



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

**Sermon for Christmas Eve Candlelight**

December 24, 2025

# Gift Wrapping

## Luke 2:1-20

<sup>1</sup> And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. <sup>3</sup> So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>5</sup> to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. <sup>6</sup> So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. <sup>7</sup> And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup> Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. <sup>10</sup> Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. <sup>11</sup> For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

<sup>15</sup> So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. <sup>17</sup> Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. <sup>18</sup> And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. <sup>19</sup> But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

Christmas is all about gifts. That's why we like Christmas so much, isn't it? We all like to receive gifts, don't we? And most of us like giving gifts to others. It makes us feel good to brighten someone's day with a gift. So, as we've gathered here tonight, we do so to



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focus on the greatest Christmas gift of all.

You've seen the slogan: "Jesus is the reason for the season." It's printed on bumper stickers and sweatshirts and in a host of other places. After all, Christmas is Jesus' birthday. And didn't we come here tonight to give our gifts of praise to the newborn King? Didn't we come here to please the Christ Child through our singing and even through our offerings? Don't we, like the little drummer boy, want to give a gift to Jesus? Of course we do. Yet, we have nothing to give worthy of the King of kings and Lord of lords. And if we think that we'll give ourselves to Him, or our hearts to Him, what kind of gift is that? Because of our inborn sin, our old dirty dead unbelieving hearts are certainly not the kind of gift we should be giving to "the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay."

But fear not, beloved, for Jesus is not the reason for the season – you are. You have been gathered here not so much to give, but to receive. You've been brought here tonight to receive a Gift from God. We probably wouldn't choose the gift we're given. It isn't wrapped in pretty paper. It isn't in the biggest box, or even the smallest. It doesn't have a bow on it. Rather, the gift we receive tonight is described in these words: "And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Yes, the gift we receive here tonight is that Child that was born – Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

This Gift comes wrapped, but in strips of rags. He's laid in a manger, not a cradle. Not exactly the place *we'd* go looking for a Christmas gift is it? Yet, here He is. The Savior of the world. God has given you Himself, His only begotten Son. God Himself has taken on human flesh and been born of a virgin. And, as He was born, so Jesus lived. The night of His birth, there was no place for Him. Later, He would say of Himself, "The Son of Man has no place to lay His head." And, after He died on the cross for the sins of the world, He was once again wrapped in cloths and laid in a borrowed tomb (Lk. 23:50, 52-53). But, He was not some useless Gift simply to be discarded, like the colored paper you'll rip from the packages under your tree tomorrow. No, this Gift reclaimed His life, reasserted His importance when He rose from the dead, and even now lives and reigns in heaven, giving you His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

So, you see, *you* are the reason for the season. Jesus exchanged His glory for humility. He became poor so that you might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9). He exchanged Himself for you as He took your place on the cross, suffering the punishment you so richly deserve at the cost of "His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death."

And so you received in your Baptism a robe of righteousness, for you were intimately connected with Christ's death and resurrection. In that holy washing, you were given Christ's righteousness, His holiness, as your very own, thus His death became your death and His resurrection became your resurrection.

And Christ continues to come into our midst to give us these gifts. He comes to us in the preaching of His Word, pouring into our ears and hearts the forgiveness of our sins.



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He comes to us in the bread and wine of His Supper, giving us His very Body and Blood to eat and to drink. In these precious gifts He comforts us with the very peace of God.

Yes, we all like to give and receive Christmas gifts. Despite the difficulties you may have endured this year, rejoice in the gift you've been given. Rejoice in the Christ-Child, for He is born to save you from your sins. Rejoice in that forgiveness, for it is yours on account of that Child's suffering and death. Rejoice that He continues to give you the gifts which bring true and eternal peace with God. In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen