

J.J.

THE BLESSING OF CHRISTMAS
(Preached at Christmas Service of FCC)

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

INTRODUCTION :

By God's grace, I have been tasked with preaching about "The Blessing of Christmas".

BLESS BLESS Mano po. I believe some of us, the first time we heard the word "Bless" was during the Christmas season either during reunions or when we're visiting our "Ninong" or "Ninang". As Filipinos, before they give us money or gifts, our mom or dad would say to us, "Ok, bless, bless muna." Or when we are falling in line for our "Aguinaldo", before we get our money, our tito or titas would say, "bless muna" This means, we have to do "mano po"

So from then on, I've associated the word "bless" or "blessing" with money.

Even today, the word "blessing" will mostly mean something that is material.

Examples : You got a new car. "That's a blessing". You got a new house, "Uy blessing"

Icebreaker: I wonder why we never reply to our friends when they say, "Uy, you have a new boyfriend ha." We don't answer, "Uy, blessing yan"

Now in order for us to understand "The Blessing of Christmas" We have to define first the meaning of "Blessing" and we have to define "Christmas"

Definitions

We all know that Christmas is celebrating the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

CHRISTMAS : Christos (Christ) moesse (mass) celebration or festival; FESTIVAL OF CHRIST.
We are celebrating Christ this season – the Birth of our King. I have a different preaching for that.

WHAT ABOUT THE WORD BLESSING?

I know if we've been a Christian long enough, we have an idea what it means but we have never really put a finger on it, which means no one can exactly define it.

We are "blessed" that we have the Bible as our ultimate source of truth.

BLESSING DEFINED ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE

- **In the Old Testament, there are two words for bless or blessing**

- First is "barak" which means**
 - to praise, congratulate or salute.

The derivative is "berakah" which means

- **an invocation of good things** like abundance, prosperity of every kind.

Illustration : When Jacob was stealing Esau's blessing from their father.

Genesis 27:12 Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be mocking him and bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing.

A curse is an invocation of bad things; a blessing is an invocation of good things.

- **Or it's a gift.** (I'm giving you a blessing "gift")

This means, it's a material thing.

- **Or a treaty of peace** (God bless you in these time of trouble)

The word "berakah" has been used 400 times in the Old Testament

Second word is "esher"

- Happiness; gladness

Psalm 33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

Job 5:17 Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty."

- **In the New Testament, there are also two words for bless or blessing**

First is "makarios" which means; this word is like "esher" in the OT

- Happy, glad

Example : The beatitudes in Matthew 5

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"

5 "Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth."

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God."

Second is "eulogio" which literally means "eu" (good) and "logos" (word)

This word is like the word "berakah" or barak" in the OT

- to praise, congratulate or salute. (putting in a good word)

That's why you hear prayers like "We bless your name oh God." Which means we praise or salute you oh God

- to cause someone to prosper or to make them happy "I'm giving you a blessing"

Given all of these definitions in the Bible, with the danger of being too simplistic, here's the meaning of the word "blessing"

QUOTE : A blessing is a good situation, invocation or action that brings gladness of heart.

Examples :

Situation : Seeing the sunset, getting healed, seeing your loved ones, a new home

Invocation : “God bless you.” God give you good things that will give you gladness of heart. Or people in World War II, hearing the words, “The War is over”

Action : Someone gave you money; someone helped you in times of need;

All of these are good situations that gives gladness of heart.

Now knowing the Biblical meaning of the word “blessing”, you will now understand why the angel declared to the shepherds

Luke 2: 10 And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

That's why, this is the BLESSING OF CHRISTMAS

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

TODAY, I PRAY THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL OPEN OUR HEARTS AND MIND ON WHY JESUS CHRIST IS THE GREATEST BLESSING THAT WE HAVE EVER RECEIVED.

THE BLESSING OF CHRISTMAS : THE GREATEST GIVER, THE GREATEST GIFT, THE GREATEST GAIN

I. THE GREATEST GIVER

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Illustration: An Air Jordan Retro 13 shoe nowadays costs around \$260.

On April 2023, The sneakers worn by Michael Jordan in the 1998 finals — or as fans put it, his “Last Dance” with the Chicago Bulls — have fetched for a record \$2.2 million at auction, according to reports. A Chicago Bulls Jordan Jersey costs about \$480-500. In 2022, the Jersey Jordan wore in his last championship was sold at \$10M

What's the difference? Same pair of shoes. Same style. But what's the difference? IT CAME DIRECTLY FROM MICHAEL JORDAN.

After competing with Michael Jordan, Larry Bird quoted, “I think he's God disguised as Michael Jordan.” I know it's blasphemous for him to say that but it's how he's trying to describe the greatness of Jordan.

BUT WHO IS GOD COMPARED TO JORDAN? Jordan is nothing!!!!

Psalm 96:4 For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.

We will only appreciate Christmas if we know WHO GOD IS and HIS HOLINESS AND HIS GREATNESS. He is the Giver of the Greatest Gift.

THE ONE WHO GAVE US THE GREATEST GIFT (which we will talk about later) IS THE ONE WHO CREATED THE VERY GROUND YOU ARE STANDING ON RIGHT NOW. THE ONE WHO HOLDS EVERYTHING!!!

NOTE : If I would preach about the greatness of God, it will take us an eternity to do it. Do you know that the main wonder in heaven is getting to know the greatness of who God is?

If we truly know who God is, we will react to His greatness with words like David.

*Psalm 8: 3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?*

And that is precisely, THE MOTIVATION OF GOD WHEN HE GAVE HIS SON!

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

What is this kind of love?

Saint Nicholas Illustration: Some people give gifts as a reward. Or you receive a gift because we did something for them or we give gifts out of obligation.

We even have a song for Santa Claus to scare the kids, "Santa Claus is coming to town."

... Oh! You better watch out

You better not cry

You better not pout, I'm telling you why

Santa Claus is coming to town!

... He's making a list

Checking it twice

Gonna find out who's naughty or nice

Santa Claus is coming to town

... He sees you when you're sleeping

He knows when you're awake

He knows if you've been bad or good

So be good for goodness sake!

Important Note : We never give a nice gift to those who punches you in the face or to those who stole from you. "Merry Christmas, I bought you a watch because you punched me in the face."

And yet God, gave us the greatest gift when we weren't good people, when we sinned against Him. In fact the Bible says,

Quote : Sin is a closed fist and a blow in the face of God. – Joseph Parker

AND YET GOD GAVE US THE GREATEST GIFT WHEN WE IGNORED HIM, HATED HIM, REBELLED AGAINST HIM AND SINNED AGAINST HIM....

WHY? SIMPLY BECAUSE HE LOVES US!!!

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We have to remember that God is a holy, holy, holy God – a consuming fire! And yet because of love, He gave the greatest Gift.

II. THE GREATEST GIFT

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The blessing of Christmas is not only in the greatness of the giver but in the greatness of the gift.

When we were in school, one of the required reading was the short story by O'Henry titled,

The Gift of the Magi.

It was the story of a husband and wife in the early 1900s named Jim and Della. They have fallen into hard times and it was Christmas time and Della wanted to buy a present for her husband. But she only had \$1.87 in her pocket. She wanted to buy her husband Jim a chain for his watch but it costs \$20. Della had beautiful brown hair that's knee-length (Remember this is the 1900s) so she went to a wig maker to sell her hair. So the wigmaker, cut her hair and she got \$20 for it. She was so happy that she immediately bought the platinum chain for her husband's watch. She waited for her husband to come home from work. When Jim arrived, Jim saw that Della's hair was cut short and he became sad. Della had to explain that she sold her hair so she can buy the chain for his watch. After seeing this, Jim brought out his gift to Della, it was a set of beautiful combs for her long hair. Jim explained to Della that he sold his watch in order to buy the combs.

It was a story of love and sacrifice.

The best gift that someone can ever give to us is something that is given out of love and something that we need.

Remember this, true giving takes sacrifice.

2 Samuel 24:24 I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."

Remember, God owns everything and He can give us anything easily.

The Lord said to Jeremiah, *“I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?”*

BUT WHAT IS THE ONE THING, IN THIS CASE PERSON THAT WHEN HE GIVES IT, WILL COST HIM SOMETHING – HIS OWN SON – OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST!

GOD HAS TO SACRIFICE HIS OWN SON BECAUSE OF HIS LOVE FOR US IN ORDER TO FULFILL OUR GREATEST NEED – THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR SIN.

Again, why?

1 John 4:10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Why do we need forgiveness of our sin? It's because if our sins are not forgiven then we will go to hell.

Quote : What sends people to hell? Not sin; unforgiven sin, unforgiven sin. We all sin, and we would all end up in hell if our sins were not forgiven. – John McArthur

That's why :

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 8:24 I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."

Some of you might say, "Why can't just God forgive me of my sins, why does He need to sacrifice His Son."

We have to remember we have offended/sinned against a Holy, Holy, Holy God. And since He is Holy. He is just and a good God...Sin needs to be punished. And since we have sinned against a thrice Holy and eternal God, the punishment is eternal hell and damnation, separation from God. We cannot call God good if he is not just. It's like a judge, you cannot call a judge good if he lets a criminal get away from his crime. But He is also a God who loves us. He doesn't want us to go to hell. Somebody has to take the punishment on our behalf. He cannot send any man because when that man dies, he only dies for his own sin. He cannot send Himself because God cannot die.

His solution : He sent His own Son to become Man in order to die on our behalf for our sin.

Challenge : I heard a pastor preaching with these words, "We can help people by giving them food for their bodies but their souls are still going to hell." This Christmas, yes, let us give gifts. Let us help people who are in need **but let's make sure that we are also making sure we share them the Greatest Gift that God has given – His own Son Jesus Christ.**

QUOTE : JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF IS THE GREATEST BLESSING YOU CAN GIVE TO OTHERS!

Which bring us to the last reason.

III. THE GREATEST GAIN

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

What is eternal life? Some people do not appreciate eternal life because they thought it's living in the clouds for a long long time with angels playing harp and etc.

Let our Lord answer what eternal life is all about

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Eternal life is a love relationship with God. That's why when you believe in Jesus Christ today, eternal life starts immediately not the moment after you physically die.

Illustration : Yesterday, my wife and I are talking and we had brunch together in downtown and then went into this marketplace. She said, "Aren't you happy sumama ako." I said, "I can do things alone but I'm HAPPIER when I'm with you." There's a saying, "It's not the place that makes it special but it's who you're with." To be honest, even if you're in a simple place just as long as you are the person with you love, in the end, the place doesn't really matter. Ask young people who are starting to fall in love with each other.

It's the same with this world, the only true joy and rock is if we have God and what is the only way to have a relationship with God?

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Illustration : I was talking to some of my Hindu friends, their relationship with God is God and man – one who only answers prayers or who punishes our sins.

But is only us Christians, who knows that when we put our faith in Christ Jesus, we start a relationship with God of FATHER AND CHILD.

John 1:12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

Quote: 'Father' is the Christian name for God. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption." - J.I. Packer

If God is our LOVING Father, do we need to worry about anything? Whatever happens, whether in this life or in the next...for a Christian, the best is yet to come.

Summary :

The blessing of Christmas is God who is the greatest giver has given us the greatest gift so we can have the greatest gain.

But remember, **Jesus Christ who is the Son of God that God gave is God Himself.**

That's why here is the blessing of Christmas.

GOD GAVE HIMSELF TO US.

"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). Ref: Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23

I LOVE TELLING THIS STORY :

A rich man and his son loved to collect works of art. They had quite a vast collection, from the works of Raphael to Picasso. When the Vietnam conflict broke out, his son marched off to war but died in rescuing the life of another soldier. About a month later, there was a knock at the father's door. A young man stood on the porch with a package in his hands.

He said, "Sir, you don't know me, but I am the soldier that your son saved. He saved many lives that day, and he was carrying me to safety when a bullet got him. He often talked about you and your love for art."

The father opened the package. It was a portrait of his son, painted by the young soldier. He stared in wonder at how he had captured the personality of his son in the painting. He was so drawn to the eyes that a few tears trickled down his cheek. He thanked the young man and offered to pay him for the portrait. But the soldier declined, saying it was a gift. Then he walked away.

The father hung the painting over the mantel. Every time visitors came to the house to view his art collection, the father always showed them the picture of his son first. The father died a few months later.

There was to be a public auction of his art collection. Many influential people had gathered, excited over the famous paintings that would be sold that day. On the platform for all to see was the painting of the son.

The auctioneer banged his gavel and the bidding began. "Who will start the bidding for the picture of the son?" There was silence. No hands were raised. Then the people began to grumble. "No one wants the son," one man shouted. "We came for the real paintings. We want Van Gogh and Rembrandt. Let's get on with it!" But the auctioneer insisted, "Who will take the son?"

Finally, a voice came from the back of the room. It was the voice of an old gardener, a servant who had worked all his life for the father and his son. "I'll give ten dollars for the painting," he said. Being a poor man, it was all he could afford. No other bid was made. Finally, the auctioneer brought down the gavel again. "Sold!" he said, "sold for ten dollars to the man in the back row." Then he laid down his gavel and said, "The auction is over."

The people were in an uproar. "What about the paintings?" they shouted. "I am sorry," said the auctioneer. "There was a stipulation in the will. I was clearly told not to reveal this stipulation until now. Only the portrait of the son will be auctioned. Whoever bought the painting would inherit the entire estate, including the paintings. The man who took the son gets everything."

This is the blessing of Christmas that God gave and we need only to receive it.

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

MAY YOU HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS!

S.G.D.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father in heaven, we want to thank You for Your presence with Your people. We are assured that you are with us right now because your Son Jesus Christ, who is God was born in a manger and was called Immanuel, meaning "God with us." As we gather for further fellowship today, may Your Holy Spirit be the one to provide us with love, joy, peace and laughter. May our conversations be full of You and may it give you honor and glory. We also want to thank You for the abundant blessing of food that we will share together as one family in Christ. May this food be nourishment for both body and soul and provide us with strength throughout the rest of the day. And when we finish our fellowship, may we always be reminded about the Blessing of Christmas – which is you O Lord, the very God Himself who loves us so much that You gave your own Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sin so that we will have an eternal relationship. Give us the opportunity, the courage and the wisdom to share the Blessing of Christmas to those who don't know You yet. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.