

The Gift

Valleys Family Church Sermon (Christmas Nativity Service)
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 16th Dec 2012

Intro

- What do you want for Christmas?
- *(Have a wrapped gift as a prize- choose someone and get them to pick a random piece of paper out of a hat- each piece of paper has a different direction such as 'move the gift back three rows' etc. The person the gift lands on can't open it until all the papers are used up. Before each point of the sermon another paper is taken out of the hat by another volunteer. Idea taken from 'Make it Stick' book from www.group.com.)*

Read: John 3:16

(Show first frame of powerpoint- new frame for each point)

- We will go through this verse starting at the start but then changing it's order to bring out it's meaning.

For God so loved the world

- God loves mankind
- He is creator- we know there is a God because of what He has made- a painting speaks of a painter
- Creation beautiful, most beautiful=mankind, in His image for relationship with Him- God shaped hole that nothing else can fill.
- He made you, your eye colour, fingerprints- He loves you.
- You knit me together in my mother's womb, you saw my unformed body, every day of my life was written in Your book before one came to be- Ps 139.
- You are unique and He loves you, more than you can love yourself. He never made anything rubbish. God saw all that He had made and it was very good.
- God loved so much He gave- He wanted to express His love in a gift.

should not perish

- What does it mean to perish? Here is poison- if drank that you'd perish.
- Mankind has a problem worse than cancer and it affects all of us- the problem of sin.
- Sin is 'missing the mark', falling short of God's goodness, breaking His laws.
- God's laws- 10 commands. Shall not steal, lie, misuse God's name, no idols- anything which is more important to us than God
- Just one sin makes us a lawbreaker
- Conscience- if all we had done and thought over last week were on show this a.m how many of us would want to stay?
- There is a result- wages of sin=death. Death came into world when first humans turned backs on God- we inherit their sinful nature- you don't have to teach a child how to misbehave, but how to behave. We all fall short in different areas, but we all fall short.
- God is Just- He is more just than the best judge in the world. If a judge kept letting people go unpunished for terrible crimes there would be an uproar. If a judge did the same for petty crimes there would still be an uproar. God has to punish sin to remain good, or He becomes bad, guilty of sin.

- We will all stand before God's judgement seat and give an account of our lives to Him. We can get away with nothing- He sees all, even our hidden motives.
- The result of that judgement will be Heaven or Hell- Hell is when we are punished for the wrongs we have done in this life. In Heaven there is no sin, therefore to enter you need to be sinless.
- However, God has a dilemma- He must punish sin, but He loves mankind. What does He do? He arranges a rescue plan- the most wonderful gift ever.

He gave His only begotten Son

- Only= unique, but the Bible mentions angels being like 'sons of God' and Christians as 'Sons of God' in what way is Jesus the only Son? He is the only begotten Son. Beget means to give birth. A cat begets a cat. A frog begets a frog. A human begets a human. God begets God. Jesus is God becoming a human being- fully human and yet fully God.
- Jesus is God- He claimed to be able to forgive people's sins against God. He claimed eternal existence 'before Abraham was born I AM'. The Jews tried on numerous occasions to kill Him for blasphemy. He was finally crucified for claiming to be God's Son. God gave Him the nickname 'Emanuel' at His birth, which means 'God with us'. He was born of a virgin, which means God was the father not Joseph. Religion is man trying to get to God. Christianity is God coming to us.
- Jesus was fully human. 'I'm only human!' Jesus knew what it was to be hungry, thirsty, tired, lonely, rejected, in pain. He was 'a man of sorrows' familiar with suffering. Jesus was able to identify with our trials- He was tempted in every way as we are, yet was without sin.
- Jesus performed many miracles, taught people to love their enemies and gave the most amazing teaching the world has known. And yet He was betrayed, mocked, tortured and crucified, the cruelest of deaths.
- Jesus died in our place as our substitute- He took our punishment on Himself, He took the blame for the things we have done wrong. He did this to rescue us from Hell and open the door to Heaven. For those who accept it, their sinful nature was nailed to His cross, setting them free to a new life living for God. He was condemned in our place- He went to the electric chair instead of us, loving us enough to die for us. He paid our bill and his perfect bill of obedience was credited to our account.

Have everlasting life

- How do we know His sacrifice for us was effective in getting rid of our sins? How do we know God the Father won't still be angry with us and condemn us? Because God the Father rose His Son from the dead as a proof to us that the sacrifice had worked, otherwise we would be left guessing. The resurrection is the greatest miracle of all time.
- Jesus appeared to over 500 people over a period of 40 days in a wide number of locations and different situations, showing Himself to be alive with many infallible proofs, such as eating and drinking, people could touch Him and talk to Him. Even those who were formerly hostile such as His brother James were convinced when they saw Him resurrected. The chief persecutor of the early Church, Paul became a follower when He met the risen Jesus. Most of these early Christians were put to death for what they believed.
- Jesus promised that all who have faith in Him have from death to life, just as He has done. The Christian promise is that death is not the end. Jesus ascended into Heaven and said that He was going to prepare a place for us and will return to take

us to where He is (Heaven).

- Soon Jesus will return to judge the world and save those who have trusted in Him.

Whoever believes in Him

- Some say 'that's not for me'. Yes it is! It's for all who choose to believe. Believing is a choice and God won't make that choice for us.
- No one is too good to not need God's forgiveness.
- No one is too bad to be beyond God's forgiveness- Jesus died for all!
- Belief is not good works. Many think wrongly that we enter Heaven by being good, or by doing good works- our good works will never be enough as we have all sinned and will continue to do so until the day we die, that's the whole reason why we need a saviour, otherwise Jesus died for nothing!
- We are saved by faith- simply trusting in what Jesus has done for us.
- The faith that saves us is faith that does not delight in sin, but is sorrowful about it and turns away from it- this is called 'repentance'. We choose to forsake sin and go God's way instead.
- Jesus promises to come into our lives as we surrender to Him. He comes into us and lives in us by His Holy Spirit, God in us. This way He changes us from the inside out, gives us power to live a good life pleasing to Him.
- It is as we make Jesus the boss of our lives, rather than ourselves that He is able to come into our lives and save us- it is surrendering our lives to Him as Lord and trusting in His death and resurrection on our behalf.

Summary

This is God's wonderful gift to you. Have you received it yet? If you died tonight do you have an assurance you would be in heaven? You can have that assurance right now.

Prayer & response.