

“The Perfect Gift: Jesus, the Word of God”

Scripture: Isaiah 2:1-5; Romans 13:11-14

Graphic: gift, Bible, Jesus, light

Key Verses: 13:14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Theme: Receive the Perfect Gift of Jesus, the Word of God. We don't want to be Christians satisfied with the status quo. We want to actively be seeking/searching ourselves in light of what we read in the Bible and in response to the Holy Spirit., in order to find out what next step God's asking us to take.

1) Introduction

- a) How many people, by a show of hands, received the perfect Christmas gift last year from someone you love?
- b) How many people even REMEMBER what they got for Christmas last year?
- c) See, the problem with gifts is that we usually are really excited right when we get them. But over time, they just become part of our routine, or we forget about them all together. What we think is really cool just becomes normal over time.
- d) And you may be out there again this year shopping for that perfect gift for those people in your life...
- e) But there's one Gift that since the beginning of creation has been inspiring, instructing, and transforming the world...and that Perfect Gift is Jesus.
- f) And as many times as we may have heard that before, and as much as we have read and sung about the Christmas story, I challenge us this year to look at the story again with fresh eyes.
- g) Let's spend time hearing about the prophecy and promise of Jesus, the Word of God, the Messiah, the Immanuel, and the Christ.
- h) Let's unwrap this Perfect Gift...and just like a gift under the Christmas tree with your name on it, placed early in the season, we have time to look at it from all sides. We have time to pick it up and shake it. We have weeks to turn it over in our hands and let the anticipation build...who is this Jesus?
- i) We have time to fall in love with Jesus this month, if we are willing to allow Jesus to show us who He is again...
- j) I need a volunteer this morning...

- k) Go to the back of the sanctuary and you'll find a big, shiny, wrapped present...bring that up to me, please.
- l) This present has four sides – and each week, ending on Christmas Eve, we will stand on a different side, looking deeply into the Perfect Gift of Jesus. This week, we will see Jesus, the Word of God. Then, Jesus, the Messiah. After that, it's Jesus, Immanuel (God with us). Finally, on Christmas Eve, we will look into the manger and see Jesus, the Christ Child.
- m) In the midst of everything else we do this month, I pray that Jesus will constantly be on our hearts and minds...as we navigate the culture and the chaos to find the Perfect Gift from God for us. This is certainly the Gift that we will remember forever...
- n) Are we ready?
- o) Let's pray...

2) Scripture

- a) The story of the gift of Jesus, the Word of God, does not start at the manger...or the cross...or the tomb. It didn't start when people wrote the Spirit-inspired words of Holy Scripture. It doesn't begin with the Jewish people, even. It begins at creation...
- b) Here's something that might blow your mind! Jesus Christ was present at the beginning of everything...at creation, one with God.
- c) It wasn't until later in history that God sent Jesus Christ to be in the form of the baby at Christmas...that we read about in the gospels. From eternity, Jesus Christ existed as the second person of the Trinity, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit.
- d) And so our story begins there...not at the manger.
- e) But why do we call Jesus, the WORD of God?
- f) Well, if you remember your creation story, God didn't use his hands or fingers to create. God didn't need tools. You know, God didn't grab a huge rake and rake the world into existence. The most important ACTION that God DID during creation was SPEAK. He SPOKE the universe into existence. God's self-expression comes through speaking WORDS.

- g) And ultimately, as we will get to, Jesus Christ is the primary, and highest, visible self-expression of Almighty God...
- h) Jesus Christ is literally God's Word (with a capital W).
- i) And as God's Word, He is our way to know who God is, and what God is like, and what God expects from us...
- j) But, see, we have an advantage because we live in the age AFTER Jesus Christ came to earth. We know the rest of the story.
- k) But can we TRUST the story...that's the question?
- l) And the answer lies in the prophecies that came BEFORE Jesus was born...the Word from God to faithful people like Isaiah...
- m) Turn with me in your Bibles to the OT book of Isaiah, chapter 2...

n) Read Isaiah 2:1-5

- i) In the midst of chaos and corruption and sin...God spoke to Isaiah, giving him a vision for the future... "In days to come..." Not tomorrow, necessarily...not at some time in the end of all time...but a specific TIME to come.
- ii) And this prophecy has five parts...
- iii) The first, verse 2, God will raise up Zion. God will raise up the place where God dwells with His people...
 - (1) And this isn't a literal thing...God will exalt THAT place. Prior to the people of God settling in Jerusalem, that PLACE was the tabernacle – the tent that housed the 10 commandments and the Ark of the Covenant.
 - (2) When Isaiah received this prophecy, that place was the Temple in Jerusalem.
 - (3) But Zion, was God's holy city that will come about when the Messiah comes and God's reign is established throughout the earth...
- iv) Second part of the prophecy – people will be drawn TO IT. "...all the nations shall stream to it."

- (1) People from all over will be drawn to this place. There will be an attraction to this place that God has lifted up.
- v) #3 – people will sing a call of pilgrimage, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.”
- vi) #4 – They will be drawn there purposefully, with the motivation to be taught God’s ways and to walk in God’s paths.
- (1) It’s like we’re going to school...we want to do this because we want to learn what God is all about...who He is...what He wants...
- (2) And we KNOW, says Isaiah, that God will be faithful and will teach us...His Word will go out from Jerusalem...
- vii) Lastly, there will be transformation of the world...
- (1) God will make certain judgments and tell us what we are to do
- (2) And people will respond to what God wants and will act.
- (3) The people, not God, will turn weapons into farming implements...there will be peace throughout the world.
- viii) All of this because God will provide a place for people to come to learn about God and then be transformed by His instructions.
- ix) We know from history and from our own lives that this type of thing can only happen with the intervention of God. World wars and conflicts, fighting and murder...none of those things are working...
- x) And as awesome as it is to think about people flocking to God for instruction, the time had not yet come...has not yet come. People were and are still living in darkness and sin.
- xi) And as we look at this prophecy, and we look at the world, we wonder what God was pointing to. Where’s the Perfect Gift in all of this?
- xii) We know, because we are living in the time closer to the time foretold in Isaiah, that the birth of Jesus must have something to do with it, even though we still live in sinful times.
- xiii) And no one knew that better than the Apostle Paul, who described himself as the chief of all sinners. Paul was writing to the church in

Rome, pleading with them urgently to understand the instructions from God through Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and live it.

xiv) Turn with me to Romans 13, verse 11...

o) Read Romans 13:11-12

i) I have a problem with my alarm clock. The problem is, it goes off every morning at 6am. And even though I'm a morning person, I still don't like waking up with an alarm...

ii) Paul is turning on the alarm clock for the Romans and blocking them from hitting the snooze.

iii) "WAKE UP!" Paul says. You KNOW what time it is. Basically, Paul knows he is talking to Christians...he knows that they have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ...

iv) "Why are you sleeping?" Time is wasting...salvation is nearer now than when we first became believers. It's the sense of moving toward something big. That Christmas surprise is one day closer to being opened.

v) And that something is the same thing we read about in Isaiah...the day when we will be part of God's plan for world peace and a new kingdom. A time when we will walk in the ways of the Lord.

vi) He goes on to say that, "the night is gone, the day is near." Paul uses the analogy of night being dark to represent sin and the sinful things that usually happen at night, with the light of day and the holy things that happen in the light – not hidden or shrouded.

vii) He goes on...

p) Read verses 13:13

i) That's quite the list. Paul is warning them to walk toward God and not away from God. Use what you have learned and stay away from those things which you KNOW are not honoring God – orgies and drunkenness, immoral behavior, in fighting with each other and jealousy.

ii) And the same goes for us. And we may not be engaging in the sexual sin that Paul is referring to here, but quarreling and jealousy are rampant in our culture and very often in the church.

- iii) We must be diligent to know what God wants us to be doing and not doing and always be searching ourselves – not others – in order to catch our sin. And an honest prayer of a faithful follower of Jesus is, “Lord, show me my sin as if it were in a mirror in front of me.” “Show me in the Bible where my sin is identified and help me to get rid of it.”
- iv) Identifying and being honest with our sin is the only way that we can begin to get rid of it for good.
- v) Paul is telling the church to wake up and get real with sin!
- vi) And then he gives us our alternative to sin...

q) Read verse 14

- i) Put on the Word of God. Know Jesus and be ready to do what he does. Be willing to do what he told you to do.
- ii) Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ has the connotation to putting on armor...being prepared for battle...being equipped to battle sin and Satan. Wear Jesus!
- iii)...and make NO provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires...leave no room for sin in your life...only Jesus.

3) Application

- a) When the prophet Isaiah took a look around him, he was frustrated and angry that the people of God were walking away from God.
- b) God gave him hope that SOMEDAY, there would be a way for people to come directly to God to listen to his Words to be inspired, instructed, and transformed into a holy people. For Isaiah, that day never came while he was alive...the GIFT went unopened.
- c) But God had a plan...
- d) When Jesus was born, everything changed. God’s word that was present from creation took on a human form in Jesus. That Word that spoke the world into existence now was living in a small baby in a manger.
- e) That eternal Word was alive for us, here and now.

- f) And just like the prophet said, that eternal Word lifted up like Zion is that which draws us to God, invites us to bring others along, motivates us to learn and grow, and transforms us.
- g) And the way that God has chosen for that to happen is the church reading and reflecting on the Gospel story of Jesus, and the rest of the Bible.
- h) This book is not just words on a page. It's not just cute stories about people from ancient history. And it's not JUST Spirit-inspired writings from faithful people who had a relationship with God.
- i) This book and the words that are in it, represent the God who gave us the gift of life through Jesus Christ.
- j) This gift is about inspiration as we read about what God has done throughout time...about the prophecy that points to Jesus.
- k) This gift is about instruction and clarity to know good from evil, right from wrong, holiness from sin. And then learning how to live that out in community.
- l) This gift is about transformation from the inside out as we believe in and trust these inspired words from God.
- m) This gift is to be opened and shared with the world – though both our mouths and our actions.
- n) This is one part of The Perfect Gift of Jesus.

4) Conclusion

- a) From creation until this second, God has been constantly involved in the lives of His children...and just like any parent, God wants to give us to very best gifts.
- b) The gift is Jesus, the Word of God. God gave it so we would know exactly what we are to do and be. Be willing to receive the gift as it is and obey.
- c) It is under the tree already, waiting to be opened. You know what's inside...size it up, spend time looking at it, shaking it, and turning it over in your hands.
- d) Then dream with me about a life with the fullness of this gift open and active in your everyday life. Read it. Drink deep of its wisdom. Be transformed by it. Be led by the Holy Spirit from it, and then go and share it.