

# Opening & Enjoying the Greatest Christmas Gift of All: The One God Gave

## John 3:16

Every year as we read the Christmas story's four chapters, we can see again how God tied Christmas & Easter together, right from the start. So as we turn to Luke 1:78-79, watch how the Lord places the plan of salvation right in the middle of the opening chapters of the Christmas story.

Our God sits enthroned in Heaven, as Ruler over the entire Universe. But through Zecharias' prophecy we can see that when the Lord looks down from His Throne upon this planet overspread with people—it looks pretty dark down here. So:

### GOD SENT A GIFT TO THOSE SITTING IN DARKNESS

That's the picture of why God launched the plan of salvation: sending Jesus to save anyone, who will respond in faith. Listen to God speak in Luke 1:78-79:

Through the tender mercy of our God,

With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;

**To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,**

To guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Notice the third phrase of this passage. This is a summary of the condition of every human born on Earth: *unless God touches their life*:

### GOD SAYS WE ARE ALL BORN BLIND, STUMBLING THROUGH LIFE IN THE DARK, AND HEADING TOWARDS PERSONAL, ENDLESS DOOM.

Christmas is the story of the Lord God Almighty, motivated by His great love, sending Jesus to provide the way of salvation to lost humanity sitting in that complete darkness.

Jesus came to Earth as the sunrise [Dayspring] from God, to shine the light of salvation upon all of the lost and sin darkened people of this world.

The Roman world of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century had reached the highest levels of science, literature, culture, engineering, transportation, and medicine known since Adam and Eve stepped from the Garden.

Yet with all that advancement most people were still hopelessly lost, and endlessly troubled by an inability to even control their own fears and desires—let alone know how to come to know the Awesome God of the Universe.

God surveyed His creation and found that the crown of creation, the only creatures made in His image had a soul threatening, terminal illness called sin. In every instance of Christ's coming (Christmas) there are clues describing what we needed as exactly what Jesus came to offer us.

This Christmas, we need to see ourselves as God saw us.

## GOD'S GIFT IS ONLY FOR THE LOST & DYING

Christmas from the Divine vantage point as explained in the Bible should make us see Christ's death is only for the guilty, only for the hopelessly stained, and only for the helplessly lost. It is in that condition—that we find God's grace.

Perhaps the most well known verse in the Bible, is also the clearest expression of the heart of Christmas.

John 3:16 “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.

God so loved our world: lost, blinded by sin, stumbling towards the chasm in darkness—that He gave His only Son, the Light of the World, to be a Savior for sinners.

All we have to do is unwrap and experience all that He has given to us.

## BEWARE OF UNOPENED PRESENTS

As a father of many Christmases when the family is all sitting around and gifts are being opened, I have looked into the eyes of a small child standing before me saying: did you open my present to you? Often those tiniest, handmade gifts were somehow misplaced, overlooked, and the giver was still waiting. What joy it was to see their faces when at last the gift was found, opened, and shared..

All of us who are saved, born again, and believers in Jesus Christ this morning have received a gift—the greatest gift. But the question we need to answer this morning is have you opened that gift. Salvation has many wonderful elements—each like a special present. Are you opening your presents?

Salvation is a package of never ending gifts of joy and delight each day.

These gifts are opened by faith one by one as we see who we have become in Christ. So the Christ of Christmas is the start of a lifetime of priceless gifts, given to us freely by God above. As you think about Christmas, gifts, presents, giving and receiving—why not check and be sure that you are opening the only gift that you (and everyone else) really needs? It starts as we:

## OPEN THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS

Because of our sin—we are all debtors to God's Righteousness; so we need forgiveness.

Christmas is about Forgiveness. Nothing matters more to any who have sinned—and God says all have sinned.

One moment before your last breath, one thing will matter more than anything else—whether you are dying forgiven or unforgiven.

The peace you can have one moment before you die is available on a daily basis if you understand what God has done in Christ and if you choose to respond by faith to Him.

*In Forgiveness we go from hopelessly offending God stained by sin to the peace of complete forgiveness.*

We need to experience what the Scriptures often declare—God is a God who offers His children complete forgiveness. Trace with me again those life giving words in your hearts as I read them to you.

Then repeat the truth of what God has done!

“For I will forgive their wickedness and **will remember their sins no more.**”

(Jeremiah 31:34b). **God has forgotten all my sins.** Say that aloud with me.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...” (Romans 8:1). **Jesus will never condemn me for my sins.** Say that aloud with me.

Today celebrate your forgiveness that is only in Christ.

## OPEN THE GIFT OF JUSTIFICATION

Because of our sin—we are all guilty convicts in God's sight; so we need justification.

Christmas is about Jesus who died to take guilty convicts and destroy any record that that ever committed a crime and takes their place in the punishment—**that's justification!** A Sinner stands before God as accused and is declared righteous by His imputed righteousness.

*In Justification we go from being accused and guilty before God to being righteous and with no record of wrongs!*

We need to experience what the Scriptures often declare—God has once and for all through Christ's sacrifice justified us. That means that He has accused us, declared us guilty of sin and then made us righteous and forever deleted the record of all our wrongs.

Romans 8:33-34 “**Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.** 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

I have been justified and by Christ justifying me—**Christ erased the record of my sins.** Say that aloud with me

Colossians 3:3 “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God”.

By Christ justifying me—**I am held securely by Christ, in God.** . Say that aloud with me

## OPEN THE GIFT OF REGENERATION

Because of our sin—we are all dead in our trespasses and sin; so we need regeneration.

Christmas is about Jesus who died to take us who are dead in our sins, bring us to life and welcome us as family members, full of endless life and brand new—**that’s regeneration!**

*In Regeneration we go from dead and decaying to alive and overflowing.*

We need to experience what the Scriptures often declare—God Himself has regenerated us. That means that He has sought us out in our dead and decaying condition, breathed eternal life into us, and brought us into His family by the new birth. Then He comes to live within us so we are forever having an abundant and overflowing, eternal life.

*Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”.* Because Jesus regenerated me—**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.** Say that aloud with me

Colossians 2:10 “...and **you are complete in Him**, who is the head of all principality and power”. Because Jesus regenerated me—**I have everything needed to make it through life, in Christ.** Say that aloud with me

## OPEN THE GIFT OF RECONCILIATION

Because of our sin—we are all enemies of God; so we need reconciliation.

Christmas is about Jesus who died to take enemies and make them friends—**that’s reconciliation!** A Sinner stands before God as an enemy and is made a friend by His peace.

*In Reconciliation we go from being an enemy at war with God to being His treasured friend!*

We need to experience what the Scriptures often declare—God has ended His war against us in our sin by Christ's reconciling sacrifice and has established not a truce, He has made us His treasured friend.

Ephesians 1:6 “... to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us **accepted in the Beloved**”. Because Jesus reconciled me—**I am accepted In Christ Jesus.** Say that aloud with me

John 15:15 “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; **but I have called you friends**, for all things that I heard from My Father I

have made known to you”. Because Jesus reconciled me—**I am Christ's friend**. Say that aloud with me

## OPEN THE GIFT OF ADOPTION

Because of our sin—we are all strangers to God; so we need adoption.

Christmas is about Jesus who died to take strangers and make them part of the family—**that's adoption!** A Sinner stands before God as a stranger and is called a Son by His choice.

*In Adoption we go from being a stranger and an outsider to being His son or daughter and in partnership with Him!*

We need to experience what the Scriptures often declare—God has taken me from being a stranger outside of His presence and blessing and has made me his child and the son and daughter of His family in partnership with Him.

John 1:12 “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name”. Because I was adopted by God—**I am God's child**. Say that aloud with me

Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”. Because I was adopted by God—**God is working out everything during my lifetime: for His good**. Say that aloud with me

## OPEN THE GIFT OF REDEMPTION

Because of our sin—we are all slaves to unrighteousness; so we need redemption.

Christmas is about Jesus who died to take slaves and make them freed forever—**that's redemption!** A Sinner stands before God as a slave and is granted freedom by Christ's payment.

Christ's death to pay the price of our sin is so wonderful that we, the redeemed of all the ages will be joined by the angels so that together we may sing a new song, as Revelation records:

And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.” Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” (Revelation 5:9–12)

In Redemption we go from being a slave chained to our sins to complete freedom by God and a new focus.

We need to experience what the Scriptures often declare—God has liberated us from our slavery to sin, broken sins chains that long had enslaved us and freed us to focus our lives on what really matters to Him.

1 Corinthians 6:20 “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s”. Christ bought me with a price—**I belong to God.** Say that aloud with me

Ephesians 2:10 “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”. Because Christ bought me in redemption—**I am God's workmanship.** Say that aloud with me

## OPEN THE GIFT OF SANCTIFICATION

Because of our sin—we are all defiled; so we need sanctification.

Christmas is about Jesus who died to take our soiled and misdirected lives that always get wasted and make them clean, focused and fruitful—**that's sanctification!**

*In Sanctification we go from our formerly wasted and empty life to holy purposeful life.*

We need to experience what the Scriptures often declare—God has come into me and taken over my wasted life and made me new, entered my empty life and filled it with Himself to make me holy and filled with His purposes more and more until He gets me Home.

Romans 8:35 “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” Because of Christ's sanctifying work in me—**I will never be separated from the love of God.** Say that aloud with me

2 Timothy 1:7 “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”. Because of Christ's sanctifying work in me—**I never need to fear again.** Say that aloud with me

As you begin each day, each month, and as we come to the end of this month—as you begin a new year, one of our greatest privileges is to open and enjoy the gift of salvation God has given to us. By faith we please God when we believe what He's said about us. We need to not live by what others say or have said about us all your life.

## START A NEW SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

As you begin each day, each month, and as we come to the end of this month—as you begin a new year, one of our greatest privileges is to open and enjoy the gift of salvation God has given to us.

By faith we please God when we believe what He's said about us. We need to not live by what others say or have said about us all your life.

One of the most powerful habits you could grow is to take this list of the ramifications of having received the only gift everyone really needs and rejoice by faith in your great salvation!

Keep reminding yourself of what great things God has promised and done through Christ's death for us!

Slowly as you understand and lay hold on these truths a life-changing transformation take place in our minds, and then in our emotions, and finally throughout our entire life as we live each day based on God's eternal truth.

## OPEN & ENJOY YOUR GIFT EACH DAY

Satan is the Accuser and wants us to only remember all the many times we have fallen; Satan delights in the days, weeks, or months he can keep us condemning ourselves for what we've done. That is his plan, so don't fall for it.

Resist Satan as you believe the truth; speak the truth; and preach the Gospel to yourself.

And whenever we fall down, God says to just turn back to Him and repent, confessing our sin immediately--and believe that what God has promised in His salvation.

We are forgiven, justified, regenerated, reconciled, adopted, redeemed, & sanctified.

That makes us precious in His sight, special in His plan; and that is what it means to be—

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