TITLE: “WHY GIFTS”

TEXT: John 3:16; Ps. 111:7, 9:16, 89:14; Is. 30:18;

Gen. 2:16-17; Lame. 3:22-23; Mt. 1:21; Jn. 1:29

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about gifts.

What better time for the subject then as we approach Christmas.

How many here this morning are anticipating a gift this Christmas?

Have you ever wondered why it has become tradition to give each other gifts to celebrate someone else’s birthday?

We celebrate Christmas, Jesus birthday by giving gifts to one another. Why?

Parents, why do you give gifts to your children on Christmas?

Kids, why do you give gifts to your parents on Christmas?

The answer to the question is going to be varied but most often we will respond by saying something like, well, because I love my children or I love my parents, or I love my husband or my wife and I just want to show them how much I love and appreciate them by giving them a gift.

I mean Christmas is a time to express our love for each other isn’t it?

If that were entirely the case though, why don’t we give our loved ones and friends gifts everyday of every week?

I mean, if the reason that we give gifts at Christmas time is primarily because of our love for others, does that mean that we don’t really love them the other 364 days in a year when we don’t give them gifts?

Of, course not! But that is not the reason, or should not be the reason that we give gifts at Christmas time.

Christmas is a time of joy, of hope, of promise, of anticipation, of our feeling generous, wanting to be generous. The question that I ask this morning is, “what is it that we are joyful, hopeful, and anticipatory about?

Why are we more generous at this time of year than any other?

Let me give you a little hint this morning on the direction that I am going with this---Our joy, our hope, our anticipation, our generosity at Christmas should not be because of how much love that we have for each other!

If that is our focus then we miss the importance and significance of Christmas!

You see, Christmas isn’t really about how giving we are—Christmas is about how giving God is!

The Christmas verse that I want to share with you today is:

John 3:16 (NIV) "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.

If we celebrate Christmas for any other reason than this then we are missing out on what Christmas is really all about.

Is it wrong to give gifts to one another at Christmas?

Not at all! But there should only be one reason that give them…..Because of the gift that God has first given us. The gift of Jesus.

Our giving should be in response to the gift that God has given us in the gift of Jesus Christ.

To really appreciate God’s gift we need to reflect on why God gave us the gift of Jesus…

God gave us the gift of Jesus because God is a just God!

You may be thinking, I don’t quite understand. What does Gods Justice have to do with His giving us the gift of Jesus.

I mean, isn’t the gift of Jesus because of His love and mercy? How does God’s being just enter in here?

Psal 111:7 (NIV) The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy.

**Psal 9:16 (NIV) The LORD is known by his justice;**

the wicked are ensnared by the work of their hands.

**Psal 89:14 (NIV) Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.**

**Isai 30:18 (NIV) Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion.**

**For the LORD is a God of justice.**

**Blessed are all who wait for him!**

**The Lord is known by His justice! Righteousness and justice are the foundations of His throne! The Lord is a God of Justice!**

What does it mean when we say God is just? What is the Justice, justness of God? It is important for us to know because justice is an attribute of God, just as love and mercy and grace are attributes of God. Things which make up who and what He is!

Justice=

**04941 mishpat {mish-pawt'}**

**from root shaphat {shaw-fat'}**

**1) to judge, govern, vindicate, punish**

**1a1) to act as law-giver or judge or governor**

**1a1a) to rule, govern, judge**

**1a2) to decide controversy**

**1a3) to execute judgment**

God is the lawgiver and the one who judges according to the laws that He has given. He is the lawgiver and the executor of judgment for when that law is broken, the vindicator when that law is upheld!

Clear back at the creation of man God put forth a law, the first law….

**Gene 2:16 (NIV) And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;**

**17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."**

Here we have the first law of God to mankind put forth**….but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil!**

Then God gives the just judgment, the just punishment for breaking that law…**, for when you eat of it you will surely die."**

Man sinned, we transgressed against the law of God! The just, the right punishment for that transgression, for sinning against God is death!

Not just the eventually death of this body but more importantly the instant that mankind sinned he died in his relationship with God! Man’s sin separated him from his creator! And the just penalty for that sin is eternal separation from Him!

An eternity without God! An eternity without Gods love and Grace and Mercy is hell!

Scripture says that we have all sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God! We are all sinners whose just punishment for our sin is an eternity of separation from God in hell!

This is the justice of God! And it is a right, a righteous justice! It is exactly what we deserve!

So what does Gods justice have to do with Christmas, God’s gift of Jesus to a lost world, a world condemned to eternal separation from Him in hell.

God is just but He is also a loving and a merciful and gracious God!

Lame 3:22 (NIV) Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.

**23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.**

**Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed!**

**(Taw-mam’= wholly, completely, entirely, finished. Be finished, be destroyed. )**

Even though being consumed is exactly what we deserve!

Never ask God to give you what you deserve!

Every one of us here this morning deserves Hell!

We have all sinned against an all Holy, all Righteous God!

Go down through history…

The apostle Paul, Peter, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—they Didn’t want God to give them what they deserved because they knew that what they deserved was an eternity in Hell!

Martin Luther, Billy Graham, Mother Theresa didn’t want God to give them what they deserve because they know that what they deserve is an eternity of separation from God in Hell because they have all sinned against Him!

If we ask God to give us anything let it not be what we deserve but let it be His mercy!

God created mankind and placed him in a perfect environment! As created mankind was immortal! There was no death or morning or crying or pain! There was no sin! Everything was perfect! Mankind then chooses to disobey God!

Mankind chooses to sin against the one who had created him!

Gods just judgment, the justice of God---mankind is eternally banished from His presence!

And if God was just, just, if justice were His only attribute it would have all ended right then and there!

All Mankind separated from God forever!

But God is not just, just! Justice is not His only attribute!

God is also loving and merciful and gracious!

And so He looks down on His fallen creation, His heart breaks! He comes up with a plan to redeem fallen man!

The plan….A sacrifice, propitiation, a substitute to take fallen mankind’s place!

There is a problem! Mankind has already fallen to sin!

There is no one left that is worthy to pay the price!

Just as man was sinless before the fall only a sinless man could pay the just price for mankind’s sin, his redemption, only a man without sin could atone for the transgressions!

(Example; before the fall Adam was sinless---only just sacrifice—a sinless man, one as perfect as the one who sinned before he sinned)

On earth—all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God!

There was no sinless redeemer! No blood pure enough to atone for man’s sin!

So God says that if man is going to be redeemed, I will have to do it myself!

So the Father says, My creation has sinned and My justice demands that sin be judged.

I can no longer dwell with sinful man, My Holiness would utterly consume them. There is no way that it is possible for them to approach Me, so I will have to come down to them and meet them where they are at.

I will have to come up with a way of not just coming down to their level but will have to find a way to become as they are, mere flesh and blood…

So on that December morning over 2021 years ago in a stable, in a small town called Bethlehem, God gives His most precious gift to mankind…. the creator of everything that has ever been created, left the glory of Heaven and entered the human race …

Mary gives birth to the Christ Child, not by the seed of man but by the seed of God!

And the angel proclaimed ….

**Matt 1:21 (NIV) 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."**

Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew Joshua= “Jehovah is salvation”

**Jesus, … will save his people from their sins."**

Who is Jesus? The incarnation of God!

Who are His people? We all are! He created us!

Jesus, God, will save His people from their sin!

This was not just a promise for the nation of Israel but a promise for the entire human race!

A promise just as true for you and I today as it was for them then!

The dilemma was that no man’s blood was pure enough to atone for man’s sin, to provide the necessary payment for the transgressions, so God provided His own sacrifice, His own payment! God provided His own Lamb!

John the Baptist immediately Recognized Jesus for who He was…

John 1:29 (NIV) The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

God, the one who was offended provided that which was necessary to cover the offense!

John 3:16 (NIV) "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.

The justice of God demanded that our sin be judged!

God is a just God! Justice is part of who God is and He had no choice other than to judge man with a just judgment!

The just judgment for sin is eternal death, eternal separation from God!

Are you thankful this morning that justice is not the only attribute of God?

Are you thankful that He is also merciful and gracious and loving?

His justice demands that sin be judged but His Mercy and love and grace and compassion demanded that man be given another chance! That man be given a way to come back to Him!

God provided that way! He gave us the gift of His Grace, the gift of His love---He gave us the gift of Jesus….

It all started with His justice.

If we look into the manger and don’t see the justice of God, if we don’t see that we are sinners in need of this Savior then we miss the message and purpose of Christmas!

If we look into the manger and don’t see the Grace and the love and the mercy and compassion of God, then we miss the message and purpose of Christmas!

If we look into the manger and don’t personally embrace and accept the gift that lies there, then we miss the message and purpose of Christmas!

And if we give gifts at Christmas for any reason other than our response to the great gift that God has given us in Jesus then we miss out on the message and purpose of Christmas!

Challenge:

We each decide whether we will fall under the justice, the judgment of God or we will fall under the mercy and grace of God…

If you have never embraced, never accepted God’s gift to you, if you have never accepted the gift of God’s grace, the gift of Jesus, then you still remain under His judgment, His justice!

You are still lost in your sin and separated from Him.

Gifts have to be accepted in order to be enjoyed….

If I give you a gift and you never unwrap it, then the gift has no value to you..

The same is true of the Gift that God has given each of us, the gift of Jesus….we need to unwrap it, to embrace it if it is going to be of value to us.

There was a woman who had a niece. She said that one Christmas she excitedly gave her some gifts she had spent a lot of time shopping for, gifts she had put a great deal of thought into.

Two weeks later, when she asked her niece if she was enjoying them, she was disappointed to learn that her niece had decided to return them. She said, Even after my careful selection of those gifts--intended especially for her--she hadn't really appreciated them.

She said as I asked God to help me get over my disappointment, she heard God say, I know how you feel.

I have given a most precious gift that many people never appreciate or value…Many never even unwrap…Some unwrap but exchange for something else…I have given The gift of My Son…..

Have you accepted God’s gift to you this morning, have you accepted the gift of Jesus?

Have you embraced Him as the Lord and Savior of your life?

Do you see Him as a valuable gift? A gift to be treasured and adored?

When you give your gifts of love this Christmas is it in response to the gift of love that God has given you?

Have you made Jesus the reason for the season in your Christmas?