

“God’s Christmas Gift to You”

Text: Luke 2:10-11, 14

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Park Boulevard Presbyterian Church (www.pbpc.org)

Oakland, California

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PRAY!

What are you celebrating this Christmas? Listen to what a few people on the street said when they were asked this question:

- “The blessing that we’ve had in our family this year.”
- “Just the Christmas spirit.”
- “This Christmas? I’m celebrating the birth of Christ.”
- “Being home and not being on the road for the holidays.”
- “What am I celebrating? Not a lot.”
- “Nothing. I just want to get through it.”

Is that what Christmas has become for many, “I just want to get through it”? Where’s the Christmas spirit? What are we celebrating? This evening, I want to remind you of the true spirit and meaning of Christmas.

There’s a word you’ll hear a lot in the next 24 hours. It’s the word “gift”. And you’ve been frantically searching for gifts, finding the right gift at the right price. Can you relate? Where did that come from anyway? The tradition of gift-giving began because God gave you a gift at the very first Christmas. God has a gift for you and His gift is Jesus Christ. It’s a person.

Hear again Luke 2:10-11, 14 *“The angel said, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord...Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests.”*

Why did God come as a baby?

- If God wanted to relate to cows, He would have come as a cow.
- If He wanted to relate to birds, He would have become a bird.
- But He wanted to relate to us so He came to earth as a human being. God came into the world the same way all of us come into the world, by being born. I can relate to that. I can look at Jesus and say, “That’s what God is like.”

So what are the benefits of trusting in Jesus – God’s Christmas Gift to you?

1. YOU RECEIVE GOD'S GIFT OF JOY.

- A. The angel said, *"I bring you good news of great joy."* A lot of people think that faith and boredom go together. A lot of churches start at 11:00 sharp and end at 12:00 dull. They're boring. We get this misconception that God doesn't want you to smile.
- B. Can you imagine: What if my daughter came to me and said *"Daddy, I love you. I want to be the kind of girl you want me to be. I want to live for you. I want to do what's right."* What do you think I'd say to my child? *"I've been waiting for this day. You're going to regret it the rest of your life. You say you want to do right, you want to do good? Well, you're going to sit in the corner and do math problems all day! You're going to eat spinach every meal. I'm going to break all your toys and if you smile, I'll wash out your mouth with soap!"* Of course not. That's ridiculous!
- C. But, a lot of people think that way about God. They think, if I really come to God and say, "God, I want to be what You want me to be. I want to trust Your Son Jesus Christ to lead my life. I want to do what You want me to do." They think God says, "I've been waiting to make your life miserable." They think Christian means being miserable.
- D. Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* Enjoy it! God wants to make the most of your life, not to waste it or abuse it, but to make your life count. God's gift in Jesus includes joy.

2. YOU RECEIVE GOD'S GIFT OF HOPE

- A. *"Today, a Savior has been born to you."* I read a Christmas card that said,
- "If your greatest need had been **information**, God would have sent an **educator**.
 - If our greatest need had been **technology**, God would have sent a **scientist**.
 - If our greatest need had been **money**, God would have sent an **economist**.
 - If our greatest need had been **pleasure**, God would have sent us an **entertainer**.
 - But our greatest need was for **forgiveness**, the forgiveness of sins, so God sent us a **Savior**.
- B. What is salvation? What does it mean? It means forgiveness from all the sins in your past (all the bad in your life), it means freedom from the problems caused by sin that mess you up in the present and it means fulfillment in eternity (where there is no sin). How do we receive this? You've got to receive God's gift.
- C. Lifeguard illustration.
- D. As long as you're trying to save yourself, God can't save you. As long as you're thinking, *"I can work it all out. I can solve all my problems. I've got my own plans. I don't need God. I don't need anything else. I'm my own boss."* God says, "Go right ahead! Try to live that way." And with it come frustration, tension, stress and anger in your life. Worry, guilt, bitterness, depression—

where do you think those things come from? Trying to do God's job. God says, *"Relax, stop trying to save yourself and accept my gift of hope."*
"Unto you is born a Savior which is Christ the Lord."

3. RECEIVE GOD'S GIFT OF HARMONY

- A. *"And on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests."* God wants you to have good relationships with other people, not just with Him. God says, "I want you first to get your life right with Me and then you can get your life right with other people." Christmas is a time for reconciliation. It's a time to break down barriers, build bridges, and restore relationships that have been broken and damaged. It's a time to say, "I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?"
- B. For many people, Christmas is a very tense time because it means dealing with relatives with whom you have unresolved issues. Christmas is a time for reconciliation. Not only to get your act together with God, but to get your act together with other people.
- First, you get peace with God
 - And then you get the peace of God in your life.
 - Once you've got the peace of God, then you can have peace with other people.
 - *"God reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."* The gift of harmony.

Some of you this Christmas have never accepted God's gift, Jesus. In Him are the blessings of joy, hope and harmony. I challenge you this Christmas to accept the gift God's giving to you. Reach out, take God's gift and unwrap it by accepting Jesus to be your forgiver and leader in your life. It's real simple. All you need to do is ask.

PRAY!