

# “The Blood that Jesus Shed for Me”

By Chris Ulrich

Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Good to see everybody this morning. I appreciate the music; I appreciate your style, this morning, Malcolm. Could you just stand up here? (Malcolm was wearing a green jacket with red slacks) I didn't even know you had red pants, but, I tell you what, very stylish, and very Christmas appropriate, I've got to say. Appreciate that. Good to see everybody this morning, and I know it doesn't look like Christmas out there, yet, but, it felt like it a little yesterday morning, we got a very little dusting, here. But, not much; not very much at all. The forecast is for a little bit warmer than usual. Yes, after the last couple of years—anybody that was here the last couple of years, I know; if you haven't—you remember, two years ago, all I can say is, “Oh, my God.” That was the coldest, snowiest, windiest winter I've ever seen in my life, and I'm from western Mass. I mean, I gets cold! It gets cold out there, we get a lot of snow, but, that was something; that was something. But, not to dwell on that, not to dwell on that.

The theme of the month has been, “He Gave Gifts to Men.” You don't have to stand, but I'm going to ask us all to read that together, this has been our theme of the month:

***Ephesians 4:7-8** But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*

Thank you. So, we are getting close to the end of 2015, and, again, the theme of the month, it's appropriately titled, “He Gave Gifts to Men.” I know that, traditionally, December, it's a month of giving and receiving, and there's nothing wrong with that. But, Christianity is more than about traditions; it's about living this life all the time. Our brother, Parrish Lee, who is in Baltimore visiting family this week, he talked about the gifts of God these past couple of weeks, and shared about how God brings us deliverance, and takes away those things which held us captive. He also shared about the life of Christ, and how everything he said and did had, and has, significance. And that's past and present tense. There were no wasted moments. In other words, Jesus didn't come here just to hang around and kill time, and do something here that was short-lived, but something that was on-going; something that was a permanent everlasting difference in *our* lives, and the lives of anybody that's going to come afterwards.

But, right now, I'm going to ask Brother Jose G. if he could make his way up, and I'm going to ask him if he could lead us in a prayer this morning.

**Jose:** Heavenly Father, God, we want to thank You, Jesus, for preparing our hearts to hear your Word, Lord. God, that is the most important thing that You have given us, and You left it behind, Lord, is Your Word, Lord. Jesus, we pray, God, that we would put it in our hearts; keep it in there, Lord Jesus. Lord, we ask, Jesus, that You will bless us, Lord God. We ask that You bless this messenger, Lord Jesus. We ask, Lord God, that Your blood, Your Spirit, Lord God, will abound in us, Lord Jesus. God, we claim the guys that's here, God, that they may be leaders of their homes, God, and lead their children. And us, Lord God, as people, as adults, that we would take You with us, no matter where we go, Lord Jesus. Help us, God, to be great examples. Lead us, Lord Jesus. We need Your love; we need Your presence in our life, Lord. Shake us up, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you.

So, there's three points, that are going to be the main points of the message, this morning, and the first one is: “Jesus Is the Only Reason for the Season,” and I think, Malcolm, along with your outfit

this morning, you must have seen that, since you mentioned that, earlier, about that He is the reason for the season. The second is going to be, "We Need to Hold to Jesus, and Not to the Things of the World." And the last point is, "Joy to the World."

## **Point 1: Jesus Is the Only Reason for the Season**

**Isaiah 44:1-10** *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, My servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and His redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside Me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even My witnesses. Is there a God beside Me? yea, there is no God; I know not any. They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing?*

I know that's a bit of a long passage, but that will be the longest passage that we read from this morning, but it won't be the only one. But, "Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and His redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside Me there is no God." So, now we hear blasphemy of Jesus' name constantly, and then the same people turn around and say, "Oh, there is no God." Evolution is a very commonly taught belief among populations of people. The Bible is practically thrown out of supposed institutions of higher learning. Others are angry at God, for whatever reason. The list goes on.

This doesn't sound like a Christmas message, but, bear with me. The scripture from Isaiah might sound a little pushy, when you think about it, but God's not messing around in establishing who He is. The reason it might sound a little bit pushy is because, as a society, we've gotten so much, we've tried to water down the Word of God so much that any declaration that has any force sounds like an imposition. It sounds like somebody's trying to force themselves upon us. Well, God is the Creator, and Jesus is His name, and there's no if's and's or but's about it. This is not something to, like, force upon people, but it is something, because God is a gentleman; God does not force Himself upon people. He stands at the door and he knocks, and he says, "If any man will listen, I will come in and I will sup with him." (Revelation 3:20) But it also sounds like a God a lot of people don't want to listen to. But, we're still talking about Jesus is the only reason for the season.

This has really stood out to me here recently. This is a verse that, I have to say, it's convicting, because there's been plenty of times that I've mentioned the name of other religions. And this isn't about knocking other religions; this isn't about that at all. This is God speaking:

**Exodus 23:13** *And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.*

Well, that's pretty profound. Because, I have to say, that, throughout the course of my lifetime, as a Christian, sure I've mentioned them. I don't pray to them; I don't worship them; Jesus is the only

God. But God isn't pulling any pinches, as the old expression goes, and it's no different now. The names of other gods, though, isn't significant, because even the Ten Commandments states that we are to have no other gods before Him (Exodus 20:3). That doesn't mean we go looking for a fight, or we be disrespectful, but, it's about being fully persuaded in our minds that Jesus is the only way.

We're going to look at a verse, and this is something that's worth learning. I mean, I know that we've got people that are at varying stages of their walk with God, but these are foundational verses. These are things to put in your tool box. These are things to remember, because, when you come into contact with different people, and you're going to come into contact with a lot of people outside the faith, these are things to know that we stand on.

**John 14:6** *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Now, I know that the theme of the month is about gifts, so, what kind of gift is knowing that Jesus is the only reason for the season? What kind of gift is it to know that there are a lot of people who have chosen an ungodly path in this world? What kind of gift is it to know that we're the only ones who are right? Now, I hope you heard that. I hope you heard that, because it is meant to be a little bit sarcastic, and it is meant to be a little bit thought-provoking. But, sometimes that's how the non-religious world sees us, and they make excuses not to follow Jesus. So, how can we change that? Well, I have to say, I honestly don't know, or have a perfect solution for that. But, if people want to criticize us about being certain that Jesus is the only way in this life, then their argument is with God, and not us. It's not about us saying, "We're right! Everybody else is wrong! It's just us!" That's not it at all; it's about saying Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life." And we get on board with Him. We have to do what his commandments are. We have to live by His standards, and God blesses us in return. This is not just a one-way relationship, where God just forces Himself, and forces His commandments, and makes it extremely difficult. Even Christ Himself said, "**Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; ... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**" (Matthew 11:29-30) This is the easiest way, and I'm not saying there aren't hardships in this life. There are; there are tragedies, there are injuries, there is sadness, there's depression, there's sickness, and on and on and on. I know Kirk had just mentioned—and I appreciate you putting that together about the caroling last night; we had a good time out there. We drove around. It was a little more adventurous than I expected, I will say that. But, it was good. It was definitely worthwhile. But, he had a furnace go out, and that's going to cost him a pretty penny. I just had a roof that I told you last month that I put my foot through when I was up cleaning the gutters, and that was a pretty penny, but, thank God it got done. But, what I mean, my main point is, there are things that come along, unexpected costs, unexpected events that sometimes deter us, and sometimes sidetrack us, but, ultimately, we have to look at it like, Jesus *is* the only reason for the season. But, we also have to look at it like, we aren't the ones who wrote the Bible. It's about keeping God's commandments. So, if people want to criticize that, to get back to that point, their argument, again, it's with God, it's not with us.

## **Point 2: We Need To Hold To Jesus and Not the Things of the World**

Personally, I really like this time of year. I like all the decorations and lights and gift exchanges, and so on and so forth. I've always liked manger scenes; I appreciate the fact that Victory hospital, or Vista East has a manger scene at the corner of Glen Flora and Sheridan. If you haven't seen it, it's beautiful! I mean, I would have to say, it's one of the best in the county, I'd have to say. Like I mentioned earlier, I grew up in western New England, and it's a pretty mountainous area, but we get real Christmas trees, and, you know, like, my dad would just go out in the woods, and just cut one down—now, I'm not

advising that. I know it's regulations and these kind of things, but, it really gave a nice fragrance in the house, you know. We'd keep it in there for a few weeks, and, just always a fun time of year. I guess I would have to say that. And there's nothing wrong with any of those things.

**1 John 2:15-17** *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

I'm not saying that gift exchanges or decorating a Christmas tree, or having a Christmas tree, or *not* having a Christmas tree, or going Christmas caroling is loving the world. And, like I said, a group of us went last night, and had a really good time. And, I believe it blessed a lot of other people, too. That's really the important thing; that's what it was all about. And, I shared some childhood memories about the festivities of this time of year, and I believe that cheers most people up. But, we're not supposed to attach ourselves to any physical deity, or a splinter of the cross, or a shrine or an image, or even the Dead Sea Scrolls, for that matter, and think that that's going to replace our relationship with God. That relationship with God is a spiritual thing, and it's an ongoing thing. And even in Hebrews 11:6, it says, "...he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." We can't just accidentally find a relationship with God, and think that that's going to last. Or, if there's no seeking, there's not going to be any finding. I'm here to say, I think everybody here is pretty well aware of that, too. We're not supposed to cling to the things of the world. This is one of those things where, there's nothing wrong with having possessions, there's nothing wrong with having some nice things, there's nothing wrong with having some belongings, but it's not a matter of, again, clinging to those things, or thinking that—you know, I'm going to share something real quickly, as it relates to idolatry: When Moses, in the Old Testament, passed away, now this was at the end of the Book of Deuteronomy, it says that God buried him in a place where no man knows where the sepulcher is to this day. Now, Moses, if you look, and understand, as far as the Old Testament and New Testament connection, was the intercession for the children of Israel in the Old Testament. In other words, he was a man of God that was like top of the line. I mean, whatever way you want to put it, but the one thing is—and this is, I'm going to share an opinion, but I'm going to share it in hopes that it does make a point, because this is not a doctrinal opinion, but—if he wasn't buried by God, I firmly believe that people would have dug up the body and worshipped that body, saying... The same with Christ, and Christ was ascended. Because you have to look at it from the standpoint of, "Oh, I've got a splinter of the cross," or, "I've got this, you know, fragment that was on the ground at the time that Christ was... This speck of dust, here." And think, "Oh, I keep that in my pocket, and I pray to it." It's like, that's not the kind of thing we're talking about—you can't hold onto those things and think, "This is my relationship with God."

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18** *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Now, as I said before, I know I'm in a room of people who are at various stages. Some are much younger, some are older, some in between, and, whether we like it or not, time does pass by. I have to say that, as Christians, it's not a matter of, like, dwelling in the past. It's a funny commercial, by the way, I'll just share this, that—and, you know what? I know it's a beer commercial; I get it—but, I'm just going to say this, there's a guy, Troy Aikman, he was a quarterback in the NFL. Well, there's a guy that comes

up to him, and says, “Oh, yeah, I remember when you were in the league, and all those touchdown passes,” and Troy’s like, “Yeah, I don’t dwell on the past.” Then, all of the sudden, his cell phone goes off, and it’s like, “Touchdown, Tory Aikman! Touchdown, Troy Aikman!” Then, the owner of the store, and the customer, look at him, and Troy Aikman’s like, “I dwell in the past.” And I kind of like that, because it’s like, okay, you know, he’s sort of laughing at himself. I appreciate that. I think we all could use a good laugh at ourselves from time to time. But, the truth of the matter is, we can’t dwell on the past; we can’t live there. There’s nothing wrong with having recollections; there’s nothing wrong with having good memories. And I think that’s part of life. I think you have to. But, if we look only at the things which are seen, which are temporary, we’re going to get sidetracked; we’re going to lose track of what God wants for us. If we look at those things which are not seen—I know that’s hard to do—it’s not about saying this is an easy life. It’s not easy to just say—like, Linda, what you mentioned when you were up here earlier, and I appreciate—sometimes people just make an off-hand comment, but what you had mentioned about, like, we’re going to have a mansion. The Bible says, “In My house are many mansions.” (John 14:2) Christ said, “If it were not so, I would have told you.” I appreciate stuff like that, because I think it adds to the service, it adds to our vision, and it’s something that we hold on to, and it’s something to look forward to. Yeah, I believe we have to have something in this life to look forward to; there’s nothing wrong with that. But, ultimately, we have to look at what does God have for us, ultimately, because this life is going to end.

I’m just going to share a brief account. This was—I guess I want to back up a step and say, I don’t want to try to gloss over everything and the goal is not to wish our life away, like, “Hurry up and get here!” And the next thing you know, ten years have gone by, or twenty, or twenty-five, or however many years have gone by. But, there was a movie many years ago called, “Platoon.” How many’s familiar with that? Okay, it was about—Ken, I know you’re a Viet Nam veteran, and, I remember seeing it in the theater when it first came out in 1986. I was a senior in high school, so I’m telling my age. Well, even though I wasn’t a Christian at the time, there was a Scripture in—I’m going to read this—that appeared at the very beginning of the movie. Now, the movie was about a lot that went on—you know, as much as you could put into a two-and-a-half-hour movie, about the unbelievable circumstances that these guys endured, and women. But, the Scripture that appeared at the very opening credits of the movie was from Ecclesiastes 11:9. And this is all it said.

**Ecclesiastes 11:9**      *9Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment*

And, like I said, I wasn’t a Christian at the time, but it—and I’m not saying it hit me like a ton of bricks, and I was, like, on the floor repenting. I’m not saying that was the case. But I will say, it kind of stuck with me. And it was one of those things where you don’t expect to see that, or hear something like that. But it stayed with me. And I believe that that, along with some other things, got me to seek God.

But, I want to go with a little section here, where we’re going to talk about our last point:

### **Point 3:      Joy to the World**

[Editor’s note: At this point, we watched the last few minutes of the Peanuts special, “A Charlie Brown Christmas.” Charlie Brown brings back the pitiful little tree, and gets yelled at by the other kids. He says he guesses he doesn’t understand what Christmas is all about, and asks if anyone can explain what Christmas is all about. Linus quotes from Luke 2... Somehow, after that, everything all works out.]

**Luke 2:8-14** *And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, 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.*

Nice kids. I hope you all liked that. I like the comment, "Charlie Brown is a blockhead, but he did get a nice tree." Politically incorrect, but funny. You know, this might seem like a little bit of a misplaced statement, especially now, because we just heard about the birth of Christ, but the blood of Jesus has nothing to do with the beautiful surroundings, or Christmas trees, or anything else, but it does have to do with joy to the world in 2015. The blood of Jesus is what's called an intangible, because we can't really touch it, and we can't really see it, but we know it's real. It's a spiritual thing, and we know it's there. That happens to be the title of the sermon today, "The Blood that Jesus Shed for Me." I know there's nothing wrong with trees and caroling; we pretty much already covered that. Nothing wrong with Christmas cards and decorations and I know I've listened to and shared Christmas music the last couple of weeks, and enjoyed that. I'm looking forward to giving and receiving gifts in the next week. But, going back to Ephesians 4:7-8, that God gives gifts to men; in this case, to all, men and women. I know the Christmas story's about the birth of Jesus, but, I don't know that, 2000 years later, that we can't think about it as the birth, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's the joy to the world. And I'm not trying to confuse Christmas with Easter; I get that it's two separate holidays. I know that's more about the ascension and those things, but, again, this joy to the world, we're not just thinking about just the birth. I mean, that's a magnificent realization. I mean, there's Scriptures we didn't even cover today, that talks about, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel, which is God with us." (Matthew 1:23) I mean, just things like that, that are from the prophet Isaiah, that are just miraculous (Isaiah 7:14). And those are parts of the things that we hold to as Christians. But, I just know that the gift of God isn't complete without the promise of eternal life. And, knowing that we do have a promise of eternal life does give joy to the world.

I'm going to ask the singers to come, and they're going to close us in a minute, but, is the joy of God flourishing in your life? Is the path of God shining more and more to the perfect day? Because, if it isn't, it can be. I'm not saying we're not going to have problems; I've already addressed that. We're all going to have problems, we've all had—I know, Sister Lena, you buried your mom earlier this year, and your sister not long ago, and that's something that's—the Bible says we weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice (Romans 12:15). Sister Christine had just passed, just yesterday you had mentioned, Andy. Those things are realizations in this world, that, we lose loved ones, we lose friends and different people. We're going to have problems every day of our life, I would say, but the joy of God is real, and it's sustaining, and that joy of God will keep us. So, merry Christmas to everybody and joy to the world.