

# UNWRAPPING A PECULIAR GIFT

November 26, 2017 | Pastor Keith Jenkins

For those life groups that may be studying this sermon at a later date, we just finished the Thanksgiving Season and are entering the Christmas Season. Pastor Keith congratulated all who survived "Black Friday" and added "let the 'parking spot wars' begin and the ugly sweater contest winners celebrate". The Christmas music can officially commence!

Pastor Keith said his goal was not to come up with the next "Big Idea" for Christmas. Rather, the challenge is to discover some new revelation from a very familiar narrative. Essayist Dorothy Sayers noted:

**"...It is the dogma that is the drama, not beautiful phrases, nor comforting sentiments, nor vague aspirations to uplift - but the terrifying assertion that the same God who made the world, lived in the world and passed through the grave and the gate of death"**

An important key for our study today is the fact that the beginning and the end of this season centers on but one thing: **"The glorious mystery of the incarnation of Christ"**

"The infinite God, motivated by love, who spoke the universe into existence became a man so that he could redeem and restore humanity"

***Matthew 1:18-21 "This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."***

**A SAVIOR:** one who rescues, or delivers from present or future distress

**Jesus is a strangely wrapped Savior**

We would all agree that Jesus is the greatest gift ever given and we would have to admit that the package he was wrapped in was a bit odd. But isn't it just like God to wrap his best gift in peculiar wrapping?

Listen to how the prophet Isaiah said it:

***Isaiah 53:1-2 "Who has believed our message? To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm? My servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him."***

This shouldn't really surprise us. The prophet Samuel didn't recognize King David, Israel's champion because he was disguised as a young shepherd. Let's review how Jesus was "wrapped" when he came into our world.

## JESUS ENTRY INTO THE WORLD

- a. Suspect conception (Matt 1:18)
- b. A King born in a stable, not a palace, no room for him (Luke 2:7).  
Not the normal entry of Princes or Kings.
- c. He's a baby, there is no visible army and in no way ready to lead a revolution to overthrow the Roman empire!

### Additional Contextual Information:

- 400yrs between Malachi and Gabriel's announcement
- Israel suffered centuries of oppression, captivity (brief independence)
- Suffering under Roman occupation and heavy taxation

- In this first century world, every once in a while, a leader would arise & gather a following and even lead an uprising that would eventually be brutally repressed by Roman Soldiers

We also know that people often have expectations based on where you are from. Think about this in relation to Jesus:

- He was, "Jesus of Nazareth" (the carpenter's son)
- Nazareth was small overlooked, impoverished and out of the way
- He was not, "Jesus of Jerusalem", this would have been the capital, a place for nobles and a city of kings.
- The leader of the revolution is from Nazareth?
- "The birth of a child would not have signaled the coming of a great victory, or triumph of the nation of Israel over their oppressors"

### **"Sometimes the value of gift cannot be known by how its wrapped"**

The "great mystery" is that God wrapped himself in flesh (Jesus Fully God & Fully Man) Jesus is often misunderstood and his mission misinterpreted:

***Isaiah 9:6-7 "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."***

The mission of Jesus was not only misunderstood and misinterpreted, most completely missed it.

His throne initially would be set up in the hearts of men/women

- Liberating us from the bondage and tyranny of sin
- His reign and dominion begins first in our obedience to His will
- Not setting up a physical kingdom, but a spiritual one that would be eternal
- Our condition was irreversible...we could do nothing to save ourselves

It's important to understand, that desperate measures had to be taken. Outside of Christ our condition was hopeless, frankly impossible. It required "God, the creator to "stoop down" to identify with humanity, to redeem us. Jesus condescended to become a man and suffer the humiliation of the cross. Listen to Paul's letter to the Philippians:

***Philippians 2:5-8 "You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross."***

Jesus revealed God to us, his character and his heart. Most notably we see his heart in the incarnation. Most world religions, a person has to ascend, but Jesus descended to our world and became one of us. The writer of Hebrews shows us the majesty of Jesus:

***Hebrews 1:1-3 "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."***

### **1. IN HIS HUMILITY - "...take on the nature of a servant"**

***Phil 2:7 "Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."***

Born in a manger, not a palace

Born to people of humble means (The carpenters son...")  
His triumphal entry...rode a donkey

We are called not to grasp privilege; we are being challenged to imitate Jesus who emptied himself.

**2. IN HIS VULNERABILITY** - secured & provided for by God the Father entrusted all to his care

*Luke 2:6-7 "While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them."*

Like a small child we are called to be completely dependent on the Father to keep, protect and provide for you.

**3. IN HIS SELF-SACRIFICE** - What if I put myself aside, for the sake of others?

*Phil 2:4 "...Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead, don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand." (The Message)*

**4. IN HIS WILLINGNESS TO ENTER THE BROKENNESS OF OTHERS**

People can be messy, let's be honest, we can all be messy.

Who would benefit from us entering their world? We need to imitate Jesus not forcing them to come to us, but us entering their brokenness. It is a privilege that people would invite us into their brokenness. Whereas their exposure to the scriptures is important, what they really need is "living epistles".

So what is our message, what can we say?

**COME & SEE (Come taste, experience yourself)**

*John 1:45-46 "Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."*

Be Inviters this season, Jesus takes care of the rest! Don't debate, just invite them to "COME & SEE"!

*John 4:29 "Come meet a man who told me everything I ever did"*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Pastor Keith pointed out an important key for our study was *"the glorious mystery of the incarnation of Christ"*. For some in our groups, this may be a new concept for others there will be familiarity. Discuss the incredible mystery of the incarnation of Jesus.
2. Using the analogy of a wrapped present, what made Jesus such a strange or peculiar wrapped present from God? Also what do you think of this quote? "Sometimes the value of gift cannot be known by how its wrapped"
3. We were challenged to, "imitate the incarnation", so that people can see. First what does this mean to you and secondly there were four specific areas mentioned, please consider each:
  - **His Humility**
  - **His Vulnerability**
  - **His Self-Sacrifice**
  - **And His willingness to enter the Brokenness of Others**
4. Lastly, a very practical question, "what is our message"? The simplicity of the answer may throw us off, but what are your thoughts and what does it look like in your life to invite others to "come and see"?