

I. Introduction and Prayer

The first part is going to be for mom and dad. The second part is going to be for all the kids. Here's what I need all the kids to do. This is good training because you're not going to be in the nursery today. I want you to learn as much from what I have to say. So I want you to sit very quiet and I want you to listen, because your mom and dad want to hear what I have to say. Then, once we get to that point, we're going to have a time just for you guys, for the kids. I've got something really special planned for you today because I want to make this a complete package for everybody.

Let's have a word of prayer and then we'll get going this morning. Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We love you. We thank you, Father, for all that you've given us today. We thank you for your people that have decided to meet today and come here to be part of this. We love you. We thank you for all that you do. Now, bless our time. Bless your word. Lord, open up our hearts that we may understand all the true concepts and the true aspects of Christ coming into this world. We'll thank you and praise you in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

II. The True Motive of Christmas

I thought long and hard about what I wanted to do this morning and this week, because I'm like most people: Christmas gets so overdone so many years. I don't want this to be a typical Christian Christmas message today. All through this town today, there are 500 messages being preached on the real meaning of Christmas, and 600 other messages on "let's put Christ back in Christmas" and all that. Texts today are all around Matthew 2 and Luke 2, the two passages in the Bible that are always associated with Christmas. All week long for the last month, we've been barraged with nativity scenes, wise men, the star of Bethlehem, and angels. I really want to take a few moments this morning and talk about what today needs to be.

Thursday night, in our Thursday night Bible study, we had a great question, and we really did Christmas Day with all the trimmings Thursday night. If you were here, we really answered a lot of great questions and we looked at a lot of great concepts. But today, I just want to incorporate a couple of things into your day. We met today because the Bible teaches that the first day of the week is the day. In fact, today, whether you know it or not, proves what I've been telling you for the last 15 or 20 years. Some of you haven't been around me that long, but usually 20 years is the cutoff point; they usually leave right after that.

For the last 20 years, I've been telling you that it's not the world that's taken God out of Christmas. We hear that all the time today. There's a lot of good stuff out there and a lot of stuff on the TV and the radio about people getting on the bandwagon about the fact that they're trying to destroy Christmas. But I'm going to tell you, and I've said this for years and years and years, and it's a true statement: today really proves my point. I've told you for years and years and years

that it isn't the world that wants to take God out of things at Christmas; it's God's people. That's where the problem really lies. The proof of that today is today.

I like having Christmas on Sunday. I'll tell you why: I always like to see real motives in things. We say a lot of things and we do a lot of things, but the real motive gets displayed by what we do. I think it's an incredible thing because there's nothing like having Christmas on Sunday to reveal God's people's true motives. You'll see what I mean. As I already said, Sunday is the first day of the week. In the Book of Acts, that's the day they met. That was the day that God decided that He wanted the believers to meet together to celebrate, preach, teach, and do all of the things that the church does: the first day of the week. Our day, we call that Sunday.

At the same time, it isn't very often that Christmas falls on the first day of the week, only once in seven years. If you're going to take the day of December 25th as the birthday of Christ, you would think that every seven years when it fell on the day that the church is supposed to meet, the same day that the birthday of Christ shows up, wow, you would think that would be one great celebration in God's people. I like the word "celebration." Nobody uses that today. It would be a great celebration.

Yet, I was amazed all week long. Last night, they had a thing on the news, and it was going through and talking about all the churches that decided they weren't going to have church on Christmas Day. I thought to myself, "There it is." Here's the one day that the day of His birth can coincide with the day that God's people are supposed to meet. It only happens once in seven years, and you'd think that would be one great day. But most churches cancel their services today, and all through this city, church attendances are in half, or a quarter. You know why that is? I'll tell you what the problem is: Sunday has gotten in the way of Christmas. That's the terrible thing. Sunday got in the way of our Christmas. So churches said, "Well, Sunday's in the way of Christmas. We have to cancel it." God's people said, "Whoops, Sunday's in the way of Christmas. I've got to celebrate Christmas. Sunday's in the way."

If it's the birth of Christ and it's the day of the week that we're supposed to meet, it ought to be the greatest day. It only goes to show you that in reality, the two really have nothing in common. The two really mean nothing. It's a bunch of hype that we use and we talk about. My mother used to say, "Action speaks louder than words." That is so true. To have a day where it coincides with the day that we're supposed to meet with His birth, churches ought to be packed today. But the truth of the matter is, it really isn't. It's just one of those things that we do, and it's God's people who lead the way, not the unsaved world.

III. The Biblical Context of Christ's Birth

Now, I have two basic things I want to do today, and I'm going to be brief here because I want to. You're good enough to come this morning. We have this time together. What I want to do for you adults this morning, again, is just help to balance the concept of Christmas when Christ came into this world. We talked about Thursday night. We talked about how historically we know that Christ wasn't born on December 25th. We talked and showed how that came into Christianity. We

know from the Bible standpoint that Christ was born at the Feast of Tabernacles, which is in September.

The Feast of Tabernacles, you see, there's much more to the birth of Christ than just what we commonly think of Christmas. Christ came into the world for one basic, primary reason. That primary reason was to come back to His people, the nation of Israel. The Old Testament had prophesied for 800 years that a Messiah was going to come. That Messiah showed up at the only time the Messiah could have showed up. He shows up during the Feast of Tabernacles, which was Israel's feast for the regathering of the nation of Israel. The Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes. It's also, as I told you Thursday night, called the Feast of Tabernacles because that's when God came to tabernacle among men.

In the Old Testament, they had what they commonly called the Tabernacle. That Tabernacle was something that they set up and tore down all through their 40 years of wandering. Every time they pitched camp, they would set up that Tabernacle. Every time they would go on the march, they would tear it down and they'd haul it with them. That Tabernacle represented God in their world. God met with them in the Holy of Holies. Everything within that Tabernacle foreshadows the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's called the Tabernacle simply because that's where God tabernacled among men in the Old Testament.

At the first coming of Christ, God came to tabernacle in a human man, the man Jesus. We've talked about how He was very God, and the whole concept of that birth of Christ shows you how the only time He could have come was the Feast of Tabernacles because it represented the main purpose of Christ coming. I know we hear all this stuff, and it's all true, but it's all true in a secondary sense. When Christ came to this planet in Matthew 1 and Luke 2, He came to regather the nation of Israel. You find that in Romans 9, you find it in Romans 11, you find it in hundreds of places in the Bible. Obviously, we know that Israel rejected Him, so then we, as the body of Christ or the church, we come into the scheme of things. He dies on the cross, and it all kind of goes from there. So, what I want to do today is help you balance the thing out in that aspect, so I can give you something that you can take with you today that will just help you put it all in perspective.

Now, the second thing I want to do: if there's any danger in Christmas, and I don't mean this danger in a really bad way, but if there's any danger in Christmas, it is our children not coming up and understanding, to the basis of their limitations, what the real meaning of Christmas is. I don't think that you should not have Christmas with them. You know where my position is on it. But I think that every Christian family needs to have control that their children come up, grow up, get raised up in the concept of the biblical perspective of basically that it isn't all about getting; it's about giving. I want to illustrate that with your children today when we get a little bit farther down the line.

So those are the two things I want to do. I want to build our time this morning, in just a few short moments that we're going to take, around one verse, one concept. This one concept of this one verse basically says it better than any Christmas message I could preach you out of Luke 2. I could take Matthew 2 and Luke 2 and combine the two together and lay it all out. But the truth of

the matter is, this verse says what needs to be said today. I could give you a great story and lay all those things out, and you'd go home and it'd be just something else that you heard again. I'm going to leave one verse with you today that will stick with you the rest of the day. I hope it sticks with you the rest of your life. But I'm giving it to you today just because it really means and impacts what we need to understand and talk about today.

IV. The Unspeakable Gift: Charity

My favorite kind of verses in the Bible are verses that get right to the heart of it. This verse is a verse that gets right to the meat of it, lays itself out very clearly, very definingly. There's no hype with it. It is nothing you can associate other than just the truth that it brings with it. If you have your Bibles, I want you to turn over to the book of 2 Corinthians 9. You know how the book of Corinthians lays out. There are two books: 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. Just to set the stage for how this verse fits in, let me just give you a brief overview for those of you that maybe you've never been here before or you just started coming here a short time ago.

We know that those two books represent two great concepts. Paul writes these books, and in 1 Corinthians, we find the church at Corinth, the church that he's writing to, has some serious deficiencies. They really have some problems. They have lost their perspective. They have lost their concept of what God and what the Bible is all about. They're just completely off the wall with so many aspects that they're teaching and doing wrong. They've lost their balance, so to speak. So Paul, chapter by chapter, deals with them many times on multiple issues that they're messed up on.

Somewhere along the line, the church at Corinth sees the way they're going, and they repent. They ask God to forgive them, and they get back in fellowship. They say to Paul, "Hey, we really want to start doing this right." That's when he writes 2 Corinthians. Just like in 1 Corinthians, where every chapter he deals with them on an issue that they're really messed up on, in 2 Corinthians, chapter by chapter, he really focuses on the things that they really need to do to be the right kind of church that really fulfills the ministry. What it does for us, what it does for you and me, very simply, is it forms one of the greatest books in the Bible that chapter by chapter tells us exactly what we need to be focusing on, not only as a church, but as individuals. It defines almost every concept of what the ministry really is.

- In chapter 1, for instance, he talks about what it really means to suffer for Christ in the right way, how that you and I are to suffer for the ministry of Christ.
- In chapter 2, he focuses on how the key to our relationship is our forgiving spirit toward each other and for the people who do us wrong.
- In chapter 3, he talks about how if you want to have proof of your ministry, he shows you how to prove your ministry.
- In chapter 4, he defines what the ministry really is.
- In chapter 6, he lays out what you and I as Christians ought to be fellowshiping with, the true fellowship that we should be having.
- In chapter 7, he gives us the promises that we need to follow as we minister the Word of God.

Chapters 8 and 9, and this is where we're going to base our text this morning, but I have to give you the word of this before we come back to it. Chapters 8 and 9 are two chapters that are devoted to the heart of the minister. If you want to understand what the heart of the minister, you and I, who takes the Word of God and gives it to others, if you want to understand what that heart is, you've got to understand chapter 8 and 9.

- Chapter 10, he talks about the mind of the minister.
- Chapter 11, he talks about the wisdom of the minister.
- Chapter 12, he talks about how we need to have humility as we do the ministry.
- In chapter 13, he talks about the aspect of the brokenness of the minister, how that we always should carry that burden for other people.

Now, it's chapter 8 and 9 that we want to talk about because in chapter 8 and 9, we find the heart of the minister. To make a long story short, I'm doing all this to get to the one verse. He shows us that the heart of the minister is unconditional love in what we give to other people and what we give to God: unconditional love.

Unconditional love and unconditional giving in the Bible is defined by one word: it's the word charity. When you find the word charity in the Bible, you're going to find that it's a word that means unconditional giving of yourself, giving of your time, giving of your money, giving of whatever. There's no motive to it. It's totally and completely unconditional.

In fact, in 1 Timothy 1:5, the Bible says the end of the commandment is charity.

1 Timothy 1:5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

1 Corinthians 13:1, the whole chapter. Here again is where he gets them all, they're all completely confused on spiritual gifts. They're making spiritual gifts everything in the world. He comes down in that chapter and he says, "You know what? You can have all the great spiritual gifts in the world. You can have the gift of this and the gift of that. You can have all of the great gifts that you covet so much. But," he said, "if you don't have charity, none of them are worth anything." That's what the church at Corinth had gotten to. They were arguing about their great power, their great spiritual gifts, their great stained glass windows, their great everything that they have. But what they never got a hold of was the concept of unconditional love in the form of charity.

1 Corinthians 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Charity is the key. In fact, over there in 2 Peter 1:5-8, you're going to find that there are seven things. Remember our seven series we've come through? We haven't got to this one yet, but we will. There are seven things once you get saved you need to add to your relationship with Christ. The last one is charity.

2 Peter 1:5-8 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience

godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You're going to find something else. You're going to find that in all the new Bibles, when you come to the passages that put in charity, they take the word charity out and they put the word love in. You know why? Because they want you to lose the concept. There are many kinds of love. Love is a word that is so misused today. There are many definitions of the word love. You can love someone like a brother in Christ. You can love your sister. You can love your husband. You can love your wife. You can love your girlfriend. There are different kinds of love, but there's only one kind of charity. So putting the word love in for the word charity destroys the whole concept because anybody then can be left with their own definition of what they think love is. But when you have the word charity, there's no question about it. Because charity is what you and I should have, and it is a love for each other, a love for our children, a love for the things of God and the people of God and the things that we do without any ulterior motive.

I want to take 2 Corinthians 8, really 2 Corinthians 9 in particular here, and I want to talk about one concept about unconditional giving and love that we should have as Christians and how it relates to Christ coming into this world. This is a day, as I said before, we typically take this day and we celebrate the fact that 2,000-plus years ago in Bethlehem, Christ was born. We know that as Bible students, as the first coming of Christ. We understand that.

In 2 Corinthians 9, I want to give you a verse that you can just contemplate. When I want to think about spiritual things, when I want to just focus on what I need to focus on, it's a verse like this. Every time we have Christmas, every time we open up our presents, every time that we have all the things that Christmas brings, this verse comes to my mind, and it's verse 15. It simply says everything that needs to be said today. It simply says this:

2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

We're living in a time today of Christmas where everybody's going to get gifts. Let me ask you, and you've all been in here before, I know I have. Did you ever come to the place where you had to buy a gift for somebody, and you didn't really put any effort into it? You maybe got them in a gift exchange at work, or maybe your family does that, or you had somebody that you just had to get a gift to because you were going and they would be the only one. But you really didn't put a lot of thought into it. You went out and you got a gift, and it was the first thing you saw, and you never really thought if they would like it or not. It was just something that they would have something to open so you wouldn't feel.

Then you go to that place where you're at, and you give them that gift, and they open the gift up, and you're looking at it, and already you're starting to think, "Well, I probably should have put a little more thought into it." Then suddenly they give you their gift, and you open it up, and it blows you away. They have spent more, they have done more, and they have focused on exactly what you needed and what you wanted. Remember how foolish you felt when that happened? Remember how totally inadequate you felt, how embarrassed you were? How you gave to them

something that was minimal, and they gave to you something back that was just astronomical, something that was more than you could have hoped for. You didn't know what to say.

I have a feeling that when it comes to the concept of the gift that God has given us, that's how many of us are going to feel. The verse says, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." 1 Corinthians 8:3 says, "If any man loved God, the same is known of him." Love always identifies itself with the object in question. It always does. When somebody really loves somebody and cares for somebody, they give to them unconditionally. That's exactly what God did when He gave us His Son. The reality of God giving me that unspeakable gift is lost today.

1 Corinthians 8:3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

In the last couple of weeks, as we've been coming through the seven mysteries, we have been focusing on the two first mysteries. We talked about how God was manifested in the flesh. We talked about how Christ in you, the hope of glory, how the whole thing just builds around the concept of God's unspeakable gift, something, the reality of God giving to us. We talked about the lack of passion in Christians' lives, the lack of commitment, the lack of caring. It all comes back because, bottom line, at the end of the day, we don't understand the concept of what He's given to us in this gift that the Bible says is unspeakable.

Anytime I want a spiritual reality check, it's so easy for me to do. I just compare what He has given me with what I have given Him. It all comes to perspective very quickly.

V. The Unspeakable Gift: Christ's First and Second Coming

Christ entering the world is not just about the first coming of Christ. I think that Christmas cards and all of the spirit behind Christmas, even though it's good, I think it does exactly the opposite of what really needs to be done.

I saw a card the other day that said, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." Then it just trailed off with little points after it, to make its point about the first coming of Christ. That's a quotation from Isaiah 9. Truly in Isaiah 9:6 it says:

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

When you read the rest of that passage, the rest of that passage ties the first coming of Christ in with the second coming of Christ. You can't in the Bible separate the first coming and the second coming of Christ. You just can't. Because He came the first time to regather the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel rejected Him, so you and I, as the Bible says in Romans 11, who were the unnatural branches, got grafted into God and became part of God's program. But God yet wants to regain and reestablish the nation of Israel. He'll do that after the second coming of Christ.

Luke 2:14 is another one. You always hear this at Christmas where it says:

Luke 2:14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

You see it on Christmas cards, you see it on signs, you see it on TV when they want to give you a quick Merry Christmas type thing. Of course, again, that has nothing to do with the first coming of Christ. It says, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men." The men that use that verse, the people that quote that verse around Christmastime, have no idea that it runs back to Revelation 5, Isaiah 57. The peace that they're talking about there is the peace found in Psalms 122 where it says, "the peace at Jerusalem." That all is the second coming of Christ.

Psalms 122:6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.

The truth of the matter is, you can say, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men," but I'm going to tell you, there'll be no peace on earth till God's righteousness comes first.

I have actually read some stories how in World War I and World War II, the concept of Christmas and peace is so ingrained in us that we literally want to stop wars for a period of time at Christmas. The thinking is, nobody should die on Christmas. Nobody should get killed on Christmas. In World War I and World War II, when the Germans were in one trench and the Americans were in another, or in World War II they were in one fortification, and there was like two, three hundred yards between them, the German soldiers and the American soldiers themselves called their own alliance. There are a number of stories out, which I think are absolutely fascinating, how on the day before Christmas, or Christmas Eve day, and into that night, over those trenches in Verdun and Versailles and all of those places where they were fighting those pitched battles, and just the day before, hundreds of boys on both sides had given their lives for their causes.

You could hear the German soldiers singing Christmas carols in German, and the Americans would start singing them in America. There are actual documented cases where they were sneaking out in the middle of no man's land, trading whatever food they had or whatever they had, and giving each other Merry Christmas, and giving and sharing, and then going back and singing Christmas carols to each other. For that 24, 48-hour period of time, no shots were fired, nobody killed anybody, nobody died, and the two men who were enemies now for a moment of time were now brought together by a time in history that literally changed history. But the problem was, on December 26, they picked up their guns and they started killing each other again. Because the first coming of Christ didn't fix it. It's the second coming of Christ that will fix it. But you can't separate the first coming. You can't separate His birth from the second coming when He comes. You just can't. That's the great principle that you find taught all the way through the Bible when it comes to the aspect.

We've got a building in New York City called the UN, United Nations. The United Nations formally started around 1920. It wasn't called the United Nations; it was called the League of Nations. After World War I, there was so much devastation. There were so many hundreds of thousands of boys that were slaughtered that the leaders of this world said, "We need to put an end to war." So they got a bunch of nations together called the League of Nations, which after

World War II became the United Nations. On top of that building, they put a verse out of your King James Bible. It's a verse that says, it's out of Isaiah 2, and it says:

Isaiah 2:4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

There have been 158 wars since that building and that League of Nations, the United Nations, came into existence. You know why? Because the first coming of peace didn't solve it. We can talk about peace on earth all we want. There will be no peace on earth until the Prince of Peace comes back, and that takes place at the second coming of Christ. You cannot separate them.

So today, for your part, the rest of your day, with all this going on, and I want it to be a fun time, I want it to be a great time. I want it to be a time where you enjoy your family, where the kids enjoy all that they do. But the rest of your day, think about one concept: that unspeakable gift. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." That gift that God gave you and me is the reason why we have what we have today. When you sit down and enjoy your family, when you see your little kids laughing and all excited about their presents, their opening, when you see all of the things and all of the warmth that goes along with it, just remember that it's because of that unspeakable gift that we even have that with our families in this old world today.

VI. A Gift for the Children: The Bible

Now, kids, here's what I want you to do. Your moms can come up with you. I want all the kids to come up here. I'm going to sit right down here. Pat and Sonja have a little song they're going to do for you. Then I need my little elves to kind of help me here. Come right here and sit right here, right in front of the chair, right there. That's good. Get all this here. All my little singers, all my little people who sang their songs. All right, now Pat and Sonja, come on up here. This is good. This is good.

Now, Pat and Sonja. Everybody wave to Pat and Sonja. They are the people who really, all the time, make our services really special because they're a unique husband and wife group. She plays and he sings, and they just really make our church services. Because they love you unconditionally, they have a song that they have put together for you today that they're going to sing to you. It's one of my favorite songs. So I want you to listen, and then I'm going to talk to you for just a few minutes, and then I have a present for you, and then we're going to get to go home and go from there. Pat and Sonja, bless our hearts.

[Song: The Little Drummer Boy] They before the King, pa rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum. So to honor him, pa rum pum pum pum, when we come. Baby Jesus, pa rum pum pum pum, I am a poor boy too, pa rum pum pum pum. I have no gift to bring, pa rum pum pum pum, that's fit to give our King, pa rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum. Shall I play for you, pa rum pum pum pum, on my drum? Mary nodded, pa rum pum pum pum, the oxen lamb kept time, pa rum pum pum pum. I played my drum for him, pa rum pum pum pum, I played my best for him, pa rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum. And he smiled at me, pa rum pum pum pum, me and my drum.

Give them a hand, wasn't that wonderful? Thanks, guys. I was going to dress them up like little elves today. Okay, well, I have to ask you a question here first of all. I want to know how many? Oh, you do? Is this for me? "Hope, all your dreams come true." Oh, look who's on the front of this, it's Snow White. It cost me \$2,800 one time to meet her. Unforgettable. Should have married her.

Okay, now I have to ask this question because I want to know this. How many of you got up this morning and opened your presents already? Let me see your hands. Oh, and no, you didn't. That means she wanted to, but you wouldn't let her. How many are going to do it when you go home? Oh, good, that's wonderful.

Well, listen, here's what I want to do today. This is what we want to do today, and I want you to listen very carefully, just a few minutes, and we're going to be on our way. Because I don't want to take away from your Christmas. I want everything for the rest of your day to have fun. I'm glad that you got presents at home. I'm glad you're going to go home and rip them open and do all of those things. That's really a fun time, and I want that. I want you to go home with your mom and your dad and your grandpa and your grandma and just have a great time.

But the thing that I want you to remember is this, and I know you're little and I know you're young. So you may not understand everything I'm talking to you about. But I want to talk to you about the best gift anybody will ever give you. Your mom and dad love you more than anything else in this world. I know that because I know your mom and dad. Your mom and dad and I, we talk about you all the time, we pray about you all the time, and we just think you're great. That's why today when you go home you're going to have all the presents that you have. Your mom and dad love you. You heard me talk a little bit ago about how you love things without any kind of condition. You just love you because you're you. That's what your mom and dad, that's the way they love you. That's the way you need to love your mom and dad.

But as you get a little older, you're going to also understand that you need to love God the same way. Because you're going to realize that God loves you unconditionally. I know some of you already know that. I hear great stories about your memory verses that you all learn down there in Sunday school. I hear all of those great things, and I'm so proud of you. I'm never going to be a preacher who doesn't become one with his kids in my church. I know your names, I watch you, I talk with you. You're just as important to me as your mom and dad. Because someday, someday you're going to grow up in this church and you're going to take leadership and you're going to do things just like your mom and dad are doing now.

So you see, I want to, along with your mom and dad today, I want to give you a gift that when you go home today and you open up everything else. Mom and dad, sometime today, probably need to just sit you down with everything and look at everything you have. Then look at the gift that me and your mom and dad are going to give you this morning in church. You need to say, "You know what? All these are fun. All these are great. All these are wonderful, and you always deserve them. But the best gift you got this year was this book, this one right here that your preacher and your mommy and your daddy gave you in church this morning." So that's what I really want to give you.

So we're going to, who's got them? Okay, come on up here. Now don't open them yet. We're going to open them. Everybody's going to open them at the same time. So just wait. But we got, I want to talk to you about it before we open it. Don't open them yet. You're like me. I just told my wife not to wrap mine so I could just see them all week. Did everybody get one? Everybody got one? Okay, now listen up here. I'm sorry. I can't hear you. Who are we missing? Okay.

Now look, don't open it yet. This is something that maybe right now, because most of you can't read. I had a woman this week when I told her what I was going to do, she said to me, "Why are you doing that? Those kids can't even read." And I asked her, "When you played the Wicked Witch of the West in The Wizard of Oz, was that, was it?" No, I didn't know that. I know that, but someday you will. This is something that will last really the rest of your life. It doesn't matter when I give it to you now. It only matters that it will last the rest of your life. I want you to know that your pastor, along with your mom and your dad, loved you enough today that with all the other presents you got, this one was the most important.

Okay, now you can go ahead and open it up. Go ahead. Open them up. Open them up. Go ahead. You can open them out of the box. Take them out of the box. Oh, boy. Look at those. We don't do nothing cheap around here. Not when it comes to you guys. You can take it out of the box. We're going to hold them up here and show everybody in just a second. Did you take them out of the box? You need help? Open them up. We have some kids who are experts at opening them up. We'll get them all open. Well, those are nice. We got any left? I want one of those. Oh, well, bless your heart. I love you so much.

Everybody turn around and show everybody what you got. The best gift that I could give you would be a Word of God. It's got a little flap on it. It's got big print in it, even though you can't read yet. I've been reminded twice this week. But you'll keep this the rest of your life and you can start bringing it to church. I just wanted you to know I love you. And I want you to know that it is special. I wanted you to know that all day today now when you open everything else up and you have... Well, I love you too. Bless your heart. My goodness. They're NIVs, kid. They're the best Bible you can get. Is it really? Well, no, I just know now that I just want you to be happy. I'm telling you, this is without a doubt, guys, this is the best present that you'll ever have. Want me to snap that for you? Okay. Let's turn around and hold them up and show everybody. Show everybody what you got out here. Hold your Bibles up. Oh, those are really nice. Really nice.

Well, kids, let's all come around and get... We're going to close out with prayer and then we're going to be done. Everybody, all the kids come on around here and let's just have a prayer together. Let's all hold hands together and let's just thank God for His unspeakable gift. Everybody grab somebody's hand. Thank you so much for your music today and for all that you did and for being such a special part of our time today. We just love you so much. Let's all hold hands here. Come on. Get your mamas in here too so everybody can... We'll grab hands here and let's all pray. Let's bow our heads now. Okay. That's good. Here we go.

Father, we thank you for today. We thank you for all of our kids in our church. We thank you for their moms and their dads. We thank you, Father, for most of all that of all the things that we could give each other today, you gave us the greatest gift. That greatest gift was your Son and the

Word of God. Today, Lord, as these little kids have fun with all their presents, let Mom and Dad reinforce that the greatest gift they could ever have is the Bible that we gave them this morning. Father, we just thank you and praise you for all of that. Thank you for our time today. May the rest of this day be bathed in the light of our time this morning with your Word. We'll thank you and praise you in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen. Merry Christmas, everybody.