

*“All I Want For Christmas”*

*“All I Need For Christmas”*

*Pastor Randy Orndorff*

*December 24, 2018*

*8 PM*

Key Text: Luke 2:8-20

## **I. Introduction: All I Want..., So That!**

When I think of our Advent/Christmas theme this year, “All I Want for Christmas”, I can’t help but think of that song I heard as a child, “All I Want for Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth”. Do you remember why the child wished for her two front teeth? One was so she could only whistle, but most important was so she could wish everyone a Merry Christmas. That’s not a bad thing to want for everyone, now is it? A Merry Christmas.

We all have some sense that Christmas has to be about more than what we want. I want a new pair of hiking sticks, or sunglasses, or a new bike or iPad. What is it you want? It’s nice when we think about gifts, or cards, or letters we receive because it does say to us there are those who care and want us to feel appreciated, encouraged and loved. After all, isn’t that a key reason you give gifts to those around you? Isn’t why we want our Best Gift to Jesus we’ve just given to be an expression of our appreciation and love to Jesus so that boys and girls and those in need in our Culpeper community feel cared for and valued? The answer is yes. And friends, those are the gifts no amount of money can buy.

The gifts that come from a heart full of love, care, kindness, and grace are gifts that have extrinsic but also intrinsic value. We can literally see on the outside the good your gifts bring. But, trust me, it effects people on the inside, too. And that’s where the light and love of Jesus shines most brightly.

## **II. What Does God Want For Us?**

We may wrestle some when we think about what we want for Christmas. Let’s think about it like this then. What does God want us to have, not only at Christmas time, but all year long? And why would God want us to have something so special like hope and peace, love and contentment? Because God loves us and wants the best for us. And God, knowing best what we need, God gave. God gave us a most special and precious gift in the giving of His son, Jesus.

Friends, the Christmas story is what it is. It’s a story of God knowing God’s people needed a lot of help. We still do. God knows God’s people need hope and healing, purpose and to feel we belong.

Notice God did not come to us with pomp and circumstance. God came in a most common way to a couple who had very little. What they had a lot of is maybe what we need most.

Faith, trust, assurance, confidence God would provide, even though everything wasn’t lined up for the baby’s arrival.

## **III. Christmas is More Than What We Want or Need**

God sent Jesus to a young mother and to a Jewish carpenter who were willing to obey God and follow God’s plan for them. The baby was born in a barn or shed or cave and laid in a feeding trough. If Jesus would have been born in a place of royalty, how could the majority of people in the world, including us, ever related to Jesus? We couldn’t have. But, because of how all this took place, the good news is we can!

Let’s go a step further now. Is Christmas really about what any of us want? Is it really about what we think we need? Or is it more than this? The very first words we heard 4 weeks ago on the first Sunday of Advent were these: If Christmas is about anything it is about giving. My mind has not changed on that and my hope is my actions will match my belief because our behaviors should be matching what we say we believe. Faith without good deeds is dead.

On that first Christmas, Mary and Joseph welcomed the Lord in the form of a new born baby. Angels welcomed the Lord by singing songs of joy and praise, “Glory to God in the Highest...”

Shepherds came to the place where he laid and welcomed God into the world. The Word made flesh had come to dwell among us. We celebrate that presence as we receive the bread and the cup tonight.

#### **IV. How Will We Welcome Jesus?**

How will we each welcome Jesus? Corporately we sing, we give, we hear scripture read and proclaimed. We each receive an invitation to the Lord’s table to receive the spirit of Jesus afresh this Christmas Eve night. We welcome and receive Jesus as we pass the light of Christ symbolically as we light each other’s candle.

In a certain town there lived a cobbler, his name was Martin. Martin’s wife and children had died long ago, and Martin’s despair was very deep indeed. He really began to lose his reason and purpose for living.

One day, an old holy man stopped by. Martin opened up his heart to him. He said, “I no longer wish to live, I feel as if I am without hope.” The holy man said, “Despair comes from the wish to live only for your own happiness.” He told Martin to read the Gospels and to see how God would have him live.

So, Martin took him up on it and started reading his Bible. He discovered it made his heart so light that he read it every day. He came across a story of a Pharisee, a Jewish religious leader, who invited Jesus to dinner. A woman who was a “sinner” came there and anointed Jesus and washed Jesus’ feet with her hair and with her tears. And, of course, this was frowned upon and Jesus said this woman has anointed me, which you have not done.

Martin wondered if he himself would treat the Lord poorly if he came to him. Then he fell asleep. Suddenly he was awakened by a voice. No one was there but he heard, “Martin! Look out into the street tomorrow, for I shall come.”

The next morning, Martin built his fire and started to work, but could not help but look out the window many times. Then an old man named Stepanich appeared and began clearing snow for a tradesman across the street. When Martin looked again, Stepanich had leaned on his shovel and up against the building. Martin went to the door and said, “Come in and warm yourself!”

“May God bless you!” said Stepanich. As he shook off the snow, he tottered and nearly fell. Martin gave him tea and told him what happened the evening before. As Stepanich listened tears ran down his cheeks. He said, “You have given me comfort for soul and body.”

Later as Martin stitched on a boot, he looked out to see a woman turning her back to the cold wind. She had a baby in her arms and she wore only thin clothes. Martin called out and invited them in. He gave them bread and soup saying, “Eat my dear and warm yourself.”

The woman said her husband was a soldier who had been away for months. She couldn’t find work and had sold everything to get money for food, including her shawl. Martin found a cloak for the woman to wrap herself in and gave her money to get her shawl out of the pawn store.

After working a while longer, he looked out and saw an old woman selling apples from a heavy basket she carried. A boy in a tattered cap ran up, snatched an apple and tried to run away. But the elderly woman grabbed him by the hair.

Martin dropped everything and ran out into the street. He said, “Let him go, Granny. Forgive him for Christ’s sake.” He turned to the boy and said, “Ask Granny’s forgiveness.”

Later, as she was about to lift the heavy basket, the boy sprang forward and said, “Let me carry it for you, Granny. I’m going your way.”

At day’s end, Martin’s Bible seemed to open itself. Then he heard a voice. “Who is it?” He asked.

“It is I”, said the voice and Stepanish smiled from a corner of the room, then vanished.

“It is I”, said the voice again, and there was the woman with the baby in her arms. She smiled. The baby laughed and they, too, vanished.

“It is I,” said the voice once more. The old woman and the boy with the apple stepped out, smiled, and vanished.

Martin’s soul grew glad. He began reading where the Bible opened. At the top he read, “For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you took me in.” And at the bottom of the page? “In as much as you have done it for one of the least of these, you have also done it unto me.”

Then Martin knew the Savior had come to him on that day, and he had welcomed him.

(Taken from, “Where Love Is, There is God” by Leo Tolstoy)

## **V. In What Ways Does Jesus Come to Us?**

So here we are celebrating Christmas and the coming of the Christ child. How will we welcome Jesus? In what ways does Jesus come to us every day? In all sorts of ways? We might look at this story and think of all that Martin gave. I wonder what Martin received in his giving? What do you think?

There was another Martin who lived in the 1500’s named Martin Luther. He preached a sermon on the Christmas story and how Mary was tired, cold, afraid. She was so young, by herself, no mid-wife. And Joseph nervous and trying to help best he could.

Luther suddenly said to his congregation, “I know what you are thinking. How quick I would be to jump in and help Mary and the baby. Luther said how quick they’d all help because they knew how great Jesus is.

However, if they had been there at that time, without knowing Jesus, they probably would be no better than the people of Bethlehem. Luther’s question, and it was a challenging one, “Childish and silly thoughts are these, why don’t you do it now? You have Christ in your neighbor, so why don’t you serve your neighbor now? For what you do for your neighbor, you do to the Lord Jesus Christ himself.”

Well there’s nothing much meek and mild about that is it? But how true it is. It’s not what we know to do, it’s about what we do. I have no idea what you might see or who you might see when you look out your window in the days ahead but what will you do with what you see?

How will you welcome Jesus this Christmas and in the days ahead?

## **VI. The Great Story or the Greatest Tragedy?**

Do we realize, as Craig Lounsbrough has said, “We have been granted an exclusive part in the greatest story ever told. And without a doubt, to walk away from that part would be to write the greatest tragedy ever conceived.”

Which way will you walk? To the manger, or away? Towards God or a more self-centered life? Towards Jesus or towards some other priority?

We prepare to celebrate Jesus’ coming to earth as we celebrate his birth tonight and tomorrow. Just know the Savior, like he did for Mary and Joseph, like he did for the shepherds and wise men, like he did for the world, comes to you and comes to me. Will we welcome him?

If we do, I believe we will receive all we ever think we want or need. And in the end have so much more to offer those around us through the witness of our lives as the light of Jesus shines brightly through us. Because Jesus lives in your heart, you are now the light of the world. Go and shine, chase away the darkness. Share and choose to be part of the greatest story of all. “Born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth. Hark the herald angels sing, ‘Glory to the newborn King’.”

Jesus invites us into his story as we prepare to come to the Lord's Table. Let us prepare our hearts to receive these Christmas gifts of grace, forgiveness, hope, and new life.

Amen.