

## **2005-12-25 - The Purpose-Driven Christ - Pastor Joseph LoSardo (1106214620)**

(0:02 - 0:23)

Today is Christmas Day. It's also the Lord's Day. Today, some of our nation's larger churches have decided to close their doors because they've determined that it's inconvenient to hold services, to open building facilities, to upset family gatherings and gift-giving traditions of Christmas morning.

(0:23 - 0:42)

Their claim is that they're pro-family, that they're merely decentralizing the church on Christmas Day from the building to the homes of Christian families. It has a nice family-friendly ring to it. However, unfortunately, they, like many Christians or Christians in name, have missed what Christmas is about.

(0:43 - 0:56)

We paint a picture of what Christmas is in the view of many professing Christians today. Christmas, we are told, is about children. On Christmas Eve, not a creature is stirring, not even a mouse.

(0:57 - 1:15)

There's a light snow falling outside and the children are rising early and the parents are rising late. It's about children opening up presents beside a warm fire in an eight-foot green real pine tree decorated in red and gold. Quietly, a Johnny Mathis CD plays in the background.

(1:15 - 1:37)

It came upon a midnight clear, followed by the soothing voice of Nat King Cole, chestnuts roasting on an open fire. Then maybe in the most spiritual of homes, the Hallelujah Chorus and Handel's Messiah. Mom gets up after breakfast, pours the family some eggnog, and they sing together, Silent Night, Holy Night, all is calm, all is bright.

(1:37 - 2:06)

Somewhere in the room lies a small nativity scene depicting a little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie with silent stars going by, how silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given. A peaceful stable scene, speechless bewildered shepherds and wise men, tranquil, mild-mannered Mary and Joseph there stare into this glowing manger as the glow comes out. The little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head.

(2:07 - 2:24)

The cattle are lowing while the little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes. There's kind of a Norman Rockwell view of Christmas that is even shared by many Christians. We equate Christmas with peace, with peaceful scenes, with quiet and with rest.

(2:24 - 2:43)

Why is it that we look at Christmas in this way? Is this really what the first Christmas was like? Consider a few things. This is the birth of a child under less than adequate conditions. I would assure you that there was considerable noise on that day in that cave in Bethlehem.

(2:44 - 2:54)

It was not such a nice little quaint, clean stable, but rather a cave, straw and dung all over the ground. Probably smelled. It's no still town, that's for sure.

(2:54 - 2:59)

A little town of Bethlehem. It was bustling. There was no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn.

(2:59 - 3:09)

And with every birth pang, Mary is crying out with pain. And when the baby Jesus was born, I would doubt no crying He made. Shepherds.

(3:09 - 3:20)

Shepherds were at the time of that history actually hirelings at that time in history. They were the lowest class of people. They were probably sleeping off a drunken stupor that night.

(3:20 - 3:31)

When all of a sudden they're awakened and they're frightened by the piercing sound of angel voices. Wise men. Wise men? Actually magicians, astrologers.

(3:31 - 3:48)

They're in the presence of a lying King Herod at this time who has the intent of murdering this child. Sleep in heavenly peace. If there's any peace, any peace in the birth of Christ, it certainly did not last for long as the light of the world came and shined in the darkness.

(3:49 - 4:05)

But the people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. On the eighth day of Jesus' life, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to be circumcised. And there in the temple was an old prophet by the name of Simeon.

(4:05 - 4:22)

And he prophesied, behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel and for a sign which shall be spoken against. Turning to Mary, he says, yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul. The light.

(4:22 - 4:57)

The light did not bring peace, but the light brought a sword. And we darkness-loving people murdered that light so that the sword would not only pierce the soul of Mary, but as Simeon said, would also pierce the thoughts of many hearts and the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed. In the great Christmas prophecy of Isaiah 9 that Emily read prior to telling us about the child that would be born that the government would be on his shoulders, it says in Isaiah 9 too, the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

(4:58 - 5:32)

They who dwelt in the land of deep darkness, on them a light has shined. And so today, those who will truly experience the fullest meaning of Christmas are not those who are going to be sipping eggnog by an open fire in front of a red and green tree while the weather outside is frightful. It's going to be those who are truly, really going to understand what Christmas is about are those that understand this verse, are those that understand they were a people in darkness to whom a great light has come.

(5:33 - 5:41)

Christmas is not about children. It's about a child. It's not about gift giving, but a gift that was given.

(5:42 - 6:17)

And only when we understand that it is we who have walked in darkness that have seen that great light, then we will understand what Christmas really means. Only those who've had the sword of a piercing light laid upon their soul, only those who realize that Jesus, the light of the world, died, satisfying the Father's wrath toward us treacherous blind God-haters, so that we might be able to see, then we will understand Christmas. 1 John 3, verse 8 tells us the Son of God appeared for this purpose that He might destroy the works of the devil.

(6:18 - 6:35)

Christmas is a celebration of the peering of the Son of God on earth. But not silently, oh silently, but with a sword in His hand to destroy sin. And sinners who recognize themselves as such can do nothing more than rejoice.

(6:35 - 6:40)

That's why we rejoice. That's why we sing joy to the world. Because of this fact.

(6:40 - 6:57)

Jesus came to earth for a very specific purpose. Nobody else in the history of the world ever foreknew and foretold and carry out His life, His death, His resurrection the way that Jesus did. And as you read the Gospel accounts, you see here's a man who knows what's coming.

(6:58 - 7:16)

He not only knows what's coming, he describes what's coming, he performs what's coming, all according to the purposes of God foretold in the Scripture. He sets His face like flint to do what is written of Him. He will not turn to the right or to the left, lest one prophecy fall by the wayside.

(7:16 - 7:32)

Remember back in John 10, verses 17 and 18, Jesus said these words, I lay down my life so that I may take it up again. No one has taken it away from me, but I lay it down on my own initiative. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again.

(7:32 - 7:57)

In other words, it may appear to bystanders, it may appear to those who don't know that Jesus was a victim, a victim of intrigue and betrayal and conspiracy and violence and mock trials and fickle governors, but Jesus says, I'm in charge. He says, nobody takes my life from me. I lay it down and I will take it up.

(7:58 - 8:14)

Let's open our Bibles to Matthew. Gospel of Matthew chapter 1. Jesus was a sovereign sacrifice for sin. Jesus was in charge of when and how He died, when He died, when He rose from the dead.

(8:14 - 8:33)

It all had a purpose. He had a purpose. And perhaps nowhere in Scripture is the purpose stated more clearly than a beautiful Christmas verse we read earlier, where an angel comes to Joseph and explains to him the purpose for his child, this child that was

implanted in the womb of Mary.

(8:34 - 9:00)

Matthew chapter 1, verses 20 and 21. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sin.

(9:01 - 9:13)

Today, very simply, quite simply, we're going to look at this verse. We're going to find the purpose that Jesus came to earth in this verse. We're going to find how He accomplished that purpose.

(9:13 - 9:43)

And lastly, how we participate in that purpose. And dear Heavenly Father, I ask that Your Word would pierce the hearts of Your people today, that as Simeon prophesied in the temple 2,000 years ago, that a sword would pierce the soul of Mary, so in the same way that sword would also reveal the thoughts and intents of the heart of man. So today, Lord, we ask that Your Word, which is a two-edged sword, would pierce the hearts of Your people, Lord, and bring them unto Yourself, Lord.

(9:43 - 10:00)

For You did come, and You, Lord, have died to save Your people from Your sins. We thank You, Lord God, for sending Your only begotten Son to the world today. May He be revealed today, and may Your people glorify Your name in Jesus' name.

(10:01 - 10:22)

Today, I want to turn next to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 10. Gospel of Mark, chapter 10. And it's interesting because this particular verse of Scripture follows up right after where we left off last week, where we focused on the spectacular truth of the coming of the Son of Man, that He was not to be served, but to serve.

(10:23 - 10:31)

In the Gospel of Mark, chapter 10, verse 45, it says this. Mark 10, 45. The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.

(10:32 - 10:44)

We already discussed this, the importance of being served by Him. This is the heart of

Christianity, by the way, being served by Him. Our God does not need our service.

(10:44 - 11:01)

We think we serve God. He's not glorified by getting recruits to help Him out. In Acts 17, verse 25, it says, He's not served by human hands as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all men life and breath and everything.

(11:02 - 11:28)

Our God is so full and so sufficient and so overflowing in power and in life and in joy that He glorifies Himself by serving us. And every time Jesus makes a command, every time the Scripture makes a command for us to do something, it's His way of telling us, that's my way that I want to serve you, is what He's saying. The way He commands is the way He desires to serve us.

(11:29 - 11:38)

Jesus doesn't need our help. He commands our obedience and He offers His help. That's why becoming a Christian is a humbling thing.

(11:39 - 12:00)

And if there are any of those in our midst that are not Christians, it's a humbling thing. It requires you to drop your self-sufficiency, our self-reliance, our nature to say, I can do it. And we need to come to a place to say, I can't do this.

(12:00 - 12:08)

I cannot do this. I cannot save myself. I can't be or do what I know I'm supposed to be and do.

(12:09 - 12:18)

I am desperate, Lord. I need something way beside what's supposedly inside of me, as the world says. I need Jesus Christ.

(12:19 - 12:38)

Return to Him. He is not our servant in the sense of we order Him or we command Him what to do. He's our servant in the sense that He will use all of His divine resources to help us, to strengthen us, to guide us, to save us, and to sanctify us.

(12:38 - 12:54)

In other words, God doesn't want to be served in any way that implies that we're supplying His need or supporting Him or offering Him something that He doesn't already

own by right. He already owns your money. He already owns your possessions.

(12:55 - 13:07)

You know, even when you work, it's only because He's given you life and breath to do so. That's what Acts 17 is saying there. All you can do is submit to His spectacular offer that He is making to be your servant.

(13:08 - 13:26)

And that submission is called faith, a willingness to let Him be God, to trust Him to be the supplier, the strengthener, the counselor, the guide, the Savior. That's what it means to be a Christian. But there's one very specific act of service here in Mark 10 that Jesus mentions.

(13:27 - 13:33)

Look at how it continues. The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve. And here is how He serves.

(13:33 - 13:44)

To give His life as a ransom for many. Jesus came to give His life as a ransom for many. That's what Christmas is about.

(13:45 - 13:56)

That is exactly what the angel told Joseph. He shall save His people from their sins. This is a giving of a life as a ransom.

(13:56 - 14:01)

It was intentional. It was purposeful. There was a purpose in His coming.

(14:01 - 14:15)

Christ didn't come to earth with other things in mind for other reasons only to find Himself getting caught up in some plot that ended up resulting in His death. He came for the purpose to die. Without Calvary, Bethlehem is pointless.

(14:16 - 14:36)

Without the cross, the birth means nothing. And that's why so many Christians today, quote Christians are, Christmas is about eggnog and trees and decorations and giving gifts because they're not conscious of the purpose for which He came. You know, even when we spout that popular phrase, Jesus is the reason for the season.

(14:38 - 14:47)

Well, that sounds great. But what's the reason for Jesus is the real question. We can know Jesus is the reason for the season and not know the reason for Jesus.

(14:48 - 14:57)

Take a look at the context here. Mark 10. He's going down the road.

Look at verses 33 and 34. He's going to Jerusalem. His disciples are suspecting something tremendous is going to happen.

(14:58 - 15:16)

He's walking in and you see what He says. Look in verse 33. Behold, we're going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes and they will condemn Him to death and they will deliver Him to the Gentiles and they will mock Him and spit upon Him and scourge Him and kill Him and three days later He will rise again.

(15:17 - 15:30)

You see the purpose, the intent here in these words? There's no question about it. Jesus is knowingly walking in to the jaws of suffering and death. And then in verse 45, He tells us why.

(15:31 - 15:47)

He came to give His life a ransom for many. Why is the death a ransom? What is a ransom? The Greek word here is *loutron*, which means just that, a payment to release someone from some kind of bondage. A prisoner of war, you'd pay a ransom.

(15:48 - 15:59)

Pay someone to come out of slavery or pay someone's debt. It's a ransom. The implication here is that Jesus' death is a ransom that's going to release many from bondage.

(16:00 - 16:14)

He's paying what they cannot pay so that they can go free. He's substituting Himself for them. He's paying the cost, which was His very life, so that many can have freedom.

(16:14 - 16:25)

So the ransom is describing a substitution. It's Jesus in the place of many. Some argue that this doesn't suggest that Jesus was actually a substitute.



(16:26 - 16:52)

Some will say, well, the for there means for the benefit of, suggesting that Jesus' death on the cross was not substitutionarily and specifically standing in the place of the sinner, but rather was providing a benefit or an opportunity whereby the sinner may or may not participate. Only problem is the word for, the word is anti in Greek, means instead of. It means on behalf of.

(16:52 - 17:08)

It means because of. And even if we take that meaning out of the word for and put in what people say for the benefit of, look at the context here. There is clearly an exchange going on.

(17:09 - 17:17)

There is one life for many lives. Many are condemned and their lives are forfeited. John 3 says they're condemned already.

(17:17 - 17:38)

But Jesus gives His life as a ransom for the many and these many are then released from their condemnation. There's a substitutionary transaction that's going on that has taken place, a payment that's been made whereby many who are sinners are made righteous. And we in the modern church, we tone down this so much.

(17:38 - 17:53)

We have toned down the atonement into this powerless wish. You know, God is up there wishing that people will be saved. No decisive action, no purpose to actually bring the sinner to Christ.

(17:54 - 18:06)

And that is not the Gospel message. I don't know about you, but a few years ago, I realized that's not really that good news that I have a chance to be saved. No, the Gospel, we have to get the Gospel right.

(18:07 - 18:22)

You know, we could have everything else perfect. We could have a beautiful government structure in our church, plurality of elders and deacons and everyone serving in ministry and doing and working and going out witnessing every week. We'd have a wonderful missions program.

(18:22 - 18:30)

We could hate false teaching. We could have great compassion on those in need. But if we don't get the Gospel right, we're building on a flawed foundation.

(18:31 - 18:54)

The Gospel is not God can save you. The Gospel is God saves. Didn't Jesus say, all that the Father gives me will come to me? Didn't Paul say, for those whom he foreknew and whom he predestined to become conformed in the image of the Son, and whom he predestined, those he called, and whom he called, he also justified, and whom he justified, he also glorified.

(18:54 - 19:10)

There's an assurance here in these words. This verse speaks of God knowing people, not facts about people. Sometimes people say, whom he foreknew? Well, he knew that down the corridor of time, someone would exercise faith and come to him.

(19:10 - 19:21)

No, he didn't know facts about you. He foreknew you if you are his child. In the Bible, God's knowing, when God knows something, it's specific, it's personal, it's intimate.

(19:21 - 19:29)

There is an intimate knowledge of God. If you are his child today, he knew you before the foundations of the earth. Jesus said, I know my own and my own know me.

(19:29 - 19:50)

And our minds have been so conditioned by the modern church to think of the cross as a redemption that does less than redeem, as Christ is a savior who does less than save. The biblical view of the atonement is that Calvary not merely made salvation possible, but it saved. And that is good news.

(19:50 - 20:03)

The cross saves. Most of the church today, let's nobly say, I could not have gained my salvation without Calvary. The Bible teaches us, Christ gained my salvation at Calvary.

(20:04 - 20:31)

We could take comfort in this. This is a strong, powerful, intense love that God has for his people that will stop at nothing, that will go all the way to the death of his only begotten son, that will stop at nothing to keep the one who is loved from perishing. Furthermore, we can't give God all the glory of his grace that saved us if we think that all God can do in his powerless self is make salvation possible for us.

(20:31 - 20:48)

Son of man gave his life as a ransom for many. He paid the price once and for all, for all who would believe. Jesus said it in Matthew 26, this is the blood of the covenant which is poured out for the many for the forgiveness of sins.

(20:49 - 21:07)

Paul said it in Romans 5, 6, for while we're still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, Romans 5, 8. We were justified by his blood, Romans 5, 9. We're reconciled to God by the death of his Son, Romans 5, 10. Peter said it.

(21:07 - 21:19)

He bore our sins in his body on the cross, 1 Peter 2, 24. Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, 1 Peter 3, 18. John said it.

(21:20 - 21:35)

In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he has loved us and sent his only Son to be the propitiation for our sins. It was a ransom, not an offer. Do you understand that? It was an exchange.

(21:36 - 21:47)

Your sin for His righteousness. Aren't you thankful that He saved you? He saved you. He ransomed you.

(21:47 - 22:00)

He stood in your place, in your stead on the cross. He bore your punishment and your wrath. Billions and millions of people woke up this morning and they believe all the facts.

(22:00 - 22:08)

Everything that the children just did, they would look at that and say, I believe all that. I believe everything about the birth of Christ. I believe Jesus was real.

(22:09 - 22:19)

He was born in a real stable, in a real Bethlehem, in a real manger. They believe even in the virgin birth that God took on flesh on Christmas Day. They believe in the shepherds and the angel and the magi.

(22:19 - 22:53)

They know that Jesus is the reason for the season, but they're not conscious of the reason for Jesus. They don't know why He has come to save His people from their sins, to give His life a ransom for many. But you ask, okay, what is this bondage or this slavery that the many are in, that they need to be ransomed? Jesus tells us in John chapter 8, verse 34, that we are slaves to sin.

(22:53 - 23:06)

He said, truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. Today, whether you realize it or not, if you're not a Christian, you're a slave to sin. All of us, before we were Christians, we were slaves to sin.

(23:07 - 23:20)

Christ did not see us as generally good people, with an occasional problem that every now and then we sin. He said, you're under the power of sin, you're under the tyranny of sin. We're slaves to sin, and that's why we need a ransom.

(23:20 - 23:31)

We need to be ransomed from the power of sin. And that's not the worst of it, because sin brings the wrath of God. Jesus taught us that the penalty for sin is eternal punishment.

(23:32 - 23:49)

If we're not ransomed, we remain guilty in our sins, and we will be punished forever, because sin is an infinite offense against an infinite and holy God. That's our natural condition. That is a natural condition of everyone here, apart from Jesus Christ.

(23:49 - 24:11)

We are, the Scripture says, by nature, children of wrath. Our consciousness tells us that. You know, every time New Year's came, how many resolutions did you make and how many did you break? How many times we fall short of our own standards, the standards that we set for ourselves we fall short of, let alone God's perfect standard.

(24:12 - 24:21)

But some will still say, well, you know, I'm no worse than anyone else. My sins are only small compared to the sins of others. God wouldn't condemn me because He's loving.

(24:22 - 24:34)

Some say eternal punishment would be unjust. But all of these are just the opinions of men. The Bible says very clearly, very clearly, if you sin, you're a slave to sin.

(24:34 - 24:40)

If you transgress one law, one, you've broken them all. That's your place. That's your state.

(24:40 - 24:51)

And as a result of that, God's judgment abides upon you. It's written plainly in the Word. Listen, don't let other people form your opinions for you.

(24:52 - 25:04)

Don't rely on eternal matters, hearing what others are saying. Go in and find out for yourself in the Word of God. Answer this eternally important question for yourself from God's Word.

(25:04 - 25:24)

Way too much hangs on it to trust others. And the answer in Scripture is plain in Romans 6. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Two destinies, eternal life in heaven, eternal death in hell.

(25:24 - 25:42)

Eternal death is what we are ransomed from. Romans 3 says all sin, but that's what Christmas is about. Christmas is about that all sin, but Christmas is about the reason for Jesus who came to save His people from their sin.

(25:42 - 25:59)

Turn to 1 John. 1 John. 1 John chapter, I'm sorry, yeah, chapter 3. You know, this is such good news, isn't it? That we who have put our faith in Jesus Christ, He saved us from our sins.

(26:00 - 26:13)

He saved us from our sins. You know, we think about that only in light of our salvation from death and hell, that the second death doesn't have power over us, but He saved you from your sins. That is something to rejoice about.

(26:13 - 26:24)

The word saved in Greek is sozo, and it means delivered. He delivers you from sin itself. 1 John 3, verse 8. The Son of God appeared for this purpose.

(26:24 - 26:37)

We're talking here about purpose, the purpose of the coming of Jesus Christ in Christmas. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. What are the works of the devil? We'll look on.

(26:37 - 26:59)

No one who is born of God practices sin, because His gods, meaning God's seed, abides in Him, and He cannot sin because He's born of God. By this, the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious. Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

(26:59 - 27:13)

When people commit sin, it is the work of the devil. It's the work of the devil to tempt people to sin, and when that sin is accomplished, then it becomes the work of the devil. That is what Christ came to destroy on Christmas.

(27:13 - 27:35)

That was the sword that Simeon saw in his prophecy that would be able to determine the thoughts of men. He came to destroy. Destroy what? Not just the guilt of sin, not just the penalty of sin, so that all of us as Christians, we could just go right into heaven and just be exactly like we were and go on our way sinning right into heaven.

(27:35 - 27:45)

He came to destroy sinning. That is something to be excited about. He came to destroy lawlessness.

(27:46 - 27:58)

He came to destroy the idea that I can live the way I want according to my own ideas. That's what lawlessness says. Lawlessness says God may demand it, but I don't prefer it.

(27:58 - 28:10)

Lawlessness says God may promise it, but I don't want it. Lawlessness, replacing God's desires with my desires. We become a law unto ourselves.

(28:10 - 28:46)

That's what the Son of God came to destroy, the works of the devil, sin, lawlessness, rebellion. That is what God came to destroy. So the work of Satan that Christ destroyed on the cross is the rejection of God's authority ultimately, and that is something that we have to rejoice about because how did he do it? Verse eight, how? By his appearing, by his coming, by his coming from heaven, that when he appeared as a baby in Bethlehem,

it was not so that 2,000 years later, we can sip eggnog by a Christmas tree.

(28:47 - 29:05)

He was being born in the form of man, and that's what Christmas is about, is appearing in the flesh to do away with the works of the devil. That's why we could say, joy to the world, the Savior reigns. You ever think about that? You look around the world and say, joy to the world, the Savior reigns.

(29:05 - 29:21)

Where is He reigning? Well, Christians could say that because He's reigning in their hearts, and they could mean it. Because the light has shined in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it. 1 Timothy 1.15, another great summary statement of the Gospel.

(29:21 - 29:39)

This is a saying that's sure and worthy of full acceptance. Jesus Christ came in the world to save sinners. So everything He did, His humble birth, His obedient life, His substitutionary death, His powerful resurrection covers the sin of His people.

(29:39 - 29:49)

It saves us and it delivers us. It delivers us from the bondage of sin and of evil. And that is good news.

(29:49 - 30:02)

That's good news to everyone here. Whether you realize it or not, that is good news to everyone here. Today, if you're hearing this and you don't know Jesus Christ, that's good news because God saves.

(30:04 - 30:15)

If you know Him, it's good news because God sanctifies, you see. It's more than just about eternal life in the future. It's life and life more abundantly now.

(30:16 - 30:49)

You know, I heard one of the most popular gifts this Christmas were these gift certificates, short-term memberships to spas, like Spa 23 or Bally's and things like that. 1 Timothy 4.8 says, bodily exercise profits little, but godliness is profitable with all things having promise in this life now and that which is to come. We could say working out at Bally's Fitness is of some value, but working out in the gymnasium of godliness holds a greater promise because it begins here and it is unto eternal life.

(30:50 - 31:06)

And if it feels good physically to run 10 miles or to lose 5 pounds, imagine how many hundreds of times better it feels to conquer Satan. To break free from sin. To overcome bitterness.

(31:07 - 31:17)

To overcome that unloving bent in our personality. To conquer bitterness through forgiveness. To love someone in 2006 that hated you in 2005.

(31:17 - 31:32)

To believe what God says about you and not what people have said about you. That's God's Christmas gift to us today. It's a gift certificate for a personally directed fitness program in the gymnasium of Jesus Christ.

(31:34 - 31:51)

The message of Christmas for you from Christ this morning is His name is Jesus and He shall come to save you from your sins. Millions of Americans woke up believing it all. The stable, the manger, Bethlehem.

(31:51 - 32:09)

But nevertheless, the same anxiety in their lives that things were going to be taken from them. The same frustrations that, you know, were destined for the crummy things. Remember what the world was like, you know, always talking, the crummy things that are going to happen to me in this life and I can't do a thing to change it.

(32:09 - 32:29)

And maybe on Christmas Day they'll forget about it because they'll spend some time with their family and the next day it'll be right back again. Their belief in the Christmas story does very little to provide them with any power over sin. And that's because the coming of the Son of God into the world is much, much, much more than a historical fact.

(32:30 - 33:12)

Much more. The coming of Jesus Christ into the world as we look at Christmas today is a message of hope sent by God to teenagers, to single parents, to overbearing fathers, to angry wives, to the smartest, to the slowest, to overeaters, to the anorexic, to prostitutes and hypocrites, to drunkards and addicts and those who judge them, to the homosexual, to the family man, to the preacher and to you. The message is this, His name is Jesus and He will save His people from their sin.



(33:13 - 33:25)

There's one way to make this gift yours. Let's go back to 1 John for one moment. We've already seen in verse 8, the Son of God appeared to Him for the purpose that He would destroy the works of the devil.

(33:26 - 33:53)

We've said that the works of the devil is manifested in sin which leads to death. We've said that those works are destroyed by the appearance of the Son of God, but it's not left there. Look at verse 9. Who is the one now who can apply this? No one, look at verse 9, no one who was born of God practices sin because His seed, God's seed, abides in Him and He cannot sin because He is born of God.

(33:53 - 34:32)

So you ask the question, what does this appearing of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago and to destroy the works of the devil have to do with me? Well, in order to experience this salvation from sin, we need to be born of God. We need to have the eyes of our heart opened so that we might see the light. And what that is is agreeing with God, agreeing with His ways about the beauty of holiness and turning from the ugliness of our sin, believing in the surpassing value of Jesus Christ.

(34:32 - 34:50)

It's not enough that Jesus Christ came and died and rose again. And if you're banking on this one work covering the sins of everyone so that everyone goes to heaven, you're going to be sorely disappointed for eternity because the Scripture says you must be born again. You must be born again.

(34:50 - 34:56)

That is God's command to you. You must be born again. No church made that up.

(34:56 - 35:00)

No religion made that up. It's not about that. It's about the work of God.

(35:00 - 35:05)

He says you must be born again. You must believe. You must trust.

(35:05 - 35:17)

You must treasure Him with your life. And if you're not born again, the works of the devil are not destroyed in your life and sin will just be going on and on and on. Sin will reign in you.

(35:18 - 35:23)

And yes, it's all true. Jesus Christ saves His people from His sins. And yes, it's true.

(35:23 - 35:45)

The cross made an atonement and it propitiated God's wrath. And yes, it's true that this was a sovereign, saving, eternal life-giving sacrifice, but it only becomes effective when you believe. Jesus said, "...for God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life." It's a simple thing.

(35:45 - 35:54)

Believe in Him and do not perish. Do not believe and perish. Your believing makes all the difference.

(35:54 - 36:02)

You can't buy eternal life. You can't hope at the end that there's going to be a second of your life that you can repent. You can't earn it.

(36:02 - 36:11)

You can't deal or negotiate for it. You can only trust the gift of eternal life that He's laid before you today. Believe.

(36:13 - 36:32)

That's what Paul meant when he said to the church at Ephesus, "...you're saved by grace through faith." That is the vehicle of faith in God's gracious gift given on the cross by which we're saved. Jesus came to give His life a ransom for many. For many.

(36:33 - 37:01)

Are you in the many? He came to save His people from their sin. Are you among His people? That's the question today. Were you ransomed when Christ died? Are you still under the guilt and power of sin? Are you moving towards eternal life or eternal punishment? See how important it is to know the answer to these questions? I know it sounds like I'm belaboring this, but you need to know the answers.

(37:02 - 37:09)

Eternity lies in the balance. I'm going to close by looking at John 15. John 15, turn there.

(37:10 - 37:30)

Because I want to answer one question, because maybe someone out there is saying, I

don't know whether or not I'm a child of God. I mean, I think I may be, but I'm not sure if I really am a Christian. How can you know whether you are among the many, among His people? The world just presumes it, you know.

(37:31 - 37:37)

To the world, well, what's the qualification for someone to go to heaven? You die. You die and you go to heaven. That's the qualification.

(37:38 - 37:44)

But Jesus didn't say that. I look at John 15. I believe it's verse 13.

(37:46 - 38:00)

Greater love has no man, is that it? Greater love has no man than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. He says he lays down his life for his friends. The ransom is for his friends.

(38:00 - 38:08)

His people are his friends. So here's the question this Christmas. Are you a friend of Jesus Christ? If you are, then you were ransomed.

(38:08 - 38:20)

If you aren't, you can become a friend of Jesus Christ today, on Christmas Day. How can I know if I'm a friend? Look at verse 14. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

(38:20 - 38:33)

Now, he's not saying here that this is not how you become a friend, but rather this is how you know you're a friend. You do what I command you. There's evidence that you've been ransomed.

(38:33 - 38:57)

There's evidence in your life that you've been ransomed. Your obedience doesn't earn you the status of His friendship, but it's the evidence that proves it. So if your attitude is one that, you know, I have no desire to live for Christ, I have no desire to obey Him, I have no desire to know what He says in His Word, I have no desire to change, I have no desire to do anything that the Scripture says, well, then be sure you're not His friend and your sin remains.

(38:58 - 39:08)

But, if you've been ransomed, you'll know it and your desires will change. You'll be freed

and empowered to do what Jesus commands. You won't do it perfectly, but you'll desire to do it.

(39:08 - 39:25)

You'll want to obey Him because you love Him so much. So I'd ask you the question today. Are you His friend? Do you love Jesus Christ? Do you listen to His Word? Do you desire to know Him more? Do you obey what He hears? If not, there's one word the Scripture says, a beautiful word.

(39:25 - 39:39)

We have so hated this word, but it is one word, repent. Repent. Turn from your self-centered, self-styled, self-reliant ways and submit your life to the Lordship of the One who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

(39:40 - 39:52)

That's what Jesus commands of us today. Believe. And He goes on in John 15 to say to His friends that He reveals to you, His friends, the glory of the Father.

(39:52 - 40:00)

Look at verse 15. All things I heard from my Father I made known to you. And that's the essence of being a Christian.

(40:01 - 40:13)

The things from the Father have been made known to us through Christ. He discloses the Father to you through the Word of God. The Word of God births faith.

(40:13 - 40:24)

That faith changes you and it causes you to be born again. It awakens faith in you. Today you may have walked in this room not believing it was just another Christmas morning.

(40:24 - 40:40)

And as you're hearing the Word of God, it's breaking that old stony heart. That it's birthing a faith in you and that will change your desires and suddenly you'll find yourself wanting to please God. It awakens faith that Jesus is the final revelation of God.

(40:40 - 40:49)

That God does love you in Christ. And that He has served you by paying your ransom. And you believe these things and your life is changed.

(40:50 - 41:08)

And finally, if you already know all of this to be true, there's more good news. His being Jesus, who will save His people from their sins is not only a good news of hope to the sinner yet to repent, but also to the Christian. And that's the message for Christmas to you today.

(41:08 - 41:20)

That His name is Jesus and He has saved you from your sin. This is more than a promise to the unsaved. This is a promise to the church.

(41:21 - 41:44)

It tells us that whatever is evil, whatever is undesirable in your life can be changed. You know, no one knows the month that Jesus was actually born. But it's a happy tradition and probably providential that Christmas falls a week before the end of our year, the beginning of a new year.

(41:44 - 41:55)

Because at the beginning of a new year is the time when we resolve to change things in our lives. And Christmas is God's message that change is possible. In fact, change is His gift to you.

(41:55 - 42:15)

And as 2005 comes to an end and we look back at our lives, the good news of Christmas is that we can change. He saved us from our sins. Jesus Christ came into the world to save us from the bondage of sin, from the bondage of Satan, to give you power so that His power in you could cause change.

(42:15 - 42:46)

We're not by nature beautiful people, but the Word of God says that we have an incomparably beautiful Savior who came to change us into His likeness from glory to glory. The message of Christmas is that whatever is evil in you, whatever is undesirable, whatever character traits you don't like about yourself, the thing that God hates, that you hate in your life can be changed. A critical spirit can be changed.

(42:47 - 42:54)

Alcoholism can be changed. Irritability can be changed. Instability and tardiness can be changed.

(42:54 - 43:08)

Harshness and ingratitude can be changed. Laziness and overeating and nagging can be changed. Apathy and prayerlessness and addictions, stinginess, excessive TV watching, gambling can be changed.

(43:08 - 43:37)

The fear of talking to others can be changed. Indifference to beauty can be changed. Your spiritual pride, your lack of submission, your lust, your anger, your lack of focus, your covetousness, your fear, your self-centeredness, your lack of hospitality, your ambivalence towards the Lord's Day and church attendance, your poor example to your children, your poor example on the job, all your fears, all that occupies your mind apart from Christ can be changed.

(43:38 - 43:52)

And it will be changed as you bask in the light of His glorious, life-changing Word. Because Jesus Christ came into the world to save us from that fatalistic attitude. He came with a purpose.

(43:53 - 44:02)

He came to set us free from fatalism. He came to stop people saying, that's just the way I am. He came to save His people from their sins.

(44:02 - 44:13)

May we believe this to be true and may it be an encouragement to us this Christmas. The Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil. Sin, lawlessness, rebellion are destroyed.

(44:13 - 44:24)

They have been nailed to the cross. May we participate in it by trusting in the promises of God. May He open our eyes to His glory and give us faith to believe.

(44:25 - 44:37)

Amen. Dear Lord God, those last words are our prayer today. Simply, Lord, open our eyes to Your glory and give us the faith to believe, we pray.

(44:37 - 44:57)

And I would ask You today, Lord, even at this moment, that if there is anyone here that does not know You, that has not had their heart changed and their eyes opened, that today You would grant them the faith, Lord. That You would open up their eyes. That You would take out the stony heart and put in a heart of flesh, a heart that desires to love

You, to serve You, to obey You, Lord.

(44:58 - 45:24)

And in all those today who are Your people, may we take encouragement in the simple fact of Christmas. The simple fact that has escaped so much of Christendom as they celebrate Christmas, as they argue vain arguments of whether or not it's right to say Merry Christmas or put up a tree, Lord. In the hearts of Your people, may we know this Christmas, that You have saved us from our sins.

(45:25 - 45:59)

So that very thing in us that displeases You, that very thing, that character that is part of that old man that we find so hard to shake and that sin that so easily besets us, has been paid for. We've been ransomed from that and we've been saved that is delivered from it. Give us, O Lord God, the faith to believe that today, that we might walk in 2006 in great victory in our knowledge of You, Lord God, and in Your knowing us.

(45:59 - 47:04)

Thank You, Lord, for not coming to this world to be served, but to serve and to give Your life a ransom for many. In Jesus' name. With no concern for modern modes of ministry and pragmatism and with a commitment to systematically teach the Word of God in all of its power and to foster fellowship based on genuine agape love, it's our purpose to fulfill the great commission of Messiah to make disciples of all nations, one life at a time.

(47:04 - 47:22)

If you're a serious, dedicated disciple of Christ at Bread of Life, you'll find other like-minded believers who love and enjoy God and each other and who are not afraid to bear the light of Christ in this dark world. If you desire to know Christ in a deeper, more intimate way, that's why we're here. Jesus said eternal life is knowing God.

(47:23 - 47:43)

And the chief end of everything that we do in our fellowship is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. If you love the Word of God, you'll be excited to be part of our services where we uphold the Scripture as the sufficient authority for everything in life and teach it systematically. We're dedicated to verse-by-verse exposition in all of our services.

(47:43 - 48:03)

Perhaps you've been called by God to pastor or teach the Word. Bread of Life can be the place where you can be trained for future eldership. More practical, perhaps, than any Bible college, we offer the opportunity for hands-on experience for men of God called to the pastorate with a common understanding and interpretation of Scripture.

(48:03 - 48:19)

If you love God and desire to worship Him in the beauty of whole and initial, cherish the opportunity to worship God corporately in a reverent manner. You won't find many jokes or anecdotes. What you will find are Christ-exalting sermons, music, and fellowship.

(48:19 - 48:41)

Perhaps you find that you're not growing as much in grace and faith as you could. Our emphasis on the teaching of the purity of the Word of God will challenge you to believe and live the abundant life. You won't be fed pre-digested food, but you'll be encouraged and equipped to grow through your personal study of the Scripture, seeking God's will for yourself.

(48:41 - 48:55)

So, we ask you to seek the Lord as to whether or not He would have you to fellowship with us, and we do invite you to visit us at any one of our services. If you're not yet a Christian, you may be surprised. You certainly won't want to discount attending a service or Bible study.

(48:56 - 49:20)

At Bread of Life meetings, you'll find an atmosphere where the God of the Bible can reveal Himself to you as He pleases. And if you've not been born again, that is, you don't have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, speak with us, give us a call. Speak with an elder at one of our services, or call us or email us, and we'll be happy to send you more information, a free tape, on these matters of eternity which are so important.

(49:21 - 49:43)

God, the Scripture says, God commands men everywhere to believe, and that is His command of you, if you are not born again, that you would believe. We invite you to our service. Presently, we are meeting at the Holiday Inn on Route 46 West in Totalwood, New Jersey, on Sunday mornings at 11 a.m. We also have Bible studies and home groups that meet during the week.

(49:44 - 50:08)

So, if you want to find out about our services or Bible studies, or want any other information or a list of tapes or resources, you can contact us by calling toll-free 1-866-38-BREAD. That's toll-free 1-866-38-B-R-E-A-D. In numbers, 1-866-382-7323.

(50:09 - 50:34)

Or email us at B-O-L, that's B as in boy, O-L, short for Bread of Life, underscore key, and



the word fellowship, B-O-L underscore fellowship at yahoo.com, or by post office mail at Bread of Life Fellowship, P.O. Box 133, New Milford, New Jersey, 07646. All of this information should be on the front of the tape or the CD. So, I hope to get to meet you at a service.

(50:34 - 50:43)

Until then, may the Lord bless you and may He keep you. May He cause His countenance to shine upon you. May the Lord be gracious unto you, and may the Lord give you His peace.

(50:43 - 50:45)

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.