

“The Perfect Gift: Jesus, the Christ Child”

Scripture: Luke 2:1-16

Theme: The Perfect Gift: Jesus, the Christ Child

Graphic: manger, Mary and Joseph, candles, gifts

Key Verse: John 1:4 ...in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

Ask them to: Take time to examine your life and celebrate the fact that, on this night, darkness is forever shattered by the light of the Perfect Gift: Jesus, the Christ Child.

Read the Christmas Story from Luke 2:1-20

Tonight, as we prepare to conclude our worship, think about a circle and a light...

In a few moments, we'll be making those two things become a reality before our eyes...a circle of light as we join together and hear the familiar words of O Holy Night sung.

When two people are married, the custom is to exchange rings as signs of love and commitment to each other – perfect circles, with no beginning and no end...

A circle holds things together, but can also protect and keep others things out. In marriage, love holds things together and defends us against outside attacks.

On this night, when we celebrate the Perfect Gift from God, the birth of a child Christ, that circle represents God's love and commitment to us...his people.

It's a love that never ends...a love that joins together...a love that protects and defends...a perfect, unconditional love for us.

The circle that we will create represents God's love...many different people gathered together...some strangers to each other...some friends...all bound together on this night as one perfect circle...no beginning...no end.

But on THIS night, even a circle as beautiful as we will make is not complete...you see, our circle will be formed in a dark room. In order to complete our circle on THIS night, our circle of light needs LIGHT!

In the beginning of the gospel of John, we read these words: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

The light from our candles, in a darkened room, will provide that age-old feeling of warmth, unity, and something at which we can stare and get lost in the moment. May that light remind us of Jesus Christ, the light that came into the world on Christmas!

There is no night like tonight...

God's love breaks through the darkness on this night...

No other way...no other thing...no one else...can guarantee abundant life, filled with light, and the rejection of darkness other than the light of Jesus Christ in the world.

God's love is light, it shines for us through the hard times of our lives, the dark times...maybe you've lost a loved one who we know can never be replaced...maybe you've strayed away from the church and away from God. Maybe you continue to struggle with sin or think you have given up too much to deserve God's love.

Yet despite all that, God's love is still light...and no darkness can ever consume light. In the darkest place you can imagine in your mind, when a light shines, no struggle, no sin, no evil can ever defend itself against the light.

It's the same way with God's love for each of us – no struggle, no darkness, no hard time can ever defend itself against God's care and love for you.

The Apostle Paul wrote these words to his friend Titus (from Peterson's the Message): God's readiness to give and forgive is now public. Salvation's available for everyone! We're being shown how to turn our backs on a godless, indulgent life, and how to take on a God-filled, God-honoring life. This new life is starting right now, and is whetting out appetites for the glorious day when our great God

and Savior, Jesus Christ, appears. He offered himself as a sacrifice to free us from a dark, rebellious life in this good, pure life, making us a people he can be proud of, energetic in goodness.

Jesus Christ, a light to guide and protect and carry you onward...

With us, his people, forming a circle of light, with Christ in us, you will be bound together with those you are with tonight...all of us together, in a world of darkness, now filled with light.

When we form that circle, and as the light from the candles is passed to you and then you pass the light on to your neighbor, remember that it's more than the flicker of a candle...it's more than a circle of friends...it is God's perfect love represented in our hearts this night...

Jesus, the perfect gift from God to the world, was born to be the light in that world...to show us how to live, to ask us to follow him...to love us so much that we would know HOW to love others...and to guarantee our eternal life in heaven.

Not just a light around a circle...life and a love that God has given to us as a gift on this Christmas Eve...