

## **The Presents Given by Christ at Christmas**

### **Immanuel – God Is With Us!**

**Introduction:** Take the year 1809. The international scene was tumultuous. Napoleon was sweeping through Austria; blood was flowing freely. Nobody then cared about babies. But the world was overlooking some terribly significant births.

For example, William Gladstone was born that year. He was destined to become one of England's finest statesmen. That same year, Alfred Tennyson was born to an obscure minister and his wife. The child would one day greatly affect the literary world in a marked manner. On the American continent, Oliver Wendell Holmes was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And not far away in Boston, Edgar Allan Poe began his eventful, albeit tragic, life. It was also in that same year that a physician named Darwin and his wife named their child Charles Robert. And that same year produced the cries of a newborn infant in a rugged log cabin in Hardin County, Kentucky. The baby's name? Abraham Lincoln.

If there had been news broadcasts at that time, I'm certain these words would have been heard: "The destiny of the world is being shaped on an Austrian battlefield today." But history was actually being shaped in the cradles of England and America. Similarly, everyone thought taxation was the big news--when Jesus was born. But a young Jewish woman cradled the biggest news of all: the birth of the Savior. - Adapted from Charles Swindoll Seasons of Life Devotional

### **Scripture Reading**

#### **Matthew 1:18 – 23**

**18** Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. **19** And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. **20** But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." **22** All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: **23** "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us)"

**Purpose:** Every Christ follower must unwrap and use the gifts that come with salvation to the honor and glory of God.

Transition: First, we have to look at the condition of humanity that Jesus came into in order to save His people, first the Jew and then later, opening up the Gospel to the Gentiles.

### **Jesus reveals people's need for a Savior**

#### **Luke 9:46 – 48 (KJV)**

**46 Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. 47 And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, 48 And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great**

- Jesus knew and knows the heart of every man and woman. He sees our pride, our selfishness, our arrogance when we compare ourselves to other people. He knows our evil thoughts, our lustful thoughts. God and Jesus know our penchant toward sin. Yet, they are compassionate and want to find a way to solve the sin problem so that we can have an ongoing relationship with a holy God. That my friend is one of the miracles of Christmas!!
- God is just, He cannot ignore sin. We established last week that He must judge sin. The soul that sins will die according to Exodus 18:4.
- We are not just talking about a physical death but those who are not redeemed of their sin by trusting in the finished work of Christ on the cross will spend eternity separated from God in hell with Satan and the fallen angels who are his cohorts.
- So, we need to take moment and discuss the total depravity of mankind. We have to see the terminal result of sin in our life before we discuss the cure.
- **The scorn of sin – Matthew 5:48; Romans 6:23; Exodus 18:4**
  - The standard we have to come up to as human beings to have a relationship with God, simply put is perfection.
  - God is the moral lawgiver of the universe and He lays out for us through the Ten Commandments, the Torah and the NT what the expectations are.
  - Paul, who may have been the greatest Christian, besides the Lord Jesus Christ, and said this about His righteousness

#### **Philippians 3:4-8**

**4 Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. 7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as**

loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

#### **Philippians 3:12**

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own

- Paul describes all his righteousness and good works in comparison to God's standard as human waste. His goal is to strive to not sin after being a believer but become more like Jesus.
- Isaiah says our righteousness is as filthy rags – Isaiah 64:6
- David said that even in the womb, He had a sinful nature.

#### **Psalms 51:5**

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

- David is NOT saying that his conception was sinful or that he was conceived illegitimately. What David is saying that at no time in his life was he without the effects of sin on his life!!
- Remember that we are not sinners because we sin. We were not born neutral or with a blank slate and that if we chose, we could live a righteous life in our own power and will. At some point, if we chose to sin then that is what makes us a sinner.
- That is incorrect. The message of Christ is that He came at Christmas to become the second Adam because the consequences of sin of the first Adam were passed down to all human beings by His seed. We are sinners at birth and so we sin because that is natural for us by nature. This is a very important distinction.
- If someone could live his or her life and have the chance of living a life of perfection, of keeping the law, there would be two ways to salvation and Jesus would have only died for those who sinned. Remember that verse from last week;

#### **1 John 2:2**

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world

#### **Romans 3:10 - 12**

10 As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

- This is the very bad, bad news about who we are at the core and why we act out and sin as we do.

**Quote: “We’ve all heard the axiom that nobody’s perfect. We might improve upon that a little by saying that, not only is no one perfect, but no one’s even close to perfection.” – R. C. Sproul**

**Quote: “So, the idea of total depravity doesn’t mean that every human being is as wicked as they could possibly be. Rather, it means that the fall is so serious that it affects the whole person. Our fallenness captures and grips our human nature and affects our bodies—that’s why we become ill and die. It affects our minds and our thinking. We still have the capacity to think, but the Bible speaks about the way in which the mind has become darkened and weakened (Rom. 1:21). The will of man is no longer in its pristine state of moral power. According to the New Testament, the will is now in bondage. We are enslaved to the evil impulses and desires of our hearts (John 8:34).” – R. C. Sproul**

- The effects of the fall come down at birth to every human being. It does not mean we can’t do good things in our society and for our neighbors. The problem is, because our will and decision making are tainted by sin we don’t do the things we do for the glory and honor of God without the quickening of the Holy Spirit in our life. That is the short answer. Much more depth could be shared on this topic. Now that I have made all of us feel bad and of little value in God’s eyes, we now turn to the good news of what the Savior came to do about it.

- The sympathy of the Savior – Matthew 9:36 – 38; Luke 5:31 – 33; 15:3-7

**Luke 2:11 – Linus and the True Meaning of Christmas 1:12 video**

**11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.**

- Savior – deliverer, redeemer from sin.

**Luke 5:31 – 32**

**31 And Jesus answered them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”**

**Luke 15:3 – 7**

**3 So he told them this parable: 4 “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ 7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over**

## **one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance**

- There was a day in your life and mine, if you are born again, if you have received Christ as Savior that God erected a banner in heaven with your name on it in heaven and there was a party on your behalf because you left the kingdom of darkness and all your selfishness and independence behind and you acknowledged that you were a sinner and that Jesus paid it all for you!! The angels in heaven rejoiced when your name was unfurled on that banner in heaven, when the joyous celebration of your salvation was announced!! Can you see it, can you imagine it!!
- The point of this point is that we have to see our sickness of sin, the weakness of our human condition in order to accept the answer we need, trusting in Christ and what He did on the cross and the power He gives us by His resurrection.
- God gifts us with the gift of repentance. The Puritans used to pray for the “gift of tears.” The tears of sorrow over our sin before a holy God.

## **2 Corinthians 7:10**

### **10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.**

- We must use God’s Word to define our spiritual condition and make adjustments. The Bible needs to have full say and define our lives.
- Jesus came at Christmas to ultimately save anyone who would believe, but, we must surrender our will, our desires, our passions to obey and follow Him

**Quote: “Jesus left his lofty place to rescue glory thieves who insert themselves into his place and make it all about them.” - Tripp, Paul David. Come, Let Us Adore Him (p. 45).**

**Crossway. Kindle Edition.**

**Application: We need to hold up the mirror of God’s Word to reveal the truth about how we are living.**

Transition: This first point is a simple but profound truth that we need to be reminded of continually. Let’s look more at the benefits of Jesus wanting to save His people from their sins.

## **Jesus saves people from their sin – Matthew 1:21 – 25**

- God came near and looked beyond the faults of people to their needs
  - Andrae Crouch – He Looked Beyond My Faults and Saw My Need

## **John 3:14 – 18**

**14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”**

#### **John 12:32**

**“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”**

- Aren't you so thankful that God doesn't condemn us unless we die not admitting our sin and that we are in need of a Savior!!
- God came near at Christmas to give us the hope of eternal life and abundant life here, at this time, on earth!!
- God sees the potential in us before we do
- In Matthew 16, Jesus said that you are Simon, you will be Peter – the little rock
- Jacob's name was changed to Israel, Abram to Abraham to be a father of many nations.
- What potential does God see in you? He looks beyond your sin and sees who He wants you to be. Then by His grace He empowers you and gives you resources to live out who He created you to be.
- **God came near to extend His grace beyond the deepest sin**
  - There is no sin and no depth of sin that one can perform that God will not save. Jeffery Dahmer – killed 17 men and dismembered them and was a cannibal. If he truly repented of his sin as purported that he did and was born again, He is with Jesus right now. That makes some people mad, but it displays for us the depth and the riches of God's grace. Turn to Ephesians 2.

#### **Ephesians 2:1 – 7**

**And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus**

**Illustration:** When Billy Graham was driving through a small southern town, he was stopped by a policeman and charged with speeding. Graham admitted his guilt, but was told by the officer that he would have to appear in court.

The judge asked, "Guilty, or not guilty?" When Graham pleaded guilty, the judge replied, "That'll be ten dollars -- a dollar for every mile you went over the limit."

Suddenly the judge recognized the famous minister. "You have violated the law," he said. "The fine must be paid--but I am going to pay it for you." He took a ten-dollar bill from his own wallet, attached it to the ticket, and then took Graham out and bought him a steak dinner! "That," said Billy Graham, "is how God treats repentant sinners!" - Progress Magazine, December 14, 1992.

Application: Are you content with God coming near this Christmas season?

Transition: Our last point under the presents that Jesus brings us at Christmas is that

**Jesus forgives people of their sin – Mark 2:5 – 11**

- The authority of Jesus to forgive sin

**Mark 2:5 – 11**

**5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— 11 "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."**

- Jesus was charged as a blasphemer because as the religious leaders believed and is true that only God can forgive someone's sin.
- What are some of the blessings of being forgiven by God?
  - We are right with God. When we confess our sins it is as if God wipes the slate clean and we continue on in our relationship with God
  - We have the ability and capacity to forgive others

**Ephesians 4:32**

**32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.**

- You have heard it said, "Hurt people, hurt people." But I say forgiven people can forgive others
- We can walk in confidence on our spiritual journey because we are forgiven and have the hope of heaven.



- We can have peace in relationships, even tumultuous relationships where there is plenty of conflict.
- Assurance of eternal life
- Walk in the purpose and plan God created us to do and be
- **The promise that God will forgive every sin – I John 1:9; Colossians 1:13 – 14; Ephesians 1:7; Isaiah 1:18**

### **Isaiah 1:18**

**“Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.**

- Sometimes as humans, we become extremely introspective, looking inward at our soul and asking how could God forgive these sins?
- Our sins as far as God is concerned are completely removed when we confess our sin. As far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103), cast into the deepest sea (Micah 7:19).
- All – God doesn’t remove some and make us pink instead of white
  - Water is pure but add a drop of poison who would want it?
  - Pure as fresh snow you are in God’s sight.
- Now, we have to accept that, we have to act as if it is so.
  - The devil is the one who wants to continually bring up our sin but Jesus is our defense attorney before God and says we are covered in His blood and God says we are not guilty of our sin but justified in our sight.
- The key is living in the confidence of what we know, that God cleanses us and forgives us of all our sin, our unrighteousness.
- Sometimes after a period of walking away from the Lord and getting involved in sin, it is hard for us to accept His forgiveness. But accept it and walk in the confidence of it we must.
- I find that people who are forgiven a lot love the Lord an awful lot!!

**Illustration: Sen. Mark Hatfield recounts the following history: James Garfield was a lay preacher and principal of his denominational college. They say he was ambidextrous and could simultaneously write Greek, with one hand and Latin with the other.**

**In 1880, he was elected president of the United States, but after only six months in office, he was shot in the back with a revolver. He never lost consciousness. At the hospital, the doctor probed the wound with his little finger to seek the bullet. He couldn’t find it, so he tried a silver-tipped probe. Still, he couldn’t locate the bullet.**

**They took Garfield back to Washington, D.C. Despite the summer heat, they tried to keep him comfortable. He was growing very weak. Teams of doctors tried to**



locate the bullet, probing the wound over and over. In desperation they asked Alexander Graham Bell, who was working on a little device called the telephone, to see if he could locate the metal inside the president's body. He came, he sought, and he too failed. The president hung on through July, through August, but in September he finally died-not from the wound, but from infection. The repeated probing, which the physician's thought would help the man, eventually, killed him. So, it is with people who dwell too long on their sin and refuse to release it to God. - Roger Thompson

Application: The baby in the manger becomes God's perfect payment for my sin.

Transition: As we unwrap the gift of Jesus being our Savior, may we apply the benefits to our salvation to help us endure and persevere through the good and difficult days.

**Key Thought: Jesus saw the potential in us and looked past our sin and met our need!**

#### **Questions to Ponder This Week**

1. Does the Bible define your life?
2. Are you allowing God to come near to your heart this Christmas season?
3. Is there any area of sin that you feel isn't forgiven that you have to let go and trust God?