

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on December 23, 2018:**

**"Christmas Sermon:
Jesus – The Greatest Gift of All
(Luke 1:26-38; 2:8-14)"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman shows that there are four primary special, supernatural gifts that we've been given as the result of Jesus' birth.]

Notes

Introduction:

- Good morning dear family!
- Merry Christmas!
- Today, we're going to talk about the greatest gift of all – Jesus.
- And learn why Jesus was and is the greatest gift.

- Pastor Craig first presented a 5 minute video showing Christmas morning at the Kuhlman's home (circa 2000 AD).
 - It shows various gifts being opened by their son Morgan and daughter Chloe and their reactions to them.
 - The last gift given was a blue bike as a present to Morgan, age 7.
 - He was so excited that he said, "...this is the greatest gift ever...."
- As pastor Craig commented that this video was all about opening up and unwrapping gifts.

- Today, it's popular to take shots at different political parties and economic structures such as capitalism and socialism.
- Winston Churchill said that the greatest vice of capitalism is that we all participate in its blessings unequally.
- He then said the greatest virtue of socialism is that we all participate equally in its miseries.

- But, in God's economy, especially at Christmas, all of us participate equally in God's blessings and how Jesus is the greatest gift to us.
- So, today, we're going to unwrap those gifts from Jesus – love, joy, peace and grace.
- To begin, we're going to look at some verses concerning the birth of Jesus.

Birth foretold (in a miraculous way):

Luke 1:26-38 (NASB)

26) Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, 27) to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

- At this time, the Judean Jews despised the Galilean Jews, because they felt they were of lesser value.

- Because Jesus was born to a Galilean mother, there was a statement being made by God.
- Mary was also born into a very poor family, which is another statement being made.
- So, the Creator of all things and the Holder of all wealth does not let economic structures get in the way.
- Through this, God is showing us that Jesus and salvation and the gifts He brings is open to all humanity, not just to Israel.

28) And coming in, he said to her, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”

29) But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.

- Now, Mary obviously had some doubts, but it was not caused by a lack of faith.
- She was thinking, “Why me?”
- In other words, why is God dealing with me?

30) The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.

31) And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

- Even though Mary was one of those despised Galilean Jews and didn’t have a pedigree, so to speak, yet she was told that she “found favor with God.”

32) He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33) and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

- Again, we see the contrast of the society and family Jesus is born into and what He will ultimately do – be King and Ruler over all.

34) Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” 35) The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. 36) And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month.

- So, the angel is giving Mary some confidence in that God was also blessing Elizabeth, who was barren, to be able to have a child.

37) For nothing will be impossible with God. 38) And Mary said, “Behold, the bond slave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

- Now, it’s interesting that Mary called herself a “bond slave.”
- She was, in essence, saying “I accept this; I’m your servant.”

Birth Declared:

Luke 2:8-14 (NASB)

8) In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

- Now, the shepherds were part of the despised group of people at that time.
- They were considered unclean and therefore couldn't enter into the temple.
- Once again, God is showing us that the Son of God is first going to be exposed to the shepherds, who were considered a lowly class of people.

9) And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. 10) But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; 11) for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

12) This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13) And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

- We need to realize that the angles sang like that at the beginning of creation.
- And their singing now shows us that a new day is dawning and that a new humanity, a new creation of humanity, has taken place by virtue of the Incarnation.
- The angels are rejoicing because God is correcting and undoing what happened through Adam.
- Again, the contrast is significant: the manger would not be a place a king would be born, at all. Yet, Jesus, King of king was.

14) "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

- So these two stories – the foretelling of Jesus' birth and the circumstances of His actual birth, are something we should reflect upon at this time of year.

The gifts:

- So, we say that Jesus is the greatest gift. But why is that?
- And, how is that relevant to each one of us?
- One member said, "It's the greatest gift because no batteries required."
- So, what physical gifts are the most relevant to us today?
- It's going to be different things for each one of us.
- But what really matters, is that today there are four primary special gifts that we've been given as the result of the Incarnation and Jesus' birth.
- So, let's unwrap those gifts especially during this season.
- They are the gifts of love, joy, peace and grace.

The gifts of Love, Joy, Peace, Grace:

- LOVE (Greek word is *agape*):
 - Love is how God describes Himself – God is love.
 - And it was through the birth of Jesus that love was given to us.

- Definition: “Freely given, everlasting kindness and self-sacrifice regardless of whether the object is worthy or even likable.”
- Now, sometimes we feel a little unlikable or even act unlikable.
- But, when God gave His gift of love, He gave it with no strings attached.
- And, he gave that gift to all of humanity, whether they were worthy or whether they were even likeable.

- Receiving God’s love is not about us, it’s always been about the Giver.
- God is the ultimate Giver.
- So, this Christmas season, whether or not you have physical gifts to open, we just unwrapped this spiritual gift of love, as a result of Jesus Christ.

- The second gift: JOY (Greek word is *chara*):
 - It means, “Good cheer and gladness of heart.”
 - Now good cheer and gladness of heart comes without any alcohol, whatsoever.
 - It’s what God gladly gives to us.

 - It’s easy to think about our pains, our sorrows, our troubling issues, but we need to experience God’s gift of joy.
 - Now, in God’s economy, we all equally share in all of his blessings.
 - They have been graciously given to us because they can’t be bought.

 - It’s our role to receive them and to yield to them, because they are not natural physical gifts.
 - These are supernatural gifts.

- The third gift: PEACE (Greek word is *eirene*):
 - The meaning is: “Internal tranquility despite external circumstances.”
 - Think of the worst thing we could go through like facing health issues, facing death, facing financial issues, or facing relationship issues.
 - Now God gives us His supernatural peace which we can reach out to and access it, especially during our difficult times, simply by yielding to the Giver.

- The final gift: GRACE (Greek word is *charis*):
 - The meaning is: “Kindness or favor granted without expectation of return; unearned lovingkindness.”
 - That’s why we’ve saved. That’s why Jesus, the Son of God, was sent to this earth and became human, God in the flesh, was to give us God’s salvation through grace.
 - It has happened whether we are worthy or even likeable.

Comments about these gifts:

- These four gifts from God have been given to everyone, to all of humanity, without worthiness on our part, without any expectations of return.
- This is so different from the culture that’s all around us.
- These four gifts of love, joy, peace, and salvation through grace come with no strings attached.
- These are supernatural gifts given to each one of us.

- And when we know and understand this, it makes us different people.
- When we accept and yield to these gifts, we're changed.

Sea story:

- It's a foggy night at sea and these two commanders are communicating with each other.
- The one commander, sees a light in front of him in the distance and sends out the message, "I'm in your pathway, so you need to veer right"
- The other commander responded, "No, you are on my pathway, you need to veer right."
- The first commander says, "No, you don't understand, I'm an admiral in the US Navy, so you need to veer right."
- The second commander responds, "I don't care what your title is, you need to veer right,"
- Frustrated the admiral responds back, "I'm a battleship and if you do not change course, I will take care of it."
- And finally the other commander responds back, "I am a lighthouse, and if you don't change course, you will be taken care of."
- Now, it only takes one thing to open those gifts of love, joy, peace and grace – it's simply yielding.
- But sometimes that's hard to do.
- Since, we're out there commanding our battleship, thinking we are captains of our soul and our destiny, yielding can become difficult.
- But, when we realize what we are yielding to that great Lighthouse, then our minds change, because we realize that if we don't, we have no real answers to life.

The Greatest GIFT:

- So, what is the greatest gift you could receive?
- It's all relative; it's about where we're at in our own circumstances.
- But regardless of the circumstances we're in, this season represents four supernatural eternal gifts that supersede anything that we could ever think about or desire –
- And that's love, that's joy, that's peace and that's salvation by grace.
- That's why Jesus is the greatest GIFT of all, and we are the recipients of that gift.
- So on this coming Tuesday morning be reminded that nothing else that we could ever receive physically, can ever be greater what we've already received because of the Incarnation, because of Jesus coming to this earth.
- And because of that, we can say "Halleluiah."

Closing prayer