

## WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY

### The One and Only

The story is told of someone tried to calculate how much it would cost to give the gifts named in the classic Christmas song, "The Twelve Days of Christmas." The grand total came to about \$15,000. Some items were affordable, like a partridge in a pear tree for \$34.99. Six turtledoves will run you somewhere around \$50. Six geese-a-laying will cost around \$150.

But the price takes off when you add 11 pipers piping. That is \$1,000 right there. Then there are the 12 drummers drumming. With current union scale for musicians, they will run you another \$1,000. The price really soars when you get 12 lords-a-leaping. We are talking \$3,000 for them. Granted, I don't know where you would find them, but apparently, they are very expensive.

Still, the real message of Christmas is not the gifts that we give to each other. Rather, it is a reminder of the gift that God has given to each of us.

### INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the Bible sets the tone for the rest of the Bible – indeed the rest of redemptive history. We read in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God . . ." Before there was anything, there's God. And God is the initiator. Think of it: We could not love God unless he first loved us. If hadn't awakened us in our deadness, we could have no saving knowledge of God. If he hadn't made the first move, we would have no relationship. There would be no forgiveness, no righteousness, no adoption, no future, no hope, unless it is first true: "God gave."

In his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, C.S. Lewis describes a time in his early atheist life when he understood existence through the lens of the playwright. It became very clear to him that, "if Shakespeare and Hamlet could ever meet, it must be Shakespeare's doing. Hamlet could initiate nothing."<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare was the author not Hamlet. The amazingness of grace is just that. If God and man were ever to meet; if God and man were to ever reconcile: God had to take the initiative. He did. He gave.

### TEXT John 3:16

Our text again today is taken from the third chapter of the Gospel of John and in particular verse 16 which has been my pastoral focus for some weeks. What an amazing verse: "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*" (John 3:16, ESV). The second clause is in fact the answer to the question, "How did God love the world"? He gave! He gave his only Son!

---

<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956), 223-224.

## **GOD GAVE**

What did God give? Notice the surrounding context:

<sup>14</sup> *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*

<sup>16</sup> *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

<sup>17</sup> *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

So, the word “gave” (The Greek word δίδωμι [did-o-mee]<sup>2</sup> refers to both vv 14-15 in that he was given to be “lifted up” and refers to verse 17, he was given in the sense of the incarnation. Christmas is the act of God, giving. The term “lifted up looks up to Calvary’s cross and yet even beyond to Christ’s exaltation. “Jesus is predicting his death on the cross as both his exaltation to glory and the basis of salvation for sinners.”<sup>3</sup> “The present text affirms that a loving God has not left the world to its own destructive devices. In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has intervened to give life to everyone in the world who will receive the gift.”<sup>4</sup> God took the initiative.

Max Lucado is quoted as saying, “If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. But since our greatest need was forgiveness, God sent us a Saviour.”<sup>5</sup>

## **HIS ONE AND ONLY SON**

Therefore, God’s love for the world is therefore seen in the mission of the Son. Christmas can be summarized as “He gave his only Son.” John tells us that God sent his only – his one and only Son. The Greek term used here is **μονογενής** [*mon-og-en-ace/*], meaning “one of a kind.” “The term *monogenēs* therefore refers to uniqueness and has no inherent reference to chronology or origin.”<sup>6</sup> John’s meaning pertains to the fact that Jesus was unique in kind or type. He is the only Savior.

- He is the only Savior that is inherently the glory of the Father. John 1:14 (ESV) <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

<sup>2</sup> Strong, J. (1995). *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship.

<sup>3</sup> Osborne, G. R. (2018). *John: Verse by Verse*. (J. Reimer, E. Ritzema, D. Thevenaz, & R. Brant, Eds.) (p. 83). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>4</sup> Lamar Williamson Jr.. *Preaching the Gospel of John: Proclaiming the Living Word* (Kindle Locations 582-583). Kindle Edition.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.quotes.net/quote/38331>

<sup>6</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Jn 3:16). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

- He is the only Savior that has seen the Father. John 1:18 (ESV) <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.
- He is the only Savior to believe in. John 3:18 (ESV) <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.
- He is the only Savior that gives eternal life, now and into the forever. 1 John 4:9 (ESV) <sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

### **APPLICATION**

God says, "There is only one Saviour that can save you. It's my Son." God says, "I give him to you." Therefore Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius, or some universal consciousness, etc. cannot save you. Jesus is the one and only Saviour and God gave him to us. He is the greatest gift of all.

A gift, by definition, is something that we did not earn, but which we receive from someone else's generosity. A gift is appreciated either because of the giver that you have received it from, or because of the value attached to the gift. In the case of Christ, it is both. God gave His Son. Both the giver and the gift are of inestimable value.

I wonder if I can offer a challenge this morning to all of us who hold Christ as the great treasure of our lives. Those of us who can truly say, "your steadfast love is better than life."<sup>7</sup> What if before you open presents, what if before you gather at the table for that tasty feast, you were to sincerely recite Psalm 90:14 (ESV), "Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

---

<sup>7</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Ps 63:3). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.