

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
December 25, 2015
Christmas Day**

John 1:1-14

God's Christmas Gift to You!

- 1. It is UNIQUE**
- 2. It is NECESSARY**
- 3. It is YOURS**

**Hymns: 50 – 55 – 61 – “The First Noel” –
47 – 56 – 62**

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

John 1:1-14 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Sometimes it's hard to find the perfect gift for someone. Have you ever experienced that?

- What do you get for someone who seems to have everything already?
- What do you get for parents who are downsizing, and trying to get rid of things?
- What do you get for someone who is a bit particular about their things?
- What do you get kids who already have bins full of toys?
- What do you get for that new boyfriend or girlfriend so that you send a message that they're important to you, but is not too “forward” of a gift?

Sometimes it can be difficult to find that perfect gift!

On this Christmas morning, we are going to explore that thought as we look at Christmas through the eyes of the Apostle John. In this classic Christmas gospel reading, John reflects on what happened at Christmas and what its meaning is for you and me. Putting it in simple terms, we're looking at **“God's Christmas Gift to You.”** Let's look at three different thoughts on this Christmas gift that God gives you this morning.

1. It is UNIQUE

Let's put our cards on the table right away this morning and identify what God's gift to you is. It comes – not wrapped in red, green, or gold paper – but wrapped in strips of cloth. He comes – not placed under a tree – but placed in a cow's feed box. He comes – not born in a modern birthing wing of a hospital – but in a stable, as there was no room for the expectant mother in the inn. He is none other than the Son of God himself. **What a unique gift!**

We see just how unique this gift is when we examine some of John's terms for Christ. He calls him the “Word.” This is a term only used by the Apostle John in Scripture. In a section that

parallels the book of Genesis, John mentions that even at the beginning of time, the Word – the Son of God – already existed.

What is the point of words? Words are intended to make something known. They are intended to relay communication, a message. The Christ is a message. He is also the central message of God's revelation to us in the Scriptures. We especially see this in his role as a Prophet in his life. Through his powerful sermons and counseling sessions, Jesus the Prophet spread God's message to his people. **What a unique gift!**

John tells us something else that makes this gift unique: ***“Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.”*** Your gift is the Creator of all that exists! Colossians 1 has a similar thought about Christ: ***“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”***

Later in Jesus' ministry, he would show his certain power over this creation. He would still a violent storm in front of his disciples. He would take loaves and fish and multiply them for thousands of people. He would command the fish to jam Peter's net in a miraculous catch that would stupefy his early disciples.

Yet what irony! How ironic that the one who made everything now lies helpless in a manger. How ironic that the one who created humans now is dependent on a young virgin mother to take care of his basic needs. How ironic that he needs shelter in a stable, because he has no place to give him a room.

What unique Christmas gifts have you been given down through the years? What special ones do you remember? A generous amount of money? An electronic device that you knew

you'd really enjoy? A car? This morning, rejoice in the most unique gift that you could ever be given by God. And the remarkable thing is that he has not just been “given” to you. He has become one of you.

In the sermon this past Sunday, we saw other unique descriptions of the Messiah in Psalm 2: The Son, the King of Zion, the “Anointed One.” Those descriptions and also the ones this Christmas morning are impressive enough, but consider today the greatest mystery of Christmas, that he has come “into the flesh” (the Incarnation). He is not visiting. He is not inspecting. He is not even merely watching over us. He has become one of us!

What a unique Christmas gift this is!

2. It is NECESSARY

John continues with another thought we need to know about this gift. After all, sometimes gifts are not so useful. Have you ever opened a Christmas present and wondered that? Have you ever gotten one and resisted the temptation to say out loud, “What in the world am I going to do with this?”

John said this about our gift: ***“In him was life, and that life was the light of men... To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”*** What a necessary gift this is!

To understand just how necessary this gift is for us, we need to understand the bad news of why we needed him. John paints this in vivid pictures for us this Christmas morning:

- He is light for darkness – Are you afraid of the dark? Even if you'd answer that question “No,” have you ever found yourself in a dark place unexpectedly and been surprised at your fear? Imagine you had to go through our entire campus at night during a power outage to see if anyone was in one of the

rooms. At a time like that, one can feel fear or discomfort that is a bit unexpected!

That doesn't even compare to the fear we should feel because of our "dark" condition of sin. By nature we were all "unenlightened" and headed for a dark, eternal existence away from God.

- No parents – One of the saddest Christmases we could imagine in human terms is one that a child experiences alone: No family, no parents, no loved ones. Sometimes people are moved at this time of year to give to charities that help orphans because their heart goes out to little ones in that sad situation. By nature, Scripture tells us that we are orphans. We have no family. The devil owns us. We are slaves to him.
- Death – Did death touch you this year? Was there a family member that passed out of this life through death? A friend or neighbor? A co-worker? If so, perhaps it came as a surprise, or it may have been expected. Death is the most unnatural intruder to life. It saddens with a deep sadness incomparable to anything else. It shocks. It angers. Yet the Scriptures tell us that ***"The wages of sin is death."*** Death is the just desserts of what we deserve because of our sin.

Enter God's Christmas gift to you! He is light in the deep darkness! He is light because he brings "truth," as John tells us! Jesus himself would later say, ***"I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."***

For the orphans, he has come so that we might become children of God. The Apostle Paul says in a familiar Christmas reading from Galatians, ***"When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to***

redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

And to the one over whom the curse of death looms, Jesus brings life. Jesus himself would later say, ***"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*** (John 14) He would say, ***"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."*** (John 11)

How necessary these gifts are to us! Why can Jesus guarantee them? Only because he would live a perfect life as our substitute before his heavenly Father in our place. Only because he would perfectly keep all of God's laws. Only because he would allow himself to be arrested and condemned. Only because he would suffer for our sins. Only because he would give his life in place of ours. Only because he would rise again victoriously, sealing our victory over sin, death, and the devil. These necessary gifts to you are expensive gifts.

How true it is when John tells us that he brings "grace," undeserved love and undeserved blessings that are necessary for our eternal salvation!

3. It is YOURS

We see one more angle to look at this Christmas gift from God, as John concludes his thoughts. The thought is that this gift is YOURS. Have you ever had a time at your house when someone didn't label the Christmas gifts well? Perhaps a few people didn't bother with nametags or labels for some of them. That leaves people asking, "Whose gift is this?" and they squeeze and shake it to try to remember who it's for.

What does John say about this gift? ***"(John the Baptist) came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe... The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world."***

There are a couple words in those verses that are very important to us this Christmas Day: ALL and EVERY. Whose Christmas gift is this? Whose name is on the label? "All." "Every." This is your gift.

However, this gift was not given to you in a normal way. On Christmas Day, children and adults alike are eager to peek under that tree, are excited to get one in their lap and receive their present! But what do we hear about the situation with Christ? ***"The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it... He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."***

In a shocking turn of events, the gift is rejected. Jesus came to those who were his own, and was not accepted. In fact, he was opposed and rejected! He came on a rescue mission to his people as their Messiah, their light, and was turned away. We could imagine the situation as one where cave explorers became lost under the ground, deep under the earth, and were in a dire situation. They were in the dark and were going to die. Yet when their rescuers came, the lost spelunkers grabbed their rescuers lights and dashed them to pieces. And then they attacked the ones who came to rescue them from certain death. How shocking that would be!

This is what happened to the Light of the world. And when it comes to our own situation of accepting our gift, our sinful nature would refuse him. We could never receive him on our own. Our sinful hearts by nature do not want him.

So how are we born again? How do we come to faith? How do we believe in him? We are ***"children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of***

God." We do not come into the family of God by bloodline. Or by our own decision. Or because our husband said we had to. ***"No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."*** This Christmas gift is OURS only because the Holy Spirit has claimed us and because he has changed our hearts of stone to hearts of faith. **Because of God's work in our hearts, this gift is YOURS!**

In the end, I'd have to admit that you weren't hard to shop for. God didn't have to scratch his head and say, "What in the world am I going to get these people?" He didn't have to search online. **He knew exactly what you needed:**

1. **A gift that is UNIQUE**
2. **A gift that is NECESSARY**
3. **A gift that is YOURS**

Merry Christmas! Amen.