those things are a result of sin.

But into that word of judgment, there comes this great word of hope. Genesis 3:15 is called the *Proto-Evangelium*. It's the first preaching of the gospel in the Bible. Look at that incredible verse. God says, I will put enmity between you and the woman. Now, He's speaking, obviously, to the serpent, but behind the serpent is Satan. God speaks this word of judgment that's interjected with a word of hope. I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and her offspring.

Now, that should ring a bell for our study in the gospel of John, right? Because that's what Jesus has been challenging the people of His time with. You're either a part of the family of God, or you're not. There are only two families, and that really started back here in Genesis 3:15. I will put this enmity between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head. He is Jesus. He shall bruise your head. That's Satan. And you, Satan, shall bruise His heel. That's Jesus, of course, in the work on the cross. This is then the first mention of the gospel in the Bible. It's called the good news, right?

The first book, the third chapter, is really the beginning of Christmas. And it reminds us, as we just said, that Christmas doesn't begin in Bethlehem in a manger. It all started back in a garden called Eden. So, let's just do this together. Let's just walk through what Genesis tells us about what it is that God did in light of the events that unfold here in this third chapter. The first thing that the gospel tells us is the gift is going to be a person. The gift is going to be a person, right? So, when this promise is given, and you go all the way to 2 Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 15, and there Paul says, but thanks be to God for His indescribable gift. And that indescribable gift is none other than the person of Jesus Christ. So, the first preaching of the gospel points us to the fact that the gift that God is going to give is going to come to us in the form of a person.

It doesn't stop there, of course. John 3:16, for God so loved the world. He loved the world and He gave a gift. Paul in Ephesians 2:8 and 9, for by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It's the gift of God. The person that comes to us in the form and the person of Christ is the gift of God. In Isaiah 9:6, for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. And all the way through to John chapter 10, when Jesus is talking to the woman at the well, and He says, if you only knew the gift of God that is available to you, the one that is speaking to you, if you only knew the gift that God wants to give to you. So, the gospel tells us that the gift is going to be a person.

The gospel tells us that this gift is going to involve conflict. And that's what we just read, that He is going to put enmity. Enmity means hostility. Enmity means conflict. So, Genesis 3:15 introduces into that message of judgment the idea that there's going to be this conflict that's going to work itself out between God and Satan, between God's people and those who follow Satan. And so, this is the origin of the spiritual conflict that even Paul speaks of in Ephesians 6. This great battle that wages every day in our lives and in our world takes us all the way back to the first preaching of the gospel.

The gift is going to suffer loss. The gift, of course, is a person. That person is going to suffer loss. We know that that bruising of the heel of our Lord is a foreshadowing of the cross. And it was at the cross that the heel of our Lord is bruised as He offers Himself for us.

But then notice also that the gift would ultimately win. The gift would ultimately win. The gift would, in fact, bruise the head of this one that is in view, which is, of course, Satan himself. And so, there is the reminder to us. The writer of Hebrews says in chapter 2 and verse 14 and 15 that Jesus is the death conqueror. He's the one who has overcome sin and overcome death. And so, this person, this gift that comes to us in the person of Christ that steps into this conflict and suffers loss for us ultimately triumphs and wins in His death and in His resurrection.

Let's go back to Genesis 1 and 2. Let's just go to the chapters before this word of judgment and yet word of hope. Let's go back to the beginning and just set the stage for what this looks like. And we go to Genesis 1 and 2 and we find ourselves in a perfect place. It all starts in this perfect place, right? Three things stand out as you read the account in Genesis. The story of God's creative work. The first one is He has created us

to be reflectors of His image. God says, let us make man in our image and our likeness. What does that mean? It means that every person that is born into this world has stamped upon them the image, the likeness of God Himself. It doesn't matter where they find themselves. Every one of us is always an image-bearer of God. God has put that stamp of Himself on each person, which is to say that there are attributes that God has that He shares with us. Now, there are attributes that God has that He doesn't share with us, but there are attributes that God has that He shares with us. We bear out that divine image in that way. He has created us with a mind, with emotion, with will, which is reflective again of God Himself. So, in this beginning work of creation, God says, let us make man, let us make woman in our image, in our likeness, and He puts on that, the very stamp of God.

As you go through the creation account at the end of each day, what does God say? God creates on day one, day two, day three, day four, day five, and after each day, God says, good. What I've made is good. It looks good. And then you get to day six, the culmination of all His creative work, the creation of Adam and Eve, and God looks at it all and He says, it's not just good, it's very good. He has made us in His image and likeness.

And then He's made us to have originally this unhindered fellowship with Him, so that Adam and Eve, we understand, walked and talked with God in the garden. They had this fellowship, unhindered, unbroken, this beautiful picture. They had the best of everything that could ever be imagined. They're carrying out the very responsibilities that God has entrusted to them in this perfect place. This is the ultimate utopia. This is what the mind of modern man thinks of when they try to think of a perfect place and a perfect world. It was there. It was there in the Garden of Eden when God originally created Adam and Eve. All of it rightly honoring God, so that the command in chapter 1 and verse 28, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. God's intent and purpose was that humanity would multiply and there would be many, many who would be honoring God and worshiping God and living out the very purposes of God. That was the intent and the heart, that we would be citizens of the kingdom of God. And He would be our king, and He would rule over us, and we would do everything to bring honor to Him. So, that was the perfect beginning, that was the perfect place.

Well, then everything changed in chapter 3. When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and to sin, then everything changed. All that perfection that we just looked at has now undergone ruin. And so, we are confronted with the worst news possible. The worst news possible tells us that sin has shattered this reflection of God's image. One of the things that sin has done physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, in every way, sin has left its mark upon humanity. When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, they chose to dishonor Him, and they chose that which was going to impact them and all of their legacy forever. We often call this depravity, or radical depravity, or total depravity. It just simply is to say to us that we're as bad off as we can be. That's what sin has done to the human race. It has put us in a place before God that we're as bad off as we can be. It doesn't mean we're as bad as we can be, because people prove almost every day that they can be even worse than we thought. But we're as bad off as we can be before God. In terms of our capacity, our ability. There is none righteous, Paul says in Romans. No, not one. Paul says in Ephesians that we are by nature the children of wrath, even as others. So, we have shattered, the reflection of God's image has been shattered. The fellowship is interrupted. No longer are Adam and Eve walking now in the garden in fellowship with God. They're hiding. They're covering themselves. They're no longer in this relationship of beautiful fellowship. They are cast out of the garden by the very grace of God.

And you say, what do you mean by the grace of God? Well, God didn't want them to stay in the garden and have them eat of the tree of life. They've already disobeyed and eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they stay in the garden and eat of the tree of life, they'll be confirmed in that state forever. And so, God in His grace banishes them and sends them out of the garden lest they partake of that tree of the tree of life and be in that condition forever.

So, this is how we find ourselves, every one of us, born into this world, separated from God, not in harmony with God, not in fellowship with God, no, in enmity with God. And that's what Paul says again in Romans when he says, for while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. While we were the enemies of God, He died in our place.

So, the image is shattered. The fellowship is interrupted and the reign is rejected. The reign of God is rejected. God's rightful rule over all of creation is no longer acknowledged. And of course, we see that every day in our world, don't we? The reign of God intended to be over all the earth is now subject to the rebellion of man. So, what would God do? What would God do? Here we have the perfect place. We have the perfect beginning, and it's shattered by sin. What would God do? He chose to give a gift.

He chose to give a gift. He chose to give us the gospel. He chose the Proto-Evangelium, the first preaching of the gospel, is in fact the best news ever, isn't it? The best news ever. That's what Paul means in Galatians 4 when he says that when the fullness of time was come, and we've talked about this before, at just the right time, when the world stage was at the exact place in human history where God intended for it to be, when the fullness of time was come, what did God do? God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.

Why? So that He might redeem those who are under the law with the sole view and intent and purpose of adopting us into His family as His sons and His daughters. It's amazing. For when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem those who are under the law so that they could, in fact, become His children forever, adopted into His family with all of the rights and all of the privileges so that as God looks at us as His children, He sees Christ. That's what He sees when He looks at us having been adopted into His family

So, here's the best news ever, right? We look at that in reflection of the worst news ever, and now we have restoration. Now we have a new beginning. If any person is in Christ, they're a new creation. All things are passed away, behold, all things become new. So that speaks of our position in Christ now is such that we are in a state of restoration, the divine image being renewed in us. There is redemption. There is reconciliation. Redemption is the idea that we've been rescued out of the slave market of sin. We've been set free. Reconciliation speaks to the fact that we have now peace with God, no longer at enmity, no longer in hostility, but now actually in peace with God. And then there's recovery, isn't there? God's rightful reign, living out the lordship of

Christ every day in our lives is what God intends in providing us with the best news ever.

So, the worst news ever becomes the best news ever by the proclamation of the *Proto-Evangelium*, the first preaching of the gospel. Someone said, and I think this kind of summarizes the Christmas story, right? God made it, man broke it, and God fixed it. So in nine words, you really have the essence of the story of the Bible, don't you? God made it. He made it all. He made it perfect. Man broke it. God didn't leave it broken. He stepped back in and He reclaimed it and He fixed it in the sending of His Son.

What do we do? What do we take away on this Sunday before Christmas? Well, I think first of all, God's gift is offered to everyone. If you've never received that gift, what do you have to do with a gift? A gift has to be received. A gift offered is one thing, but it has to be received. We are called upon to receive that gift. We see that in John 1, right? But as many as believe Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who receive this gift. That's what He's called us to. He's called us simply to believe. To believe is to receive.

And what is it that we need to believe? We need to believe what God has said. We need to believe what He has said about us, that we are born into this world separated from Him because of sin. He doesn't ask us to earn our way back into His favor. In fact, He tells us we can't. He tells us we can't earn our way back into His favor. He tells us the only way we will ever have favor with Him is to receive this gift by grace through faith. He simply says, believe that you have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Believe that what Jesus did on the cross was enough. God gives you the gift of eternal life and the forgiveness of sin.

If you have already received that gift, well, then this morning for you, this gift that has been given, this is a gift that we're to use, right? We're to use it. Step into this truth. Step into this gospel. Live this gospel out every day. Let every area of your life be impacted by the gospel. Let every area of your life be impacted by this transformative truth, this good news. Let the lordship of Christ be on display every day of your life so that as people see you, they see somebody that they can't explain because you're different in the way that you talk. You're different in the way that you act. You're different in the way you respond. And it's not you, is it? It's Christ in you, the hope of glory. So,

that's the essence of the *Proto-Evangelium*. The first preaching of the gospel didn't start in a manger in Bethlehem. It started in a garden called Eden.

Let's pray. Father God, we thank you so much that into this world that is filled with so much pain, so much hurt, so much suffering, so much sin that you didn't leave us to our own resources. You didn't leave us to our own efforts. But in this amazing, amazing gift, you sent your Son because you so loved the world that you sent. You gave your only Son, the Lord Jesus, that whoever would believe in him would not perish but have everlasting life. Father, I pray that anyone hearing this this morning that has not believed would, in fact, trust Jesus as their Savior right in these moments. Father, for those of us who know you, increase our love, our passion, increase our heart, our desire, Father, to use this incredible gift, to share this gospel, to live this gospel, to do all of this for you and your glory. We ask you in the name of Jesus. Amen.