

UNWRAPPING GOD'S GREATEST GIFT

DECEMBER 25, 2022

WORSHIP

O Little Town of Bethlehem,
Joy to the World, Hark the
Herald (King of Heaven),
For Unto Us A Child is Born
(Open the Eyes), O Come
Let Us Adore (His Name
Shall Be)

WELCOME

What gift have you received
this Christmas that was
something you needed the
most?

WORD

LUKE 2:6-15 (READ VERSES 1-20 FOR THE WHOLE CONTEXT)

⁶ While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. ⁸ In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; ¹¹ for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased." ¹⁵ When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us."

How well do we know what Christmas is truly all about? Christmas comes from "Christ" and "mass", from "misa", Latin for "celebration". Christmas is a celebration of Jesus Christ, God's greatest gift to us! Sadly, there are places where people do not even mention Jesus at Christmas. Filipinos are blessed that we live in a country where we can talk about Jesus especially at Christmas.

Christmas is from God; we read about how an angel of the Lord announced to lowly, frightened shepherds that Jesus had been born on that first Christmas (**Luke 2:8-9**). The angel gave an amazing message: "Do not be afraid...I give you good news of great joy... for all people" (**vv. 10-11**). Even the bravest among us fear something; ultimately, we are afraid of dying, of what will happen to our loved ones when we are gone, or what will happen to our souls. This "good news" announced by the angel is for all of us and it is from the Greek word "euangelizo", and "great joy" comes from "mega" (abundant, great) and "chara" (grace, favor). The good news about Jesus brings us great joy! The result of God's abundant grace to us is great joy.

The message of Christmas is that God's greatest gift is good news that will bring you great joy because it solves our greatest need for forgiveness (**Luke 2:11**). Christmas reveals to us many things about God, we'll highlight three of them today.

1. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Luke mentions two historical figures in his account of Jesus' birth. Cesar Augustus, the most powerful first Roman emperor and Quirinius, the governor of Syria (**Luke 2:1-5**). This is evidence that the story of Christmas is real, the birth of Christ is a historical fact. Cesar Augustus' census was to find out the number of men that can be sent to fight in a war, but God's divine purpose was for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem as prophesied (**Micah 5:2**).

God's sovereignty does not always mean we will like what's going on, but God's purpose will be accomplished. This was true for Joseph and Mary; they had to travel 150 kilometers from Nazareth to Bethlehem when Mary was about to give birth (**vv. 3-5**). God's timing is amazing because He is sovereign even over pagan kings to accomplish His purpose! Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem just in time for Jesus to be born there. If the decree was given earlier, or later than when the emperor issued it, Jesus would not have been born in Bethlehem, but in Galilee. Decrees then sometimes took months to reach people, but God is faithful, He will fulfill His promises!

You may be struggling with understanding God's sovereignty when everything is topsy turvy. Perhaps Mary wondered why the Messiah had to be born in a manger (**vv.6-7**). If God is in control, why was Jesus born in such a humble place? Well, this shows us that the good news is for everybody—rich and poor. Jesus, the King of kings loves us so much He was willing to become man and be born

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in a manger. Jesus became man so that He will someday suffer and die on the cross to save us from our sins, to make forgiveness available for us. This is the greatest gift—the good news!

God is sovereign; God is the Most High; Lord of heaven and earth. He is subject to none, absolutely independent; accountable to none. God does as He pleases, only as He pleases; none can hinder Him (**Isaiah 46:10; Daniel 4:35**). Christmas was from God's own free will; not even a Cesar Augustus can stop Him. When God wants something done, it shall be done (**Proverbs 21:1**). So, pray for our leaders and all people because God can change hearts! Though the world does not like the idea of God's sovereignty, this should "bring us comfort even in the most adverse of circumstances...sovereignty will sanctify them all" (Charles Spurgeon).

2. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

God is completely dependable (**Numbers 23:19**), in contrast to men. We all have been affected by someone's broken promise, but God is different. When God gives you a promise, He will fulfill His word. God kept His promises in relation to Jesus, the Savior (Messiah):

- Human, seed of a woman not an angel (**Genesis 3:15, Hebrews 2:16**)
- Seed of Abraham – a Jew, not a Gentile (**Genesis 12:1-3**)
- From the tribe of Judah (**Genesis 49:10**)
- From David's family (**2 Samuel 7:1-17**)
- Jeconiah's curse (**Jeremiah 22:30**)
- Born of a virgin (**Isaiah 7:14**)
- Born in Bethlehem (**Micah 5:2**)

Peter Stoner, a mathematician, calculated that for someone to fulfill even just eight of the prophecies is statistically impossible. Yet Jesus fulfilled all 300+ prophecies about Him! God's faithfulness is so true (**2 Timothy 2:13**). In His faithfulness, God may cause things to happen that you don't like; God will sacrifice your physical comfort for the sake of your spiritual character (**Psalms 119:75**). This Christmas, may you be reminded that God is faithful. You may not see it now, but God will keep His promises (ex., **Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28**).

3. GOD'S GREATEST GIFT, JESUS

God gave Jesus three titles (**Luke 2:10-11**):

- Savior - "soter" rescuer
- Christ – "anointed" messiah, chosen one; Son of God
- Lord – "Kyrios" absolute owner, Yahweh – name of God

God's greatest gift to us is Jesus, because we need a Savior from our sins and sin separates us from God (**Romans 3:23, Isaiah 53:6, Romans 6:23, Hebrews 9:27, Revelation 20:13-15, 21:8, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11**). Be like the humble shepherds, receive God's greatest gift to you this Christmas (**Luke 2:15-20**)—ask Jesus to be your Savior and Lord today and have a truly blessed Christmas!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. Self-Check.

Why do you think Christmas is great news for you? How does it bring you great joy?

2. Setting It Right.

In what ways have you seen God's sovereignty and faithfulness in your life?

3. Living It Out.

How do you plan to respond to God's greatest gift for you?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for God's greatest gift this Christmas to be revealed and accepted by your family, friends and those who do not know Jesus yet as Savior and Lord. Share the good news that bring great joy to all people as you celebrate Christmas, and all year through.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- God's provision for families deeply affected by inflation.
- War in Ukraine to end, loss of lives prevented; escalating tension in East Asian countries to stop.

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples.
- Elders, pastors, deacons, and families (holy, humble, harmonious, happy, heart-working).
- Ministries and churches expansion worldwide.

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God.
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends.

MEMORY VERSE

LUKE 2:10-11

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