

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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SERMON TITLE

The Greatest Gift

SERIES**DATE**

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KEY SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 9:15

SYNOPSIS

God is the all-time best gift-giver!

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ The Greatest Gift

2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Think back to the best gift you ever received. Was it the one you circled in the catalog? The one at the top of your list? Or was it the gift that caught you completely off guard—the one you never saw coming, wrapped in paper you didn't recognize, from someone who somehow knew exactly what you needed before you did?

Sometimes the best gifts are the most surprising ones. Not the ones we expected or asked for, but the ones we didn't even know we needed. And if that's true of Christmas *presents*, how much more is it true of the Christmas *presence*—Emmanuel, God with us?

Did you know that the tradition of gift-giving didn't start with us? It didn't even begin with the Magi bringing gold, frankincense, and myrrh. It began with God, who gave us a gift so surprising and unexpected, and completely beyond what anyone imagined, that 2,000 years later we're still trying to wrap our minds around it.

☞ When God decided to give humanity the greatest gift imaginable, He wrapped it in the most unexpected package.

The King of Kings didn't arrive in a palace but in a stable. The Lord of Hosts wasn't announced by trumpets in a throne room but by angels to shepherds in a field. Everything about that first Christmas defied expectation. A virgin conceiving - Mary's response to the angel Gabriel was essentially, "How is this even biologically possible?" (Luke 1:34). A teenage girl from Nazareth - and later people would ask, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (John 1:46). A carpenter as an earthly father. No room at the inn - God's own Son born in a barn. Shepherds - considered among the lowest in society, the kind of people who couldn't even testify in court - as the first worshippers. Wise men from the East following a star, finding divinity in diapers.

God's greatest gift came disguised as the smallest, most vulnerable thing - a baby. Who could have imagined that salvation would come swaddled in cloth, helpless and dependent? Yet this was exactly God's way: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD" (**Isaiah 55:8**).

When God's plan for your life doesn't look like what you expected, you're in good company.

☞ When the answer to your prayer comes wrapped differently than you anticipated, **don't miss the gift just because you don't like the packaging**. God specializes in showing up in unexpected ways. Keep your eyes open for the unexpected ways God is at work.


☞ The surprises didn't end in Bethlehem. **Throughout His life, Jesus continued to disrupt expectations at every turn.**



He lived a humble life. Who expected the Messiah to wash His disciples' feet (John 13:5)? Who anticipated that the conquering King would ride into Jerusalem *not* on a warhorse but on a humble donkey (Matthew 21:5)?


His teaching was revolutionary: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Matthew 20:26). "Whoever loses their life for me will find it" (Matthew 16:25).

He reached out to the unwanted. He touched lepers when others avoided them. He welcomed children when disciples tried to shoo them away (Matthew 19:14). He ate with tax collectors and sinners, upsetting the religious elite (Luke 15:2). He made a Samaritan the hero of His story (Luke 10:30-37) and promised paradise to a thief hanging beside Him on a cross (Luke 23:43).

If Jesus consistently spent time with the outcasts and the overlooked, what does that mean for us? Who are we overlooking? Who have we written off as "too far gone" or "not our kind of people"? Jesus didn't just tolerate the messy people - He sought them out, ate with them,  touched them. **The gift of God's love isn't just for us to receive; it's for us to pass on, especially to those the world has deemed unworthy.** This Christmas, **who is God calling you to surprise with His love?**

God's gift was greater than anyone imagined - not just a political deliverer, but a cosmic Redeemer. Not just healing for bodies, but salvation for souls. Not just a teacher of wisdom, but the very Word made flesh (John 1:14). Not just a good man, but God Himself among us - "Immanuel... God with us" (Matthew 1:23). The gift kept surprising those who received it.

 And here's the deal: **the surprises aren't over.**

Just as His first coming defied all expectations, Scripture promises His second coming will be equally unexpected. "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven,  nor the Son, but only the Father" (**Matthew 24:36**). Jesus continued, **"So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Matthew 24:44).** We can know the signs and seasons of his return, but the day or hour will be a surprise, so we need to be always ready.

The baby in the manger will return as the King on the throne. The humble carpenter will come as the righteous Judge. The suffering servant will appear as the conquering Lord. The one who wore a crown of thorns will wear many crowns (Revelation 19:12). The one who had no place to lay His head (Matthew 8:20) will reign over all creation.

Just as the shepherds were going about their ordinary work when angels filled the sky (Luke 2:8-9), we will be going about our ordinary days when the trumpet sounds and the sky rolls back like



a scroll. "In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:52).

Knowing Christ's return is imminent should change how we live today. It means our jobs aren't just careers - they're mission fields. Our daily routines aren't meaningless - they're opportunities to reflect Christ. If Jesus returned today, would you be embarrassed, or would you be about His business? **Don't wait for a more convenient time to start living fully for Him.** The clock is ticking, and none of us knows how much time is left. He's coming soon!

What a surprise that will be! Not just for those who rejected Him, but even for those who love Him. Scripture promises that what we will see surpasses anything we can currently imagine. (1 Corinthians 2:9). This is what makes Christmas so profound: it's not just remembering a past event, but celebrating a present reality and anticipating a future hope. **The gift given in Bethlehem keeps giving, keeps surprising, keeps transforming.**

☞ **Every day, Jesus surprises those who follow Him.** He makes a way when there seems to be no way. He provides when resources run dry. He brings peace in the midst of chaos. **He takes broken lives and makes them whole. He takes sinful hearts and makes them new.**

☞ The most surprising thing of all? That **this gift is offered freely. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).** You can't earn it. You can't purchase it. You can't deserve it. You can only receive it with the wonder of a child on Christmas morning.

Some of you today are exhausted from trying to earn God's approval. You're working yourself to the bone, thinking if you just do enough good things, God will finally love you. Stop. **The gift is already wrapped. It's already paid for. It has your name on it.** Just receive it. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (**Matthew 11:28**). That's Jesus' invitation - not to work harder, but to rest in what He's already done.

So what do we do with this greatest gift? How do we live in light of these divine surprises? First, ☞ we **receive it with gratitude. Don't let familiarity dull the wonder.** Yes, we've heard the Christmas story before, but are we still amazed at the miracle of it? God became flesh! Let's never lose the sense of astonishment. God with us. Thank the Lord!

☞ Second, we **share it with urgency.** If we truly understand the magnitude of this gift, we can't keep it to ourselves. Others are still living in darkness, unaware that the Light of the World has come (John 8:12). The greatest surprise they could ever receive is waiting to be unwrapped. And we get to be the gift-givers, pointing them to Jesus.

☞ Third, we **live it with anticipation.** We don't just look back to the manger; we look forward to His return. We live ready, watching, expectant. "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know



on what day your Lord will come" (Matthew 24:42). Every moment could be the hour. Are we ready for the ultimate surprise?

The greatest gift has been given. The baby born in Bethlehem lived, died, and rose again. He ascended to heaven and is coming back. From the surprise of the manger to the surprise of His return, it's all grace. It's all gift. It's all love. God is the all-time best gift-giver!

This Christmas, let's see with fresh eyes all that God has done, is doing, and will do. Let's unwrap again the greatest gift ever given - and never cease to be surprised by its beauty, its power, and its endless capacity to transform. The greatest gift ever given was Jesus! His birth changed the world forever. He still changes lives today.

☞ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6).

Sound track – His Name is Wonderful

His Name Is Wonderful, His Name Is Wonderful,
His Name Is Wonderful, Jesus My Lord;
He Is The Mighty King, Master Of Everything.
His Name Is Wonderful, Jesus My Lord.
He's The Great Shepherd,
The Rock Of All Ages, Almighty God Is He;
Bow Down Before Him, Love and adore Him.
His Name Is Wonderful, Jesus, My Lord.