

“The Perfect Gift: Jesus, the Messiah”

Scripture: Romans 15:4-13

Graphic: gift, Messiah, Savior, hope

Key Verses: 15:8-9 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

Theme: Receive the Perfect Gift of Jesus, the Messiah. God’s plan for salvation based on laws was ineffective because of increasing sin. God’s promised gift of a world of peace is coming through Jesus, the Messiah for all – both Jews and Gentiles. Salvation is offered through Jesus alone.

1) Introduction

- a) So Jesus was walking down the road with his disciples one day, right?
- b) Mark 8:27 says...(read Mark 8:27-31)...
- c) Jesus asked the people who KNEW him best, “Who do YOU say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.”
- d) Of all the confessions in the Gospels, this one has to be the most profound! And yet it’s also probably one of the most perplexing for us...
- e) And part of it is that we don’t know what Peter means! We assume that Peter knows what Peter means...but we’re not from that culture and so we have a disconnect.
- f) And even though, of all the things that Jesus is called - all the titles of Jesus - THIS ONE probably causes more confusion than any other, it’s one of the most important roles that Jesus has because it has everything to do with our eternal salvation.
- g) This second part of The Perfect Gift of Jesus is unwrapping the idea of Jesus as Messiah...the Anointed One from heaven who will lead the people into redemption and salvation. And, as I’ve said before, assurance of salvation brings HOPE for today...
- h) Last week, we unwrapped the first part of this Perfect Gift: Jesus, the Word of God...In Jesus, God gave us a living, visible image of Himself. And we know about God through Jesus who is described in the breathing, active words in Holy Scripture. Words that give us inspiration, instruction, and offer transformation through power of the Holy Spirit.
- i) As we turn to the next side of this gift, we receive the gift of Jesus, Messiah.

j) Let's pray...

2) Who is this Messiah?

- a) As we begin this morning, let me be clear that the concept of Jesus Christ as Israel's and the world's Messiah is something so unique and so amazing that it's also the focus of lots of controversy.
- b) In Isaiah, Yvonne read this morning about a vision for a kingdom that has at its CORE peace and harmony – that's the end result of Isaiah's vision for the world! And that vision would be realized for the Jewish people when the Messiah comes – this branch that will come from the stump of Jesse.
- c) ...and you'll remember that Jesse was King David's father...and God promised David in 2 Samuel 7:11-16 and 1 Chronicles 17:11-15 that:
 - i) David's seed (David's descendant) will be the Son of God.
 - ii) David's seed will build a house for God's name; and,
 - iii) David's seed will reign for ever from David's throne in Jerusalem.
- d) And so over here you have a picture of the future peaceful kingdom, established when the Son of God comes from line of King David to sit on the throne.
- e) But! But! Over here you have a world that doesn't look like that. So there's obviously something that had to happen first, before the peace and harmony...before there are lambs and lions snuggling together...BEFORE the bears and cows graze together...BEFORE the little nursing toddler plays with snakes, right?
- f) Listen to the words of Isaiah again, here's what has to happen first...
- g) Read Isaiah 11:3b-5
- h) This Righteous and Faithful RULER, this shoot that will come out of the stump of Jesse, will (hear this) judge all people prior to the final establishment of the Kingdom! And the work of a judge is not to just let everyone slide for the stuff they did wrong. A judge has to look at the facts and determine the punishment.
- i) And in order to get to that kingdom of peace and harmony, there has to be a way to deal with sin, which causes just the opposite, agreed? There can't be an eternity with God while still in the presence of sin.

- j) And so the people who were hearing this from Isaiah the crazy prophet were wondering how that would happen. “How are you going to usher in this kingdom of peace, God?” What will be the sign for us? What can we expect? Will it be more laws and rules? Will there be a military uprising?
- k) And for hundreds of years, they wondered what that would look like...and they made up scenarios and looked for the Messiah...and read the prophecies and waited...
- l) And he didn't come and didn't come...
- m) And then one quiet night, there were a group of shepherds camping out in the fields...watching their flocks...minding their own business.
- n) When suddenly (!) God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, “Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide. A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're looking for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger.” At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises: “Glory to God in the heavenly heights, Peace to all men and women in earth who please him.”
- o) This event was for everyone...Isaiah talked about the nations and all people.
- p) This event was in David's town...God promised a King from David's family.
- q) This event was the coming of the Messiah and Master...the ruler we have been waiting for...
- r) And it's about Peace...where have we heard this before? Peace to all people who seek to please God...
- s) This unique and amazing thing has happened...the Messiah has come!
- t) Except, there's a problem...anyone else thinking that there's a problem, here?
- u) Remember, when the Messiah comes, he not only comes to bring peace and unity on earth, but in order to establish this Kingdom, with peace and unity, he has to bring judgment, according to Isaiah.

- v) And we know that to be true, because if we want to spend eternity with God, reconciled to Him, we have to deal with that which makes it impossible for us to be with God, and that's our sin.
- w) And so something else has to happen for this story to be complete...
- x) Pause...
- y) And that day when Peter was trying to figure out the same thing, Jesus laid it on the line and asked the disciples who they thought he was?
- z) And Peter was waiting for some kind of military and political overthrow that would put Jesus on the throne as King and the Jewish people will take their rightful place...
- aa) But Jesus, the Messiah, tells the disciples that instead, he will have to suffer, and die! Not exactly what Peter had in mind...but exactly what God knew to be the plan for our eternal salvation and the hope that comes with it.
- bb) Turn with me in your Bibles to Romans, 15, starting in verse 4...

3) Scripture

a) Read Romans verses 15:4-7

- i) All that has been written...all that has been witnessed and testified to from creation until today about God points ultimately to a loving God who wants the best for his people. A God who has over and over provided a way for his people to receive the gift of salvation and wholeness.
- ii) And now, Paul writes, all those things are what give us hope today because of Jesus Christ, the Messiah who has come.
- iii) The prophecies from Isaiah, the birth announcement by the angels, Peter's confession of Jesus the Messiah and Jesus' self-understanding, all give us encouragement and make us steadfast TODAY in our faith and life together.
- iv) And that encouragement is for us to enjoy together as brothers and sisters in Christ as we follow this Messiah King...
- v) But what makes Jesus so unique and amazing is the fact that instead of offering us a kingdom that was established by violence and military force, he offers you and me eternal salvation through his shed blood.

vi) And here's where the rubber meets the road for us...here's where the prophecy in Isaiah, the birth announcement, and the confession of Jesus come into perfect focus.

vii) If you hear nothing else this morning, hear these words from Paul...

b) Read verses 15:8-9a

i) Jesus did not come as Messiah to take over the world by force and make everyone do the right thing. He didn't come to live as an example only and convince people that his way is the right way.

ii) And we still haven't addressed the judgment part...

iii) But, the most radical thing about this Jesus is the fact that the way to bring about peace and unity, the way to deal with the required judgment for sin, is to be the very One that took on the full punishment of our sin, so that someday peace and unity would emerge for us.

iv) And as Paul reminds us to be encouraged NOW for the life Jesus has given us, he also spurs us on to celebrate the fact that God not only did this for the Jewish people...He did this for us...all those who seek to be faithful followers of Christ...all nations...you and me.

c) Read verses 9b-13

4) Application

a) N.T. Wright writes this in his book, *The Meaning of Jesus*: "What relevance has such a person for the world, the church, or the Christian today? It all depends. If Jesus' project as I have described it simply led to a messy death and nothing more, not very much. Who wants to follow a two-thousand-year-old failure? Why would anyone take seriously the subversive wisdom of a strange teacher, however fascinating, who believed that Israel's God was going to act through him to save Israel and the world, but who managed not only to not save himself from death but not deliver Israel and Jerusalem from the crushing disasters of 70 and 135 [A.D.] (when the temple was destroyed)?"

If, however, Jesus' death did accomplish the real defeat of the evil that had infected Israel along with the rest of the world – if, in other words, his actions in Jerusalem did somehow accomplish the kingdom of God in the revised sense that he had been announcing all along – then this was good news not only for Israel but for the whole world.

The early church, clearly, thought it was the case. They gave as their reason one thing and one thing only: after his shameful death, Jesus had been raised from the dead. The practical, theological, spiritual, ethical, pastoral, political, missionary, and hermeneutical implications of the mission and message of Jesus differ radically depending upon what one believes happened at Easter...”

- b) Jesus asked, “Who do you say that I am?”
- c) For those who have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, Jesus is the Messiah...the one who brings forgiveness of sin, eternal salvation, and hope today.
- d) For those who are waiting to see what happens in the end of it all, the Apostle Paul would encourage you to decide NOW to weigh the evidence in the Bible, and, by FAITH, enter into a relationship with Jesus as Savior and Redeemer.
- e) The Messiah that was foretold by Isaiah and announced by the angel, is the same One who wants to save you and me...to use us today.

5) Conclusion

- a) As we prepare this morning during worship for the Advent, the coming, of Jesus into the world as a baby in the manger, we know that there’s more to this story. God’s kingdom is yet to see its full power in the world through Christ...but it will.
- b) As we wait, just as the Jewish people waited for the Messiah, we are called to be faithful. To do good, to avoid evil of any kind, and to stay in love with God.
- c) In communion is our willingness to be strengthened by faith and offer our lives, again today, to Jesus.
- d) The reason for our faith is not just the prophecy and the promise...not just the announcement and the confession, but it is the death and resurrection of Jesus, our Messiah.
- e) Come to the table this morning and unwrap this Perfect Gift from God...for salvation, for life, and for ever....
- f) Let’s pray...