

CLUES ABOUT OUR GIFT
CHRISTMAS EVE

LUKE 2:1-20
DEC 24, 2016

¹In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And 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, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And 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.

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And 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!"

¹⁵When 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." ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Have you wondered what is in gifts with your name on them?

Maybe you have tried to get clues from lumps in wrapping
or maybe picking it up and shaking it.

Maybe you have hints from what you heard others saying.

You may be curious about what is in store for you.

You may already be thinking the same thing about

the coming new year or a special event coming up.

During midweek Advent worship, we have been considering

O.T. clues, foreshadowing what is to come,

specifically what Jesus will do when he comes.

Now, our text tells us what does happen when Jesus comes.

at same time, it includes clues about what is coming for him
and these same things reveal what is coming for us

and what God is giving us because of Jesus.

JESUS' BIRTH POINTS TO A RENEWED KINGDOM

JESUS' BIRTH POINTS TO ENDURANCE AND SACRIFICE

JESUS' BIRTH POINTS TO RECEIVING GLORY

JESUS' BIRTH POINTS TO A RENEWED KINGDOM

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¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Sometimes, even when you open a gift, you may wonder exactly what it is and what it is for.

God has given us a Christ. This is the Greek word for Messiah, which is the Hebrew word for "anointed one."

In the O.T. three kinds of people were given special jobs by being anointed: prophets, priests and kings.

In midweek Advent worship we considered how Jesus is like prophets like Jonah & Daniel who were victorious in humility, priests like Melchizedek who was a representative of God. kings like David & Zerubbabel, through whom

God kept his promise of living with his people.

When Jesus is born, it is emphasized he is from David's family, that is, he is the new king promised for God's people through whom God himself will rule his people.

What this gift means for us, then, is that

we can trust God completely to take care of us, and when we trust him, he completely takes charge of us.

Our desires & behavior are controlled by what he wants.

As Paul's letter to Titus points out, God's gift causes us to

"renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives

This is great, but it also leads to something else.

JESUS' BIRTH POINTS TO ENDURANCE AND SACRIFICE

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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.

If you had fancy scarf as gift, it may be wrapped in tissue paper, but if you had work boots, they might be in a cardboard box or heavy paper. This is a clue they are for tougher use. Jesus being found in manger is clue that he is in for a tough life including poverty, homelessness and rejection.

The reason he was there instead of a well prepared crib was obedience to the Empire's census law.

This is clue that Jesus, who is God, became man to live with us under law, not just human laws but God's law.

This was tough work, but he was able to save us by keeping perfectly for us all God's rules for life we fail to keep.

Another clue is presenting of this gift first to rough shepherds.

Sheep watched by these shepherds, not far from Jerusalem, may have been destined to be sacrificed at the temple.

The one they come to watch over in the manger is also destined to be a sacrifice.

The other part of Jesus saving us was dying for our failures.

The beginning of his life in a manger was a clue pointing to the end of his life on a cross.

His life of endurance and suffering is a clue about what it means to live under him in his kingdom.

This gift doesn't mean just fun & games, comfort & candy.

There is hard work to do helping others, loving & forgiving,

There are opposition & attacks from the devil to endure.

There are sacrifices to be given up in order to keep the more valuable things God gives us.

But, still, what Jesus brings is the most wonderful gift of all.

It is not we ourselves may have guessed or expected, but it is more wonderful that we could have imagined.

JESUS' BIRTH POINTS TO RECEIVING GLORY

¹³And 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!”

Before shepherds ever see Jesus, they have very obvious clue about what kind of a gift he is: the Lord, God himself.

Despite the kind of wrapping that hides it, he is glorious.

Before his humble birth, he is the eternal one
who is over the whole universe, giving it life.
After his death he is victoriously raised to life again
and ascends into heaven where he reigns in glory
because he has finished everything
that ever needs to be done for us to be saved.
The more he gets complete glory and all the credit,
the more we get complete grace and all the comfort.
Why are you receiving the gifts you are getting?
It is because you are so wonderful and deserve them,
or because of your persistently begging for them
or because of the kindness and generosity
of those who gave them to you.
I am not certain about your other gifts, but
We can be confident of God's love,
not because of how good or deserving we are
but totally because it makes God happy to favor us.
because he is pleased to be gracious.
This is why we can have peace in with God
in spite of our sinful behavior
and can have peace in our hearts
despite bad thoughts and fears
and can so can live peacefully now
even while we are on this wicked, broken earth,
knowing that because of the glory of Jesus
we too are receiving from him the gift
of an eternal home with him in his glory.

This is what the clues that are part of Jesus birth
are telling us about God's gift to us.
JESUS' BIRTH POINTS TO A RENEWED KINGDOM
where he completely takes care and takes charge of us.
JESUS' BIRTH POINTS TO ENDURANCE AND SACRIFICE
which he offers for our sake to take away our sins
and to which he leads us for his sake.
JESUS' BIRTH POINTS TO RECEIVING GLORY
which is always his, even when it is under wraps,
and which he gives us along with peace
by his good favor and mercy which lasts forever.