

Sunday Morning Message

December 8, 2019

Christmas Message

The Gift of Fellowship

Text – Matthew 2:1 – 11; Luke 2:8 – 20

Congregational Reading – Proverbs 18:24

"A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." (Proverbs 18:24)

Introduction

Christmas is a time for giving. The Lord Jesus Himself said that it was more blessed to give than to receive, and at Christmastime we all enjoy the tradition of both giving and receiving gifts. Gifts are wonderful expressions of love, regardless of what it is that is being given.

Perhaps there are some babes in Christ, who like little children, can only appreciate the gift itself, but I would hope that most Christian adults have matured to the place where they look beyond the tangible value of a gift, and have learned to appreciate the love that motivated it.

Many of the gifts that we will give and receive this year are tangible. You can play with a new toy; you can see and feel and wear a new shirt or tie. You can put a gift card in your wallet and spend it on whatever you want. But, some of the greatest gifts that we can receive because of Christmas are intangible.

The Gift of Eternal Life - Because of Christmas, I have received the gift of eternal life.

*"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: **it is the gift of God**: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

*"For the wages of sin is death; but **the gift of God** is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23)*

Salvation is the gift that would not be possible if it were not for Christ first coming to this earth 2000 years ago in a manger in Bethlehem.

Eternal life is a wonderful intangible gift that produces many intangible as well as tangible benefits.

I've received other invaluable, priceless gifts from God such as my wife and family. I believe that these were given by God as well. You cannot put a dollar value on family. I may not be as rich as other men monetarily, but I have an enormous amount of wealth and value in my wife, my children, and grandchildren.

Family is a gift from God.

But the gift that I was thinking about tonight is the gift of fellowship. Good, godly, Christian fellowship. Fellowship that will eventually produce lifelong friendships.

Turn to Matthew 2:1 – 11

The wise men had fellowship. They were all drawn to the Lord, and they travelled together in a common purpose.

Turn to Luke 2:8 – 20

The Shepherds had fellowship. And on Christmas eve they were all drawn together in search of the Babe in Bethlehem.

Transition

Christmas provides us with fellowship. Because of Christmas, and of course, also because of the Resurrection I have received a remarkable, invaluable, yet somewhat intangible gift.

I Fellowship with God

Our fellowship with each other only comes because we now have fellowship with God.

God created man so that he could fellowship with him. God enjoyed walking with Adam in the cool of the day. But, man's fellowship with God was broken because of sin. Jesus came to earth to restore that fellowship. He died on the Cross to pay our sin debt, and to restore our fellowship with the Father.

"... and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3b)

A wonderful gift that is available to us because of Christmas is the gift of fellowship with God.

II Fellowship with Each Other

But, we also can receive the gift of fellowship with each other.

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

Illustrate – 6:00 AM prayer meeting, breakfast

A Our Fellowship Surrounds a Person

"... and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3b)

B Our Fellowship Surrounds a Purpose

Our purpose while living on this earth is to glorify the Lord, and to work as His ambassadors trying to influence others for Jesus Christ.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:17-20)

C Our Fellowship Surpasses Problems – (social, cultural racial barriers)

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:26-29)

D Our Fellowship Provides Us with Strength

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:" (Hebrews 10:24)

"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." (Proverbs 27:17)

The closer we get to God, the sweeter the fellowship will be with Him and each other.

Conclusion

One of the many things that I want our church to work on in the coming year is to become better at providing what I will call focused fellowship; fellowship that is focused on developing godly, lifelong friendships. Fellowship that will cause us to sharpen one another, and cause us to draw closer to God. Fellowship that will challenge us to be better servants for the Lord and more effective soulwinners.

This Christmas, let us thank the Lord for the gift of fellowship that He has given us, but let us also be challenged in the 2020 to work on developing relationships, friendships, and godly fellowship with each other. Fellowship that is inclusive, and free from cliques; but also a fellowship that is focused on helping us all to be better Christians.