

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS
December 24, 2017 Morning Service
2 Corinthians 9:15

I want you to find in your Bible one little, short verse. It's in II Corinthians 9 and verse 15. Paul is talking about sowing and reaping and he then he adds this verse and it's where I want to jump off from for just a few minutes with us. Then I'm going to preach three short sermons today. There's going to be an application after each one of them. I'm going to ask you to do something after each short sermon. Now this is not a sermonette. Sermonettes make Christianettes. We're not looking for that. Alright? But just brief three simple, salient, pointed thoughts that I want us to think on under the banner of All I Want For Christmas. Paul said it this way: *Thanks be to God for His indescribable* [it can be translated unspeakable] *gift!*¹

As a matter of fact, it's the only time in the whole of the New Testament that this word is used. From Matthew to the Revelation, the only time you find this word indescribable. It means that words fail to communicate. You cannot do it justice. God gave the greatest gift, the indescribable gift and that gift came as a baby, grew to a man, went to a cross, out of a tomb, and to a throne. It's the greatest gift you'll ever receive this Christmas. I get some great gifts. I receive some gracious gifts from people in this congregation already today.

The greatest gift you could ever receive is Jesus Christ. Why is that? It's the most expensive gift you'll ever receive. It cost God his whole life. It is the only gift you'll receive that will last forever. He's not going anywhere. He's the Alpha and the Omega and He is forever world without end and Jesus would be the most practical gift you'd ever receive because you would use it every day. You speak to Him. You confess your sins. You cry out to Him. You worship Him. It is an indescribable gift.

So how do we respond? That's what I want to think with you about for just a few minutes this morning on this Christmas Eve early joint service. Thank you for coming and being right here. How do we respond? Well I want us to respond like Mary and Joseph. I want us to respond like shepherds and I want us to respond like the Magi, like the wise men. How do we respond?

Number one. We find in the Bible what I want for Christmas is the faith, the faith of Mary and Joseph. When you read about Joseph you find him in Matthew's gospel chapter 1 beginning in verse 20. You find these words: *But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived*

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in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. [That's what his name means is Jesus. He's coming to save.] *Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us." And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.*

Joseph responded by faith. The angel revealed. Joseph responded. Mary just a teenage girl, the angel comes to visit. She says, "How's this going to be?" He said, "You will be with child by the Holy Spirit. You are highly favored." In Luke's gospel chapter 1 and verse 38, look at it. *And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word."* Not what I want, not what my mother wants, not what Joseph wants but what God wants. She responded to the revelation by faith.

Listen to me, dear friend. It's Christmas. People come to church. I tell young preachers all the time. Be very careful with Christmas. Everybody, everybody loves a baby in a manger because He hasn't started talking yet. It's when He starts saying stuff that it gets hard. It's when He grows up and says, "I'm God and you're not." It's when He grows up and says that, "I'm the way, the truth, and the life and you can't get to the Father but that you come by Me." It's when He grows up and says, "There's a narrow gate and I'm the door. I'm the gate and no man goes to heaven but that He comes through Me." Everybody loves the baby but then He starts talking. When He talks He brings revelation and you must respond to that revelation and you must respond by faith. For by grace you have been saved through faith.

Hebrews 11 says that without faith it's impossible to please God. So on this Christmas Eve morning here's what I want to do. This is sermon number one. This is application number one. I want to ask you here all across this room. You've come, some of you to make your momma happy. Some of you just came because there's lunch after this. You say, "You know, pastor, I've never asked King Jesus to be the Lord and King of my life." I want us to do that today. You're here. You may be in the choir and not a Christian. You may play an instrument. That doesn't get you to heaven. You could be a gospel preacher. That doesn't get you there. It's that you know Jesus Christ. Amen.

John, is that you? Lord, have mercy. I love you. John used to come to church here and his wife got sick. He's now across town. I'll never forget the day. This wasn't in my notes. I just looked up and saw my friend. He's what I'm talking about. I went to John's house and went in the kitchen. He had been listening to me preach. He said, "Pastor, I need what you're talking about. I need Jesus to save me." I said, "Are you ready?" He said, "Yeah." We just bowed our head right there and he prayed and said,

“Lord, come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me.” When God saved him then he got up and he ran into the kitchen. I looked around like, what are we doing? Are we making a sandwich or something? He went in there and he opened the bottom drawer and he pulled out all the liquor in his cabinet. He started pouring it down the drain. He said, “I’ve decided, preacher, if I’m going to get in, I’m going to get all in and I’m going to follow the Lord with a sober heart.” That’s what he told me that day. Blessed be the name.

I’m telling you, what God did for John He’ll do for you today. He’ll save you but you’ve got to come to where Mr. Johnson was, that you’d say, “Lord, come in.” So here’s what I want to do. I want everybody just to bow your head right now. Everybody just bow your head. If you’ve never asked the Lord to save you I’m going to pray a prayer and if you’re ready today like he was then, pray these words after me and mean it. Don’t pray them to me. Pray them to the Lord. Pray these words right here. Just say this. “Father God.” Just tell Him. You say, “Preacher, I don’t know how to pray.” Just tell Him these words. “Father God, I admit to you I’m a sinner. I ask you to come into my life, forgive my sin, and I by faith receive you. I pledge to walk after you and live for you as you give me strength to do it. Thank you, Jesus, for saving me, in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

Now listen to me. I believe you prayed that prayer and that minute God saved you right here. I believe you were born again. When we sing a song here in just a few minutes after the third sermon, I want you to walk right down here. I want you to take me by the hand. You say, “Pastor, I don’t know if I could go public.” It’s when Jesus, the baby, started talking again. He said, “Those that’ll be ashamed of Me here I’ll be ashamed of them up there. If they will be unashamed of Me here, I will not be ashamed. I’ll take their name to the Father.”

I encourage you to come. I’m praying. All I want for Christmas this year is the faith, the faith of Mary and Joseph. Secondly, I would desire and want the obedience of the shepherds. The obedience of the shepherds. In Luke’s gospel chapter 2 we find this group of shepherds. In Luke 2, look in verse 8. You’ll see it on the screen. Follow along. We find Mary and Joseph. The baby’s coming but now God begins to deal with some folks and he says in chapter 2 of Luke, verse 8:

In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. [Friend, if an angel showed up in this house today, you’d get terribly frightened.] 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; for today in the city of David there has been born for you [for you, dear friend] a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there appeared

with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

Do you know you never find angels singing in the Christmas story? Not a singing angel in the gospels. They praise and they say but you never hear them singing. My wife told me that and I told her, "Praising is singing and you're wrong and I'm right." She said, "Well you need to go back to seminary because that's not what that word means. These angels, they were giving praise and speaking Glory to God in the highest.

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." So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

We see Mary and Joseph with faith. We see the shepherds being obedient. The angel says He's going to be there. Go. And they went. He said to them, "Fear not because this Savior was born for you." How do you obey? There are three things I think you see here.

Number one. You fear not. You bow down. You speak up. Pretty simple. God's called you to follow after Christ. Fear not. We live in a world where if you stand for Christ today it's not always easy. Fear not. Greater is He that's in us than he that's in the world. He'll see you through. He's your strength, your comforter. Fear not.

Secondly, bow down. Now we don't find these shepherds on their knees but we find them in worship and you know that word worship. It means to kiss toward God. I cannot help but believe that they did not lean on their staff and bow down as they came to the King. I believe they got up to praise Him but worship always begins on our knees. That's going to be our second application. I'm going to ask everybody in this room in just a minute to get on your knees if you're physically able. On Christmas Eve morning what a better way to do worship than to get on our knees. It's great to hear the wonderful choir sing and this quartet and others and clap our hands but I tell you, it would do us a world of good to bow and get on our knees.

Fear not, bow down, and then verse 17 says they spoke up. *When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.* Can you imagine? They're running into the stable. "Are you Joseph?" "Yeah, I'm going

to be His earthly father.” Let me tell you, there’s a bunch of angels out here in the field and they began to make known everything that they’d heard. They were just being obedient.

You say, “It sounds crazy.” Sometimes obedience looks crazy. Sometimes doing what God tells you to do, like when somebody slaps you on one side of your face to turn the other. That baby started talking. He had some hard sayings. Even some of them are called hard sayings in the Bible. As a matter of fact, Jesus said, “If your master makes you go one mile don’t lay down the load but go two. Go a second mile.” That’s obedience. Anybody can love one that loves you. It’s those that you’re called on to love that don’t love you. Hallelujah. Those that speak evil of you and despitefully use you and you show the love of Christ unto them.

So here’s what I’d like us to do. I’d like us to pray the Lord’s Prayer. You say, “Well I don’t know it.” Well just mumble along. You’ll be alright. People around you – you’ll pick it up. When you get to the end, you’ll know the end. Okay? We’re not going to put it on the screen. You say, “I’ve never heard of the Lord’s Prayer.” Well then you ought to learn it. You’ll find it in Matthew’s gospel chapter 6. If you’re physically able. If you’re not physically able I just want you to lay your head over on the cap rail of that pew in front of you but if you’re physically able just slide out on your knees. The older I get the harder this is. I’m going to ask them just to clip my mic off while we pray this prayer. We’ll just all say it together. I’ll begin and then you join me.

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory, forever.

Father, teach us how to pray, how to bow, how to worship in obedience in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Now as you slide back into your seat there’s a third sermon I want to give you right quick. What do we want for Christmas? I want the faith of Mary and Joseph. I want the obedience of the shepherds but then you know there’s a Baptist in the house because he wants the generosity of the wise men. Amen? Oh we find them, the Magi. In Matthew’s gospel chapter 2, the wise men we call them. How many of them were there? We don’t know. It doesn’t tell us. Most people tell us there were three because they brought three gifts but we don’t know. Many people say they came on camels but we don’t know that. As a matter of fact, they probably would have more rightly come on Arabian stallions than they would have camels. They were in Babylon. They were about 300 miles from Bethlehem.

My home in Pisgah, Alabama is 350 miles from Pensacola so that's about the distance that they're going to travel, these wise men. From Chattanooga, Tennessee to Pensacola, Florida. Just a little less than that. They're not in a minivan. They're going with difficulty. They're wise men because they're from Babylon. Daniel used to be there. These men studied the stars and they studied prophecy. When they saw the star they went to Jerusalem to ask Herod. Herod brought the wise men and said, "Where does the scripture say He's going to be born?" They said, "In Bethlehem of Judea."

Tonight I'm preaching on that word Bethlehem. Just Bethlehem. What does Bethlehem teach us? That's my candlelight service message. They said, "It's going to be in Bethlehem," and Herod said, "Well go find Him. Come back and tell me where He is because I want to come and worship Him." He was the biggest infidel in the scriptures. He wanted to go kill Him. They saw the star. Some people say, "Was it a comet?" No. This was a star that was leading. This was the Shekinah glory of God. It was like in the Old Testament when they came out of Egypt, a pillar of fire and a cloud that led them. These men went and the Bible says when they got there, they fell down and worshipped and these wise, rich men opened up their coffers and they gave gold, frankincense and myrrh. Most unusual.

The gold of course would speak to us of God's sovereign dominion, that He is King. I was in Jordan, the county of Jordan right next to Israel one time. We were out to eat and began to go through the crowd and they said the king of Jordan is about to drive by. Well, we got out there on the side of the road like it was a Macy's parade. We were watching. We were fixin' to see the king. He went by slow and waved. That didn't do one thing for me. You know why? That wasn't my King. Amen. Those Jordanians went crazy. I just said, "Well, that's pretty cool." It's good to see him but that wasn't my King.

Let me tell you, friend, if He's not your King, Christmas is not very big. Let me tell you, if He's your King, it's a big day. They brought the gold. Let me tell you, friend, your wealth, your wealth belongs to the Lord God. You ought to be a giver. Here in just a minute the third sermon's going to be, we're going to take an offering. We're going to pass the offering plate. We didn't have small groups with all my people this morning and so we're going to give our tithe and our offering. I've got mine and you've got yours. We'll give it together. Tonight we'll give those gifts that will be for our benevolence ministry that'll keep the lights on in houses all year long. We'll give and the children will help me put that money in the manger. This morning we bring our tithe. We bring our offering. We bring our gold.

Then frankincense. It speaks of His sinless deity. Not only is He King, He's God. They came to worship Him. The baby was God. Frankincense is first found in Exodus

30:34 when you find the incense formula and the frankincense that comes out of a frankincense tree or a bush is a white resin that causes the smoke to come out of the incense. Dear friend, not only does your wealth belong to God, your worship belongs to God. That's what they were doing with frankincense. They were coming to worship the King.

Then myrrh. Myrrh was used in two ways in the life of Jesus. In Mark 15:23 when they put Him on that cross, they came and put on a pole and put up to Him wine mixed with myrrh and He said no. It was an agent to numb the pain. He said no. He would then die. Nicodemus would come and take Him off the cross and wrap Him and take Him to that tomb and they rubbed the body with myrrh. It was an embalming agent. Why did they bring myrrh to a baby? I'm telling you, the reason they did is that Christ was born to die. It's the picture of His sacrificial death. The gold is sovereign dominion. The frankincense is sinless deity. The myrrh is His sacrificial death. No man could take His life. He laid down His life for you. Hallelujah. What a Savior. He died for you. He was born to die. The myrrh speaks.

Two of our deacons the other day – their kids are married. They had a little baby. They posted a picture. One deacon on one side. One on the other. They were both holding that little baby just days old. I wrote under there. I said, "That baby looks just like Jesus hanging between two malefactors." Not all our deacons are like that but those guys were guilty that day. Amen. That's where Jesus died. That's why there's two crosses up there, one on each side. One with a shaft of light going down on it. That's one malefactor that believed and said, "Forgive me." The other died in darkness and would not believe. That's why that picture is there in that marvelous stained glass.

The myrrh. He came to die. Your witness belongs to God. You should be telling this story. Just my church members now, just the people that are members of Olive, I want you to listen to me right here. This is the 24th day of December. We're almost out of year. We're in month twelve. Let me ask you, have you shared the gospel with anybody this year? Have you talked to anybody about the gospel? I wonder if you really believe it if you've gone a year and haven't talked about it. The myrrh speaks of His death. You must tell the story. It's the only way that we become the people of God in this community is that we tell the story.

Some of you prayed to receive Christ. That was our first short sermon. Then we bowed and all worshipped as we prayed the Lord's Prayer. Now we're going to give our offering to the Lord. So offering bearers, get right where you need to be. We're going to sing a song and then I'm going to finish the sermon because the sermon's not done until the conclusion is in it. We've not done that yet but this is application of point three where we come with the generosity of God's people.

I've never taken an offering during the sermon before but I'm about to do it. Somebody needs to pass up here with the big money people in the choir. We'll get theirs after church. Amen. Brother Jon, are you ready? Are you going to do that song? I love this song. This is good. Let's sing it. Gentlemen, go receive the gifts of God's generous and gracious people and then we'll come to conclusion. Let's sing, Jon. Hallelujah.

Today our eyes go to a cradle. You look forward to a cross. We'll be in here on Good Friday. Do you know this year Easter is April 1st? Who's the fool? That's the question. From the cradle to the cross and then He's coming again. He promised to come once and He did. He went to the cross and died and now He is at His coronation and when the Father says, "Go get your children," He is coming again. Are you ready for Him? Are you ready?

Yesterday my son, as I said, picked up my parents and they drove that 350 down here. I sent a text and said, "Where are you?" I'd go to the window and look out. He'd send me a text and say, "We're just getting off of 65." I said, "Good. Ya'll be here in about an hour." An hour went by. They've got to be close. I kept going to the window and looking. I kept going.

I was reminded of Dr. Vines over at First Baptist Church in Jacksonville used to tell the story of going to the children's home for special needs kids. He said he asked the proprietor that was there, he said, "Why are all the windows smudged on this side of the building?" He said, "Oh preacher, we have people like you that come for chapel and two weeks ago a man told the kids that Jesus is coming and He'll be coming from the east and he told them which side of the building it is." He said, "For days after that they keep their little fingers and their noses and their faces at the window saying, 'Is it today? Is it today? Is it today?'"

Oh that we would anticipate and live in such a way. Is it today? Today? What if He came back on Christmas Eve? I wonder who would preach this afternoon. Somebody would. Not me. I'm out of here. I hope a lot of you won't be here but if He tarries He's coming. We live in grand anticipation. Hallelujah. What a Savior. Jesus is born today.