

The Inscrutable Gift

Acts 2:37-41; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; 12-27-20

Reluctant Converts

The description of CS Lewis' conversion to Christianity is a great illustration of all true conversions: we are naturally unwilling to come to God for mercy through Christ and it takes God's relentless and effectual work in our hearts to subdue our rebellion and lead us to rest in Jesus. We can see this in Acts 2.

'You must picture me alone in that room at Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. – CS Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*

Celebration of Christmas

For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself. (39)

The indescribable gift is received through inscrutable sovereignty. (2 Corinthians 9:15; Isaiah 40:28; Romans 11:33 - ESV)

Inscrutable Sovereignty and Giving the Gift

How do we see God's sovereignty in the Christmas story?

We see God's sovereign intervention in the virgin birth. (Luke 1:26-38)

We see God's sovereign intervention in the birth in Bethlehem as prophesied. (Luke 2:1-20)

We see God's sovereign intervention in the marriage of Mary and Joseph. (Matthew 1:18-25)

We see God's sovereignty intervention in the protection of Jesus and the fulfillment of prophecies. (Matthew 2:1-23)

Inscrutable Sovereignty and Receiving the Gift

The Christmas story can seem to most of us as surprisingly familiar and unexciting. Many of us fail to see the amazing thing that is claimed to be true in the Christmas story: God was born as a baby and never stopped being God! *Is this a story that is easily believed? Evidently not!* The incarnation and crucifixion are unbelievable apart from grace! (1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Romans 3:9-18) *So then, how does anyone ever receive the Gift?* If we have a heart to receive God's Gift of His Son, then all thanks goes to God! (John 1:1-18) *Who or what is God sovereign over?*

- His Choices (Psalm 115:3)
- Inanimate objects (Jonah 1:4, 15; 4:8)
- Plants (Jonah 4:6)

- Insects (Jonah 4:7)
- Animals (Jonah 1:17; 2:10)
- People (Daniel 11:3; Proverbs 21:1)
- All circumstances (Proverbs 16:33; Isaiah 45:7; Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
- Sin (Genesis 20:6; Psalm 81:12; Romans 1:24, 26, 28)
- Salvation/hearts (Deuteronomy 29:4; 2 Chronicles 30:12; Jeremiah 24:7; Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:25-28; Daniel 5:21; Romans 5:5; 2 Corinthians 4:6)

Inscrutable Sovereignty and the New Year

Let's apply this truth of God's sovereignty to the advent of the new year of 2021.

How should we think about what we see in the Bible?

- God does not tell us everything He could tell us or that we want to know.
- God has told us everything we need to know to trust Him and love like He loves.
- We are prone to twist what God has told us so that we don't trust like we should or love like we should.

How do we twist the truth of God's sovereignty to hinder trust and love?

Some think, 'If God is sovereign, that must mean ...'

- Prayer is pointless.
- Witnessing is unimportant.
- Choices are insignificant.
- Sinners are not responsible.
- God cannot love all men.
- God is the author of sin.

But the Bible tells us that all these conclusions are wrong! If my understanding or response to God's sovereignty results in thinking or practices along these lines, then I don't believe in God's sovereignty as revealed in the Bible but in my own man-made theology.

Why has God told us in the Bible that He is in complete control of everything?

- To warn the unrepentant while comforting the oppressed/offended. God will bring all sin to judgment. (Psalm 68:1-6, 19-23; 145:17-21; Jeremiah 23:16-24; Romans 12:14-21)
- To humble the proud. All that you have, you have received. (1 Corinthians 4:7; Daniel 4:29-37)
- To give hope to the fearful. God will keep His promises and fulfill His purposes, no matter what. (Isaiah 41:10; 46:3-13; 50:9-10; Matthew 10:26-31; 6:24-34)

The reality of God's sovereignty can make us afraid in ways God never intended. (Habakkuk 1:1-2; 3:16) It is the goodness of the sovereign God that is meant to calm the fears that we should not have. (Habakkuk 3:17-19)