



[Pastor Keith GeRue](#)

Sermon for Christmas Eve Candlelight

December 24, 2024

How Much??

Luke 2:1-20; Titus 2:11-14

¹ In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 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. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



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Maybe this has happened to you: you open up a gift and find that the giver has accidentally left the receipt in the package. And not a gift receipt with the price hidden, but the real thing. And you can see what they paid for your gift - maybe in disappointment at how little they spent on you! Or the opposite - surprised at how *much* they spent on you; how much they thought you were worth. And maybe that's a little embarrassing, if you don't think anyone should spend that much on you.

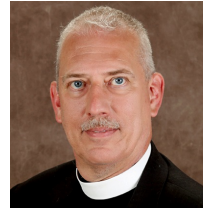
Tonight, we heard again how much God loves you and was willing to give, or pay, for you. And it is no disappointment, no little price. As creator of not only the world, but the universe and all there is, all that exists, He could have given any or all of that for you. But that was not enough. But what is there that is greater than all that? Than all that exists? Well, there is only one thing: God Himself. So, God went into His innermost being, into what He is as God, and took what is dearest to Him - His Son, and gave Him as the price for you and me. To redeem us from our bondage to sin and death, so that we could have peace. Peace with God. Peace in our hearts and minds.

That's what the angels announced to the shepherds: ***For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.***

Or in other words, the Lord - the Lord who created all things, the Lord who called Abraham, the Lord who rescued His people from slavery in Egypt, the Lord who came down on Mount Sinai, the Lord who led His people through the wilderness and into the Promised Land - that Lord, *the* Lord, is now lying as a baby in a manger! And because He is, glory to God on high and peace on earth to men.

Because this baby isn't going to stay a baby. He's going to grow up and then do something even more surprising than lying as a baby in a manger - He's going to hang from a cross. The Lord who created the trees will hang from one. The Lord who created all men will die at their hands. The Lord who gives breath to all life will breathe His last. For you. To redeem, that is, to *purchase* you. That is the price He will pay for your freedom. To pay for your peace. His death, your life.

Now, maybe you think God overpaid - if not for you, then certainly for the irritating person who lives next door to you, or bothers you at work, or cuts you off in traffic, or drives you crazy at school, or takes 5,000 items into the 10 items or less lane at the supermarket! They're not worth that much!



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You think. But God thinks they are. And the people who think you're not worth that much . . . they're wrong, too. That baby in the manger proves it. When the shepherds looked into the manger, when we still do so today through the Word and the story Luke tells us, we see *God's receipt*; how much He not only was *willing* to pay, but DID pay for us - that He gave His only-begotten Son. No matter what else you open this Christmas, no matter how much someone paid for your gift, you're not going to beat that.

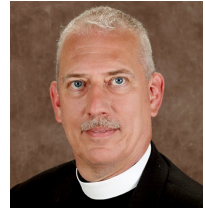
So maybe that can help us look at others a little differently. Maybe that can help us look at *ourselves* a little differently. Unless God is wrong and made a horrible miscalculation! But I don't think He did. At least, I'm not going to be the one to tell Him that! You?

So maybe your value, your worth, your self-esteem, isn't in what you do, your accomplishments, the name you make for yourself, how high you can climb the ladder, or how popular or admired you are. And not by how much others think you're worth, or how they talk about you or treat you. And not by how good you are, how much you're improving, or, that your value has gone down because, well, 2021 wasn't such a good year for you, sin-wise. You messed up pretty bad. Again. And maybe again and again. But your value isn't in any of that, because it came BEFORE any of that. That long before you were even born, God knew you, and thought you worth the life of His Son. That's the receipt you get to see tonight, in the manger.

And true for you, that's true for others, too. Jesus is their receipt as well. Which can help us look at them a little differently. I think that's what Saint Paul was getting at in the Epistle we heard tonight, when He said that ***the grace of God*** - or, the gift of God, Jesus! - ***has appeared, bringing salvation for all people***. Not just good people, or people that don't irritate us, or people the world thinks worth something - but for all people. And knowing that, knowing how much God thinks *they're* worth, and how much He think we're worth, maybe we can start thinking like He does. ***Renouncing***, Paul said, ***ungodliness and worldly passions*** - all the ways and thinking of the world and its values - and start living differently. Godly lives. Like Father, like Son, lives. Lives of love and good works for others. Not because it's the Law and we have to, but because we saw the receipt, and . . . wow! That's how much God spent for me? For them? Then *maybe* . . .

What do you think? That ***to us*** not only ***a child is born***, but ***a son is given***. That's a great ***light*** that helps us who ***walk in the deep darkness*** of this world see a lot differently. The light of God's Son in the manger. The light of God's Word spoken by the angels. The light of God's receipt and the astounding realization of just how much He loves you.

And now that love will enter not only your ears and the eyes of your minds, but your mouths as we receive the Body and Blood that once laid in a manger, that once hung on



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a cross, but then rose from the dead, and now is here and given to you. For Jesus is not only the gift that keeps on giving, but the gift that keeps on *being* given to you as He gives you Himself and His forgiveness and His life and all that He is and has. That's the gift He is for you. That's the gifts He has for you.

And while I don't know what you think, He does not think He overpaid. And while Christmas might please you, it pleases Him even more. Because that great joy the angels announced? It's *God's* joy, given to you. For He wants you to have a Merry Christmas. So, He sent His Son. He left the receipt there for you to see. He *wants* you to know how much He paid for you, how much He thinks of you. So that you'll join in telling the whole world that Jesus Christ is Born. Which sounds like a really good idea. So, let's do that now as we sing *Go Tell It on the Mountain* . . .

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen