

**JESUS
CHRIST –
GOD'S
GREATEST
GIFT**

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December 20, 2015

Sermon in a sentence: God always gives good gifts to His children and He wants us all to receive His greatest gift: Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour!

Congregational reading: John 3:13-17

Scriptures: John 3:13-17; James 1:17; Gen. 3:14-15; Gen. 22:18; Acts 3:24-26; Isaiah 7:14-15; Isaiah 9:6-7; Deut. 4:7-8; Deut. 18:17,15; John 10:10b-11; John 14:6; John 3:16-17; Matt 11:28-30; Acts 3:18-21; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:17.

John 3:13-17 NKJV No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

In this Christmas season, we hear a lot about a man called Santa Claus. He is the fat old guy with the red suit and the white beard that you see at the mall. Remember him? Just to be ridiculous for a moment, let us compare Santa Claus to Jesus Christ.

Santa lives at the North Pole...

JESUS is everywhere.

Santa fills our stockings with goodies...

JESUS supplies all of our needs and is our ever-present help.

Santa comes down the chimney uninvited...

JESUS comes in only when invited. He stands at our door and knocks.

Santa may let you sit on his lap...

JESUS lets us rest in His arms.

Santa doesn't even know your name...

JESUS knew your name before you were even born.

Santa has a belly like a bowl full of jelly...

JESUS has a heart full of love.

Santa says: "You better not cry"...

JESUS says "cast all your cares on Me, for I care for you."

Santa puts gifts under the tree...

JESUS *became* our Gift, and *died* on a tree

Above all, Santa is fake...

But JESUS, He's real!¹

Certainly this is a time of gift giving and we all love to receive nice gifts. There is nothing at all wrong with that.

There is a Christian comedian called "Michael Jr." who speaks about about growing up "poe" in America. (They couldn't even afford the last letter "r" to be "poor"; they were just "poe".) One day his Dad gave him a special gift because of his love of action figures. He opened an empty cardboard box he received one Christmas Day and his Dad told him the action figure inside was called "Invisible Man." He was really excited by this incredible gift and played with it a long time until his older brother hid it from him. Of course, he never could find it after that because it was.... invisible.

¹ Adapted and edited from World Network of Prayer, "prayer connect", Dec. 15, 2015.

No doubt, somewhere in the middle of all the shopping and hype that surrounds this time of the year, someone, somewhere will remind us to remember “the reason for the season.” So let’s stop right now and remember.

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God is a giver. In fact, as His word reminds us:

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

When Adam and Eve were created, God placed them in a beautiful garden where they had everything they needed to enjoy an incredible life of joy and fulfillment in His presence. This was God’s gift to them, in which they could sustain life, enjoy fellowship with Him and raise a godly family. But as we know, they committed a grave sin and consequently came under the penalty of death.

Immediately however, God gave them another gift – the gift of life. A sacrifice was provided for their sin and their lives were spared. God always gives good gifts!

Let us recall the words God spoke to the serpent (Satan) in the Garden of Eden. He said:

Gen. 3:14-15 “Because you have done this [*tempting Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*], you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field.... ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

Abram found favour in God’s eyes and received the promise of multiplied millions of children, even though his wife was barren and unable to conceive. When he was

fully one hundred years old, and his wife ninety years old, God began to fulfill His promise. Isaac was born, and to this day we continue to see the blessing of God to Abraham through the nation of Israel. He is the giver of every good and perfect gift!

This promise had seemed totally impossible to fulfill, but God began to fulfill it in Isaac. However, there was more to it than simply the promise of many descendants. There was also the promise of a special “seed” that would become a blessing to the whole world! God said to Abram:

Genesis 22:18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

Peter talked about this in his sermon following the healing of the lame man at the “Beautiful” Temple gate:

Acts 3: 24-26 ... all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. ²⁵ You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, *“And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* ²⁶ To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities.”

But who exactly is this “seed?” Picking up on God’s words to the serpent in Genesis 3, Isaiah fills in some more of the details for us:

Isaiah 7:14-15 ... the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. ¹⁵ Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.

(I can't really explain the way in which curds and honey leads one to live a sinless life, but that is precisely the kind of life Jesus lived!) And just to make it crystal clear, Isaiah identified exactly who this child "Immanuel" would be: none other than "God with us" (Matt. 1:23). He hammered the point home in chapter 9 of his prophesy:

Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of *His* government and peace *there will be* no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

This was God's greatest gift to humanity: His Son, our Saviour, the "God-Man" – Jesus the Messiah!

Now, let us take a look at this miracle of the Messiah from another perspective.

Abraham's descendants had relocated to Egypt in a time of famine and were subsequently enslaved there for 400 years. Then God sent Moses to be their deliverer. He led them to the Red Sea and God parted the waters for them to go through. As they travelled through the wilderness, God gave them bread from heaven and water from rocks. Their clothes did not wear out and He kept them from disease. God was gracious to His people and gave them good gifts.

He gave them the land of Canaan, and victory over those who tried to destroy them. He gave them the gift of His presence along with laws and commandments to live by

that were far superior to those of the surrounding nations:

Deut. 4:7-8 “For what great nation *is there* that has God *so* near to it, as the LORD our God *is* to us, for whatever *reason* we may call upon Him? ⁸ And what great nation *is there* that has *such* statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?

As Moses gave his last address to the nation of Israel in the Book of Deuteronomy, he relayed what God had revealed to him. The Lord said:

Deut: 18:17 I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.

Moses was accustomed to speaking with God face to face without filters or mysterious language. He understood that God was going to send a “prophet” to the Earth like himself: one who would be the Saviour to deliver His people from the bondage of ‘sin-slavery’, as Moses had delivered them from Egyptian slavery. God was going to give them a glorious new life!

Not only would this prophet speak the word of God, but Moses told the people they needed to “hear” the word of the prophet:

Deut. 18:15 “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren [*just as we read in v. 19*]. Him you shall hear.

As you are likely aware, when we read the word “hear” in scripture, it is telling us something more than simply ‘listen up’. **To hear means to obey.**

So what exactly did this prophet have to say? He said (among so many other things):

John 10:10b-11 I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly. **11** “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

John 14:6 ... “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

John 3:16-17 NKJV For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. **17** For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.”

These are words we need to *hear* and *obey*.

Solo song: “I Give You Jesus” (by Becky Fender)

We conclude with some good instruction from the lips of Peter, the man to whom Jesus entrusted the ‘keys to the kingdom’ of God:

Acts 3:18-21 ... those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

The prophet was prophesied. The prophet came. He lived, died and rose again so that we can live, die and rise again, to eternal life in Him.

Rom. 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

This is the kind of Christmas we need to have. A Christmas where we receive for the first time, or celebrate for the hundredth time the greatest gift God has given to humanity: Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Songs: I Give You Jesus; The Greatest Gift (JCM recording)

I GIVE YOU JESUS

Becky Fender

**If the ship of your life, is tossing on the sea of strife
You need someone.**

**And if you feel so all alone
And your house is not a home
You need someone.**

**If it seems life isn't fair
And there's no one left to share
All those lonely days and nights
And things just won't turn out right
And you need someone to care
And someone to just be there
You need someone.**

Chorus:

**I give you Jesus
He's the peace that passes all understanding
I give you Jesus
He's the perfect love that casteth out all fear
I give you Jesus
He's the water that you drink and never thirst again
I give you Jesus, my friend, I give you Jesus.**

**If the pressures all around
Keep your spirits to the ground
You need someone.**

**And if your body is in pain,
And your health you can't regain
You need someone.**

**And if at times when you have tried,
With all the strength you have inside
And it seems that you have failed
Remember on the cross He nailed
All the bitterness and grief
To give you peace and sweet relief
He is that someone that you need.**