

Three Christmas Presents You Can Open Right Now!! Luke 2:1-20, Dec. 24, 2025

It's Christmas Eve—almost time to open the presents.

A little boy wanted a watch very badly for Christmas. Each day, the boy asked about his watch—"Dad can I please have a watch? Mom I really need a watch", Every time he opened his mouth he was asking again or talking about a watch for Christmas. Finally the father told the boy that if he mentioned "watch" one more time, he wouldn't get one. So the boy kept quiet about his present--until that night at supper. Every night before supper, some member of the family repeated a Bible verse before asking the blessing. The boy was eager to share the verse he had memorized that day, so just before they prayed, he recited Mark 13:37—"And what I say unto you, I say unto all--Watch."

According to a survey by the Roper Organization (who also claim to know when we are sleeping and know when we're awake) 68% of Americans will open presents each year. What they don't pretend to know is when and where you will open the gifts.

Where will you open your presents? Some you open at home, taken from your stocking or from under the tree. Others at grandma & grandpa's house, or the home of some other extended family or friends. Some Christmas gifts even get opened here at church.

When will you open your presents? Ah, that is the all-important question. For some that depends on when Santa drops by. You might be one of those parents who let the kids open all their gifts on Christmas Eve. Or perhaps your TRADITION IS TO make the kids wait until after breakfast on Christmas morning to tear into the wrapping paper. But like it or not, waiting is part of the game of gift-giving.

What if I offered you some Christmas presents you can open right here, right now? No, I didn't get special permission from Santa. I don't have any 4 wheelers or DVD players or WEE'S for you to unwrap early. You'll have to wait to unwrap those kinds of gifts. But there are some Christmas gifts you can unwrap right now, without any wait. **In Luke 2:10-14, I find 3 of these gifts God gave us through the birth of Jesus.** *See if you can find them as I read Luke 2:1-20.*

SO WHAT IS THE FIRST GIFT I SEE...FREEDOM FROM FEAR. "Do not be afraid..." *At some time, somewhere, everybody is scared of something. But we're not all scared of the same things.*

A recent survey asked people to list their # 1 fear. The fear of death was # 7. What was the # 1 fear? **Speaking before an audience.**

Some fears are easy to cure: if you're scared to fly, stay on the ground. Afraid of snakes? They're easy to avoid if you really try. *But other fears you must face.*

Being afraid of the future won't stop the future from happening. Fear of losing those you love won't allow you to hold on to them longer. Eventually everybody dies, no matter how it frightens you. How do you handle these kinds of fear? When that angel says: Do not be afraid, he's also saying through that Baby in the manger, **God offers you the gift of freedom from fear.** What fears does Christ offer us freedom from? **Time permits me to only mention two:**

Fear of the future. There's another word for fear of the future- WORRY. **Worry is being afraid of what might happen, or of what we are convinced will happen.** Of course, nobody but God knows what will happen, but that doesn't keep us from expecting the worst. How will I handle what will happen? What if it's too much for me to handle? What if I fail or fall? What if I lose what I have—lose those I love-- How can I face it? **The Baby in Bethlehem's manger grew up to be a Man Who promised us freedom from the fear of the future:**

In Matthew 6 Jesus says, **"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?... 32...For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you. 34Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."**

Jesus says Don't worry about tomorrow—the same God Who watches out for the rest of creation keeps a close eye on you, too. Jesus was born to remind us of God's love for us—a love that frees us from fear by giving us confidence that God can take care of all our tomorrows. **That includes another fear He offers us freedom from:**

FEAR OF DEATH. Death is for many the ultimate unknown fear. Fear rises in our minds when we lose a loved one to death. Fear can raise its ugly head when we think about taking our last breath, closing our eyes the last time on earth. That kind of fear often fuels our grief. **Will I really ever see my dead loved one again? What will happen to me when I die?**

Jesus met that kind of fear in John 11, when two sisters named Martha and Mary lost their brother Lazarus. But Jesus offered

them the gift of freedom from the fear of death in John 11:25-26 ... ***“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die...”***

Jesus says You don't need to fear death if you believe in Me, because death isn't the end of life—it is the beginning of everlasting life! On the other side of death's door I am there, ready to welcome you into life that never ends!

Believing in Christ will not take away your fear of heights or fear of public speaking. But faith in Him can free you from the fear of the future and fear of death. You don't have to wait—you can open that gift right now—IF YOU BELIEVE.

THE 2ND GIFT YOU CAN OPEN TONITE IS... THE JOY OF SALVATION ...*I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord...*

Christmas is supposed to be a season of joy. But joy is not always easy to come by, even at Christmas. Why is it so hard to be happy? Why do good times never last? Why is every bright day followed by dark clouds? Because the world is infected with a deadly virus---***a deadly virus called sin***. Sin mars every beautiful thing in this world. Sin puts black marks on your record, that stain of guilt on your conscience. Sin is what ruins this world, what robs you of the joy you could have if only there were some way to cure the world, cure our own hearts of this dark disease of selfishness, pride, rebellion against God.

The angel announces that the birth of this Baby will bring great joy, because this Baby will be the cure we're looking for. He is the Savior, Who will bring back to us a genuine joy because He will save us from our sins. **Another angel had announced concerning Mary:**

Then we hear in Matthew 1:21, ***“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”***

We've heard those words so much they don't really register, but when a Jew in those days heard those words, their hearts might skip a beat with joy. They had been looking for a Savior for a long time---Somebody Who would rescue them from their enemies. They had hoped for the Lord to return and reign over them for centuries, to dethrone these pagans who ruled them with an iron fist. Could this Baby be the One? **Could He really be our Savior and Lord, wrapped up in one tiny Gift waiting to be unwrapped and set loose on the world?** That would be something to get excited about! That would be good news of great joy indeed! Vs. 20 records that they went to Bethlehem, found Jesus, and were filled with joy after having seen Him.

You and I know the rest of the story. Eventually Jesus does reveal Himself as Savior—but not the kind of Savior they expected. He did not come to rescue them from Rome, but to rescue them from sin. He did not come to dethrone Caesar, but to set up God's kingdom in the lives of those who believed in Him. Many of His own people rejected Him. But there were some who discovered Jesus really was the Savior.

Jesus brought with Him the gift of acceptance and adoption by God—the joy of being forgiven of sin, the joy of receiving a brand new start in life, the joy of belonging to the family of God. He offers us the wonderful gift of joy that comes from being cured from the disease of sin.

A group of prospectors set out from Bannock, Montana in search of gold. They went through many hardships, and several of their little company died en route. Defeated, discouraged and downhearted, the prospectors headed back to the city. As they tethered out the limping ponies on a creek side, one of the men casually picked up a little stone from the creek bed. He called to his buddy for a hammer and upon cracking the rock, he said, “It looks as though there may be gold here.” The two of them panned gold the rest of the afternoon and managed to realize twelve dollars worth. The entire little company panned gold the next day in the same creek and realized fifty dollars, a great sum in those days. They said to one another; “We've struck it rich!” But they needed more equipment and supplies to finish mining the gold, so they saddled up and headed back to Bannock vowing not to breathe a word concerning this gold strike. They secretly set about reequipping themselves with supplies for another prospecting trip. When they got ready to go back, they were surprised to find three hundred men following them. Who had told them? No one! The writer of the book accounted thus for the incident: “Their beaming faces betrayed the secret!”*

You can't keep joy a secret. If you have it, it shows. Do you have joy this NIGHT? You can if you open God's gift of salvation in Christ. You don't have to carry your guilt—you can experience the joy of forgiveness for any and all your sins. You can start all over, with a clean slate before God—you can know the joy of being born again. You can experience the joy of belonging in the family of God. That's the good news or Gospel in a nutshell. You don't have to wait—you can open that Christmas present of joy right now through repentance and faith. Are you ready to open your gift from God? **The angel offers us one more gift from God:**

WHAT IS THAT GIFT? A CONTINUAL GIFT OF PEACE ...”Glory to God, peace on earth, good will toward ALL...”
Christmas is a strange time of year. That's when people celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace by buying toy rockets,

toy submarines, artillery, and plastic hand grenades for their children.

We sing sleep in heavenly peace but Christmas is often the least peaceful time of the year. Wars are still fought around the globe—but they're also fought in the mall, at the school, even at home. The one time when God promises us peace is still one of the most stressful times of the year. And yet here is this angel, promising peace on earth, peace between God and humanity. The Baby born in Bethlehem he says will offer you peace that never ends. We sigh and stare out wistfully into space and think that will be the day.

And yet that gift of peace is available to you right now. That peace is not necessarily a change in your circumstances, but a calm that can fill your mind and heart even during the worst storm—a contentment that poverty or plenty cannot take away---a sense that God is in control, no matter what happens. That kind of peace is not something you work up, or earn—**it is a gift from God, a gift you can unwrap TONIGHT, a gift that is bound up in the birth of Christ.**

Maybe you need to unwrap that peace for yourself TONITE. Maybe you're not sure you're at peace with God RIGHT NOW. Maybe Christmas has become the season of stress instead of the season of peace. Why don't you go ahead and decide to unwrap that gift of peace He offers you? You don't have to wait. He gave the gift of peace when He sent His Son. All you have to do is unwrap the gift—UNWRAP IT AND CLAIM IT!!

Dr. James Dobson relates a story of an elderly woman named Stella Thornhope who was struggling with her first Christmas alone. Her husband had died just a few months prior from cancer. Now, several days before Christmas, she felt terribly alone—so much so she decided she was not going to decorate for Christmas.

Late that afternoon the doorbell rang, and there was a delivery boy with a box. He said, "Mrs. Thornhope?" She nodded. He said, "Would you sign here?" As she signed the paper she asked, "**What's in the box?" The young man laughed and opened up the flap, and inside was a little puppy.** The delivery boy picked up the squirming pup and explained, "This is for you, Ma'am. He's six weeks old, completely housebroken." The young puppy began to wiggle in happiness at being released from captivity."Who sent this?" Mrs. Thornhope asked.

The young man set the animal down and handed her an envelope and said, "*It's all explained here in this envelope, Ma'am. The dog was bought last July while its mother was still pregnant. It was meant to be a Christmas gift to you.*" In desperation she again asked, "*Who sent me this puppy?*" As the young man turned to leave, he said, "*Your husband, Ma'am. Merry Christmas.*"

She opened up the letter from her husband. He had written it three weeks before he died and left it with the kennel owners to be delivered with the puppy as his last Christmas gift to her. *The letter was full of love and encouragement and admonishments to be strong. He vowed he was waiting for the day when she would join him. He had sent her this young animal to keep her company until then.*

She wiped away the tears, put the letter down, and then remembering the puppy at her feet, she picked up that golden furry ball and held it to her neck. Then she looked out the window at the lights that outlined the neighbor's house, and she heard from the radio in the kitchen the strains of "*Joy to the World, the Lord has Come.*" Suddenly Stella felt the most amazing sensation of peace washing over her. *Her heart felt joy and a wonder greater than the grief and loneliness she had been feeling.*

"Little fella," she said to the dog, "it's just you and me. But you know what? There's a box down in the basement I'll bet you'd like. It's got a little Christmas tree in it and some decorations and some lights. And there's a manger scene down there. Let's go get it." -

God sent His Son to be born in Bethlehem to give you some special gifts---**FREEDOM, FROM FEAR—THE JOY OF SALVATION—PEACE THAT LASTS.** You don't have to wait any longer to open those gifts—you can come this evening, hold out your empty hands, and He will fill them.

Won't you come unwrap the gifts He has GIVEN YOU TONIGHT THROUGH HIS SON JESUS?

Amen.