

## **Putting it All in Perspective**

### **3 Reasons to Celebrate Christmas**

a Family Talk for Christmas Eve, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013

By Rev. Michael Gladish

In our lessons tonight and in our recitation we were reminded of some of the clearest prophecies of the Lord's birth into the world, and some of the reasons and explanations for how and why it happened the way it did. In these readings you will have noticed many references to LIGHT, and GOOD GOVERNMENT and PEACE and ORDER. The prophet, Isaiah also spoke about COMFORT, and making the CROOKED PLACES STRAIGHT and the ROUGH PLACES SMOOTH, and he said that people would COME FROM AFAR, from all over the world, bringing gifts to worship the Lord.

As we know, all these things came true when the Lord was born. When angels came to announce His birth "the glory of the Lord shone all around them," which is another way of saying there was bright LIGHT all around them. Zacharias spoke about being "saved," and "delivered from the hand of our enemies," which is another way of saying that the Lord took away the power of bad people to control us and instead showed us how to live in joyful, peaceful, orderly ways according to His love and wisdom. And, as we know, people did come from very far away to worship Him, bringing their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. But that was just the beginning. Later on people from all over Europe and Asia came to believe in the Lord, and to live as He had taught. And THEY told people all over the world about Him.

Of course there were SOME things that the prophets had said that DIDN'T happen the way people expected – things like the sun and moon being darkened and the stars falling from the sky, the crooked being made straight, and so on. These were spiritual events; they didn't happen in the natural world but they DID happen just as the prophets had said, and we are especially blessed because we can now understand in ways that were never possible before what all these things were about.

For example, we know that LIGHT in the Word is not just natural but SPIRITUAL, and spiritual light is TRUTH – the truth that SHOWS us the right way to think and to live with other people.

More about the Lord as the light of the world,  
the "sun, moon and stars" not shining, the "crooked," the "rough,"  
and the truth that makes us spiritually free.

Now, at Christmas, we have many special things we like to do to celebrate the Lord's birth: family gatherings, dinners, parties, singing, and of course gift giving. It's a great holiday including time off from work or school and for some, special vacation trips. But in all the excitement of Christmas let's never forget what it's really all about. Let's keep it in perspective, and make sure we don't forget the most important things.

To help with that, here are 3 of the most important things to remember, 3 of the best reasons to celebrate this Christmas.

### 1.

Because the Lord was born into this world and did all the amazing things that He did, **YOU CAN KNOW AND UNDERSTAND Him**; you can know and understand what is true and good in your life; you can know and understand the real meaning of His Word. If He had not been born into this world as a baby boy and grown up among people in the world you would not have this ability, in fact you would still be living in a kind of spiritual darkness that is almost impossible to imagine because, well, He **DID** come, and our whole way of thinking – our whole culture, our whole way of life – has been changed by that fact.

### 2.

Because the Lord was born into this world and did all the amazing things that He did, **YOU HAVE A KIND OF SPIRITUAL FREEDOM** that would have been impossible otherwise. You can make good decisions for yourself without having to do what powerful people or evil spirits or even foolish friends might want you to do because **YOU KNOW** that you are going to live forever, and **YOU KNOW** that what you think and how you feel is more important than anything anybody tries to **MAKE YOU DO**.

### 3.

Because the Lord was born into this world and did all the amazing things that He did, **YOU CAN DO MORE GOOD** for other people than anyone could before He came because now **YOU KNOW** that real helpfulness is not about money or things, it is about the love and wisdom and patience and forgiveness you can share because the Lord has given it to **YOU** to share.

Now let's look at each of these 3 things more carefully and think about how important they are. To help with this we need 3 children to come up here and hold 3 simple posters that will help you with this.

## 1. Poster of a brain and the word “UNDERSTANDING”

Remember the first thing? It was UNDERSTANDING. Because the Lord was born into this world and did all the amazing things that He did, YOU CAN KNOW AND UNDERSTAND the Lord; you can know and understand what is true and good in your life; you can know and understand the real meaning of the Lord’s Word. This is the first reason the Lord came into the world. As He often said in the Gospel of John, “I am the light of the world...” (8:12, 9:5, 12:36 & 46, etc.) and “I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness” (12:46).

This light is NOT like a lantern or a candle or a light bulb; it is the light of TRUTH that lets us “SEE” what is right and wrong. It is the Lord’s WORD given by the prophets and leaders of ancient times explained by Him directly, in person, so that it makes sense to us and we can understand what it means.

Most of us have no idea how ignorant the world was about spiritual things before the Lord came into the world. Really! People just didn’t have any concept of the true nature of God. So they had all sorts of strange ideas about what would please Him, including terrible things like killing animals or other people for His sake. In fact before the Lord came into the world people were really terribly cruel to each other, and in some parts of the world where they still don’t know about Him they are still terribly cruel at least partly because they don’t know any better.

Today we do know better but it is only because He has shown us how to understand Him and His Word. Of course you may not understand very much right now, but because He came into the world you CAN understand if you want to – more and more each year as you grow and learn and think carefully about the things you are learning and practice them. This is very serious, and very, very important.

## 2. Poster of a heart and the word “FREEDOM”

The second very important thing is FREEDOM. Because the Lord was born into this world and did all the amazing things that He did, YOU HAVE A KIND OF SPIRITUAL FREEDOM that would have been impossible otherwise.

You see, freedom comes from being able to do what you want – what you LOVE, but our love and wisdom come to us at least partly through angels and spirits in the other world, and before His coming into the world those angels and spirits were so CONFUSED that they sometimes had a very bad influence on people in the world, causing them to love and do harmful things. But when the Lord came He cleared up all the confusion by teaching and living according to the true meaning of the

Word, clearly demonstrating to everyone in the natural and spiritual worlds how to make good choices and live well. In doing this He fought against all the bad influences – all the hells – and put them under His control so that now, if we learn and do what He says, we can be free: we can always choose good instead of evil, kindness instead of meanness, a healthy attitude instead of a nasty one, and these choices – in the spirit of the Lord’s truth – will make us free.

### 3. Poster of helping hands, and the word, “POWER”

The third important thing was the POWER to do good. Because the Lord was born into this world and did all the amazing things that He did, YOU CAN DO MORE GOOD for other people than anyone could before He came. In fact He even said, “...whoever believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and **greater works than these** he will do, because I go to My Father” (John 14:12).

Now how in the world can anyone do greater works than the Lord? The answer is simple – not easy, but simple: when the Lord was in the world He did wonderful works of healing people’s NATURAL blindness and sickness. But since He finished His work and now teaches us even deeper truths about our lives He gives us the power to do the SPIRITUAL work that is even better, helping ourselves and other people to believe and love the things of HEAVEN and ETERNAL LIFE. We can do this by making a special effort to learn and understand what the Lord has taught us and then by reaching out to anyone who is confused, discouraged, or having a hard time, and just sharing how those beautiful teachings can help.

### Conclusion

So, putting it all in perspective: what is really important in life? - natural wealth? - natural freedom? - natural power? NO! Some of the richest people in this world are actually pretty miserable and sad – they don’t have any REAL friends, and they’re never satisfied with all the STUFF they do have. What we really need is just EXACTLY what the Lord has given us through His life in this world: the spiritual wealth of UNDERSTANDING, the spiritual FREEDOM to choose what is good, and the spiritual power to enjoy a heavenly life of generosity toward others.

Remember, happiness does not come from the power to control other people, it comes from giving other people the power to control their own lives in wise and caring ways by sharing the spirit of truth and love that the Lord Himself shared with all of us by coming into the world in His own Humanity, fighting against all the evils and falsities that blocked the light of heaven, perfecting what was Human in Himself, and showing us the way to live.

---

**Lessons from Isaiah for Christmas Eve**  
Mitchellville, MD, 2013

1.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (9:2, 6-7)

2.

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of jackals, where each lay, there shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; it shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (35:5-7, 9-10).

3.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." (40:3-5).

4.

Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

Lift up your eyes all around, and see: they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side. Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you. (60:1-5)

---