

Christmas Sermon 2021

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, December 19, 2021

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

NOTE 1 – Before we dismiss the children and ministry volunteers...

NOTE 2 – The 2021 ABM will take place on Sunday, January 23, 2022, following the Sunday Service (January 30 in case of inclement weather). Nomination forms necessary to nominate individuals for the elected office of Deacon on our church Board—whose terms expire at the Annual Meeting—must be completed TODAY. Your completed forms must be placed in the designated box on the front foyer table before your leave. Also, the deadline for the submission of Ministry Leader Reports is Sunday, January 2, 2022.

NOTE 3 – Children and volunteers are dismissed at this time for Children's Church and Nursery. God bless you!

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INTRODUCTION

Merry Christmas and thank you for joining us today! Whether you are here in person or watching via the livestream, you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes. We have much to cover in a relatively short amount of time.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

FYI 1 – This Christmas I want to offer a simple, encouraging sermon based upon items we have not touched upon in some time. To begin, the Bible presents Christ in a number of ways (i.e., it employs many images to describe His nature, purpose, work and beyond). For instance...

FYI 2 – In the pages of Scripture, Christ is identified as an Advocate who pleads for us, a High Priest who intercedes for us, a Groom who longs for and prepares a place for us, a Brother who remains close to us, a Redeemer who rescues us, a Judge who examines us, a Vine that sustains us, Bread that nourishes us, Light that guides us, a Lamb that was slain for us, and so forth...

FYI 3 – The Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—present us with four complementary images of Christ....

- 1) Matthew presents the kingship of Jesus (Jesus as Christ or King)
- 2) Mark presents the servant-nature of the Lord (Christ as Servant)
- 3) Luke presents the humanity of the Lord (Christ as Fully Man)
- 4) John presents the deity of Jesus Christ (Christ as Fully God)

KEY – Each image is vital in understanding who and what He is, as each reveals some unique facet about His Person, Nature and Work. The student of Scripture quickly discovers that no one image can fully capture the wonder that is Christ. Thus, each has to be considered carefully, prayerfully and with great joy!

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

Today I want to highlight one image applicable to Christ—an image that is especially meaningful at Christmas...

NOTE 1 – Namely, I want to consider Christ as the GIFT of the Father for humanity (i.e., both individually and collectively). In the days to come, a great many of you will spend time unwrapping presents lovingly wrapped to bring joy to your heart. This morning, we do well to regard Christ as such a gift—a good and perfect gift from the Father above. What sayeth the Word of God?

John 3:16 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

NOTE 2 – Consider the following as we wade into the waters of this message...

1) God the Father Gave a Gift We Could Neither Merit Nor Deserve

John 3:16 (Emphasis Mine)

16 For God so **loved** the world that he gave . . .

KEY – The giving of this gift of Christ was motivated by love (v. 16) and NOT the worthiness of the recipients...

Romans 5:8

8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

2) God the Father Gave His Gift Freely, Voluntarily and of His Own Volition

KEY – The giving of this gift was not forced or coerced by an external force. Rather, it was “voluntarily” given...

John 3:16 (Emphasis Mine)

16 For God so loved the world that he **gave** . . .

3) God the Father Gave a Gift of Incalculable Value and/or Worth

John 3:16 (Emphasis Mine)

16 For God so loved the world that he gave **his one and only Son** [i.e., only begotten] . . .

KEY – In giving His Son, the Father gave the very best He had to offer (i.e., His Son unique in kind and relation).

4) God the Father Gave a Gift Accessible to the Whole of Humanity

John 3:16 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that **whoever** believes in him . . .

KEY – The gift of Christ Jesus was not intended purely for the great, the elite, the noble and the beautiful. Rather, it is a gift that any-and-all can receive so long as they are willing to receive Him by faith. We all find our place and/or welcome in the “whoever” of John 3:16.

5) God the Father Gave a Gift Perfectly Suited to Meet Our Deepest Need

Ultimately, God gave His Son to rescue us from both the power and the penalty of sin that we might find life...

John 3:16 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him **shall not perish** but have **eternal life**.

QUOTE – “If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us 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. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer. Our greatest need is FORGIVENESS, so God sent us a SAVIOR.” –Max Lucado

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 3

In many ways these points would be sermon enough! If we gathered on this Christmas Sunday to celebrate these five aspects of the gift of the Father, we could say we had church! However, I would like to advance the story a bit and add the following...

KEY – Being boundless in nature, Christ functions as a boundless gift...

NOTE 1 – Thus, the one who receives Christ by faith receives an innumerable number of other gifts to be enjoyed for both time and eternity. When I think of Christ as the gift of God, I cannot help but think of Him as the gift who keeps on giving! In fact, I was overwhelmed when I put pen to paper and delineated the blessings that become ours in Christ Jesus!

NOTE 2 – With the time we have on this Christmas Sunday, as we commemorate the Coming of Christ nearly two-thousand-years ago, let us consider all that becomes ours as we give ourselves to Him by faith. We have much to consider, so let us quickly explore these varying aspects of the gift who keeps giving. May this simple word speak to your heart...

A BOUNDLESS GIFT...

- **FORGIVENESS or PARDON**

Matthew 1:20b–21 (Birth Announcement, Emphasis Mine)

20 . . . an angel of the Lord appeared to him [Joseph] in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people **from their sins.**”

Hebrews 9:28a

28 . . . Christ was sacrificed once to **take away the sins** of many . . .

1 John 1:9

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will **forgive** us our sins and **purify** us from all unrighteousness.

Isaiah 1:18

18 “Come now, let us reason together,”
says the LORD.

“Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool.

- **JUSTIFICATION**

FYI – Justification is the judicial declaration of God that sinful man shall be deemed righteous (i.e., restored to right standing with Him) through faith in the finished work of Christ Jesus. It is the complete expunging on our criminal record(s) before God that occurs at the moment of belief.

2 Corinthians 5:21

21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- **LIFE ETERNAL**

John 3:16

16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 17:3

3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

- **LIFE ABUNDANT**

John 10:10b

10 . . . I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

- **FREEDOM FROM CONDEMNATION (GUILT/SHAME)**

Romans 8:1

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

Romans 5:9

9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!

- **SONSHIP (ADOPTION)**

John 1:12

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

Romans 8:15

15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”

- **HEAVENLY ACCESS TO THE FATHER**

John 14:6

6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

1 John 5:14–15

14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

Hebrews 4:16

16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

- **CITIZENSHIP**

Colossians 1:13–14

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Ephesians 2:19–20

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

- **DIVINE HEALING (HOLISTIC)**

Isaiah 53:4–5

4 Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.
5 But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

• PROTECTION

Psalm 23:4

4 Even though I walk
 through the valley of the shadow of death,
 I will fear no evil,
 for you are with me;
 your rod and your staff,
 they comfort me.

Psalm 91:1–7, 11, 14–16

1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
 will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
 2 I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress,
 my God, in whom I trust.”
 3 Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare
 and from the deadly pestilence.
 4 He will cover you with his feathers,
 and under his wings you will find refuge;
 his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
 5 You will not fear the terror of night,
 nor the arrow that flies by day,
 6 nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
 nor the plague that destroys at midday.
 7 A thousand may fall at your side,
 ten thousand at your right hand,
 but it will not come near you.

11 He will command his angels concerning you
 to guard you in all your ways;

14 “Because he loves me,” says the LORD, “I will rescue him;
 I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

15 He will call upon me, and I will answer him;
 I will be with him in trouble,
 I will deliver him and honor him.

16 With long life will I satisfy him
 and show him my salvation.”

- **PRESERVATION (Even In Suffering)**

Isaiah 43:1b–2

1 . . . “Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
 I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
 2 When you pass through the waters,
 I will be with you;
 and when you pass through the rivers,
 they will not sweep over you.
 When you walk through the fire,
 you will not be burned;
 the flames will not set you ablaze.

- **PERSPECTIVE (In Affliction)**

Romans 8:28

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Job 23:8–10

8 “But if I go to the east, he is not there;
 if I go to the west, I do not find him.
 9 When he is at work in the north, I do not see him;
 when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him.
 10 But he knows the way that I take;
 when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.

- **COMFORT**

2 Corinthians 1:3–4

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

- **PEACE**

Romans 5:1

1 . . . Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

John 14:27

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Romans 8:35, 37–39

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- **JOY**

Romans 14:17

17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit

Galatians 5:22–23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

- **PROVISION**

Luke 12:22, 32

22 Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. . . . 32 “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

Philippians 4:19

My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 7:7–8

7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

2 Peter 1:3

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

- **WISDOM (Insight into How to Live)**

John 8:12

12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

James 1:5

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

- **WISDOM (A Suitable Foundation for Life)**

Matthew 7:24–27

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

- **PURPOSE (MACRO)**

Matthew 22:37–38

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Matthew 28:18–20

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

- **POWER TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSE**

Acts 1:8

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Mark 15:15 –18

15 "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

- **PURPOSE (MICRO – Unique Plan & Walk Crafted by God)**

Jeremiah 29:11

11 For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

- **DIVINE GUIDANCE (Specific Direction)**

Proverbs 3:5–6

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
6 in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.

Psalms 32:8

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you and watch over you.

- **HOPE (Confident Expectation of Good Ahead)**

2 Timothy 4:6–8

6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

John 14:1–3

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Revelation 19:11–16

11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

APPLICATIONS

In the days ahead you will take the time to unwrap gifts lovingly selected and prepared for you. I pray that God blesses your time with family and friends on Christmas Day! However, let us not neglect and/or forget the gift that the Lord has taken the time to provide for each of us...

1) The Gift of Jesus Christ (Come Into the World)

2) The Gift(s) of Jesus Christ (That Keeps on Giving)

KEY 1 – Of course, like any other gift, it must be received. In the same way we can spurn the generosity of our peers, we can spurn the generosity of God concerning His gift of Christ. How tragic it would be to do this, however! What a waste to forfeit so much in rejecting the simple call to trust in Jesus. Ultimately...

KEY 2 – The ONLY sensible thing to do is receive the gift of Christ in the manner prescribed by God the Father...

John 3:16 (Emphasis Mine)

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever **believes** in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Q. Have you placed your faith in Christ?

KEY 3 – If so, praise the Lord. If not, let today be that day! Do not wait but receive and revel in the gift of God!

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Those who wish to give online may do so at www.NewLifeBarre.org. Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting this local work of Christ.

NOTE 2 – Special Events...

This Thursday from 6:30–7:30 we will gather for a time of worshipful carols, Communion and a biblical word. Please feel free to join us as we celebrate the Coming (i.e., the Advent) of the Christ. Feel free to invite your friends and family!

NOTE 3 – Ministry schedule...

Prayer – Sunday at 8:45am

Sunday School – Sunday at 9:15am

CYC – Tuesday from 3–4pm and 4–5pm

Weekly Study – Thursday at 6:30–7:30pm

Women's Ministry – 2nd Tuesday at 6:30pm

Men's Breakfast – 2nd Saturday at 9am

Potluck – Final Sunday of the Month