

II. Advent in Biblical Perspective
The Divine Blessings of the Incarnation
“He Came to Save Us”
Titus 2:11–15
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December 3, 2017 • Morning Sermon

We are in Titus 2 for this Advent Season. Please follow along with me in God’s Word. Titus 2:11–15 says [11] *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

[15] *Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word by preached for you.

I’m sure you have a number of memories associated with the Advent Season. It could be memories of church, family, personal situations that have occurred, etc. I know I have many of them. Christmas became a focal point in my family’s life and I want to share one of them with you. This is a Christmas Eve memory that I have. Every Christmas Eve starting about 1 o’clock my mother would say this, ‘Son, get away from the window. Act like somebody raised you.’ I knew what she was referring to. I knew that my grandparents, Lois and Harry, by mid-morning would have left Augusta, Georgia to come to Charlotte, North Carolina so spend a couple of days with us. I knew they would arrive sometime that afternoon of Christmas Eve. I and my three sisters were convinced that if we looked out that window hard enough they would come quicker. So the imprint of our breath and nostrils was all over that picture window.

Have you ever heard of a picture window? No one seems to use that term these days when it comes to renovating homes or building them or even what is in them. This picture window in our house was a prize for us as we looked through the curtains hanging there. Perhaps you are wondering why I called my grandparents Lois and Harry. The reason for that was because when I was born they were only 35 and 36 years old and my grandmother said we were not going to get to call her ‘grandmamma.’ She told us we were going to call them by their first name which I and my sisters did for years. As we looked through that picture window I can still see in my mind that Ford station wagon with that fake wood paneling on the side.

Since my dad was in minor league baseball there was not a lot of money in our family. We were not impoverished but there were a lot of challenges at the end of every month. But my grandfather had gotten out of baseball, got a real job and was actually making money which meant presents were in the back of that station wagon. We really wanted to see my grandparents so the first thing we dutifully did when they arrived was we all ran out and hugged them. Immediately we went around to the back of their car to help them get things out. I was really looking for the number of presents and the size thereof rather than the suitcases. When you are younger you want lots of packages and big ones, not the small ones. So we would want to know how heavy they were and how many as we helped them unpack their car.

There is a song of Christmas that was written decades after Christmas and it was an early confession of the church. In fact, it is still used today on Christmas Eve in the Church of England collect and it was a song of Christmas grace. I just read it in Titus 2:11–15 and that’s what Paul wrote as his song of Christmas. There was an earlier song sung by angels which we see in Luke 2.

Luke 2:11–15 says [11] *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. [12] And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.*” [13] *And 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!”*

[15] *When 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.”* Dare I say that the shepherd’s faces were pressed against the window?

The gift of God has come bearing gifts. What are the gifts that He is bearing? The gift of God is the grace of God has appeared. Grace is the word we use to describe the actions of God for sinners based upon His love. Why is there a Christmas? It is simply because God loved sinners to save them so He sent His Son and the grace of God has appeared. When the love of God has been established the grace of God carries it out because God’s love is unmerited, undeserved, unrelenting, and unstoppable. John 1:14 says [14] *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, **full of grace and truth.*** The grace of God has appeared! Historical event has appeared.

So when you open the trunk what are the gifts? Jesus Christ is the gift of God, bringing the grace of God, has brought saving grace for He brings salvation to all men. He has brought sanctifying grace that is training us to deny ungodly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and Godly in this present age. He has brought securing grace as we are waiting for the blessed hope and the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. He also has brought a sending grace – speak these things and let know one disregard you.

The first package you pull out is saving grace because the others are meaningless without it. There is a reason there is an order in the Bible. Every word is inspired by God and so is the order. We have nothing to take to people or sent to people until God has secured us and we can’t be secured until God has set us apart and sanctified us. God sanctifies those whom He saves. So the first step is to save the peoples from the people so that He can sanctify, secure and send those people to the peoples of the earth to declare this glorious grace of God that has appeared. This is what He is writing to Titus.

Let’s look at that very first word ‘for.’ That word begs for us to always deal with something like this text in context. This text in context tells us why Paul is speaking to Titus. Paul has been released from his first Roman imprisonment and has gotten word that two areas where he has labored and the Gospel has gone and met with success, are now in a downward spiral. So he speaks to two of his men who are ministers of the Gospel – one is Timothy and one is Titus. He sends Timothy to Ephesus and sends Titus to Crete. The key to this is in Titus 1:5 which says [5] *This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—* So that Titus can teach sound doctrine.

In other words, the churches were in demise because they had ungodly leaders and ungodly teaching. So Paul gives him what the qualifications are for a Godly leader and what sound doctrine is. From Titus 1:5 to Titus 2:1 he tells Titus to set the pattern and to speak the

things of sound doctrine. Then he gives a description of a sound life which include older men, younger men, older women, younger women, masters and slaves. All the while he is saying to live this life so that God is not dishonored and dress up, adorn the Gospel for the Gospel not only dresses you up but you dress up the Gospel to bring to this world. It is a sound life that dresses it up for the world to see its work in you.

You can't have a sound life without sound doctrine and normally Paul gives the sound doctrine and then the sound life but this time he gives the sound life first. Then he gives the reasons for the sound life which come from sound words and that all comes because the grace of God has appeared. The first gift as the angels look at the stone trough is Christ. It is not just a Baby they are looking at born to two parents of a forgotten line of kings in Bethlehem. They are looking at the Savior who will live a perfect life, go to the cross to save His people from their sins and be laid in another stone trough from which He will rise on the third day. This is the God of glory who has come.

So as we focus on the first gift He has brought – saving grace – Titus 2:11 says *[11] For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.* I want to focus on three things from this verse – bringing, salvation and all people. So let's take bringing first. This is what it is not saying. It doesn't confer salvation on all people but He carries salvation to all people – He brings salvation to all people. It doesn't mean He saves all people for we know from the Bible how this is true. The Bible shows us there is a hell that will be populated by those who are not in Christ. There is a heaven, a new heavens and a new earth that will be populated by those who are in Christ. Not all people will be saved but this salvation that He is going to secure is a salvation that He has brought to all people. God has come for us to be among us and becomes one of us, not by laying aside His deity but by adding upon Himself humanity. God has come to us, for us, among us and has become one of us. Why? It is because God has come to save us, bringing salvation.

Salvation is deliverance. Whenever you hear the word salvation four words ought to come into your mind – salvation *from* what, salvation *to* what, salvation *by* what, salvation *through* what. I Corinthians 15:21 says *[21] For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.* He has come among us to save us **from** all our sin and all of its consequences ultimately and finally. He saves us from sin's guilt, shame, despair, destruction, distress, death and sin's dominion that has power over us. The wages of sin is death – physical death, spiritual death, eternal death. He has come to save us **to** Himself that we might be reconciled to God and right before God. And that God would be right within us.

He also saves us to Himself *by* grace. Romans 9:16 says *[16] So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.* John 1:12–13 says *[12] But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, [13] who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* It wasn't your pedigree, prestige or performance for it is what God has done for you, brought to you and saved you from that sin to Himself by unmerited, unrelenting, unstoppable, irreversible love through His grace, *through* His Son Jesus. The plan was the Person and the Mediator between God and man is the Man Christ Jesus.

We call Him Yeshua because it means to rescue, to deliver, to save, His people from their sins. Paul says in I Timothy 1:15, *[15] The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.*** He was born to be laid in the stone trough to go to a cross and occupy another stone trough and

be raised from it because of His victorious death to save His people from their sins. His peoples come from all the peoples of the earth. That is what we call the vicarious death.

When I was growing up there was a very famous tattoo that a certain group of people would wear. It was put on the left shoulder and it was actually downloading the book of Ecclesiastes in a statement. I only saw this tattoo on men but I'm sure there were probably some women who had it too. The tattoo said 'Born to die.' It was a tattoo of despair. Ecclesiastes in a nutshell is 'everything under the sun is vanity.' Apart from God everything is vanity. Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow you die – born to die.

How I wished I knew then what I know now because I could have said to those who had this tattoo 'You were not born to die, you were born to live. It is sin that brings that death and the One who gave you your first birth can give you a second birth and you can be born again to live. You can be born again to live because there was One who was born to die, not out of despair but delight.' You have prepared a body for me O Lord and I have appeared once and for all to abolish sin and death for I delight to do your will O God, my Father. This is the One who was born to die.

His death was not a model death, although it models death. It is not a martyr's death because nobody put Him there. It was an atoning death, a substitutionary death where He takes the place of His people to save His people from all the peoples. He pays for their sins. He takes the place of His people. It is a vicarious death. He specifically was born to die, a death He should not have died but He who knew no sin became sin on my behalf on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He came bringing sinners to God through Himself in the atoning death on the cross. I should have died that death. I was not only undeserving of His death but ill deserving yet He took that payment for me.

I'd like to explain this vicarious death idea this way. We were blessed with three children and the first child we had the way God intended for people to have children. My wife came to me and said 'My suitcase is packed and I'm ready to go to the hospital.' Apparently the Lord has been stirring and she packed it that morning. I don't remember the ride to the hospital that day but when we got there I helped her out and got the suitcase and the nurse met me with that knowing little look saying 'Ok sir thank you, you may go to this room' as she sent me to the father's waiting room which is what God intended all along. Our firstborn arrived and went to see the baby through the nursery window because back then you were not allowed to hold them then. I went in and saw my wife, kissed her and she said 'I'm going to sleep' so I went home and came back the next day.

A couple of years later we had another child. By this time everyone is talking about how the father ought to participate in the birth of the child as if we are of some use in there. I never was able to attend the classes so when the time came for the delivery the nurse said to me 'you have to leave because you're not certified' because I had not been to the classes. So when our third one came along I was a student pastor and there were a lot of young couples in the church at that time. They all sold Amway, Shaklee vitamins, and went to the Lamaze training classes and so the pressure was on to go to Lamaze classes.

So for our third child I went to all the Lamaze classes and learned to focus and breathe which was what I was supposed to help my wife with. So I then stayed in at the birth of our third child. So there I was telling my wife during the deliver to focus and breathe and she finally said to me 'will you just shut up' so I had to go to a class for my wife to tell me that? I remember this belt like device that was around her that was attached to this graph. Every time a contraction

came that needle on the graph would start moving like crazy but before it did that there was always this 'blip' and as soon as the 'blip' came the needle would start moving.

I started to notice that every time the blip came I noticed these pains in my stomach and the doctor told me those were vicarious because that is what you are doing to try and take the pain from your wife as I would try and take her place. In parenting I've learned two things never to say. One is don't tell your kids when you have to punish them 'this hurts me more than it hurts you.' Typically you may get a response from your kid that says 'then dad don't do it and you won't get hurt.' The second thing is don't say to your wife in delivery times 'this is as hard on me as it is on her.' Are you kidding me?

I know we're wanting to take the place but there was a God who not only wanted to take our place but He sent His Son to take our place, who could take our place by taking upon Himself in humility humanity to go to the cross and there took our place. There He took all the infinite wrath of God for all the sins of all of His people and He secured the salvation of His people with an atoning death that is so glorious you need not shrink back from taking it to all the nations and peoples of the world. It is sufficient to bear the weight of any and all sinners in any and all places throughout the world bringing salvation to all people.

What is their qualification? They are sinners. Sin's dominion, shame, guilt are upon them and in your heart is the glorious message of salvation that has come to you that you now can take to all the peoples. We tend to look at people through prisms. We look at people through the filters of our life. What comes natural are the worldly distinctions – the Darwinian myth of race, the arrogant myths of the haves and the have nots. We can't look at people like that. Our first look at people should not be as a bother or a competitor or their political party preference or the college they went to or can they help me or an influence person I need to know so I can move up the ladder of life. No, when we look at people we first see people made in the image of God who were born to live.

The second thing we know is that sin is in their life and they are searching for a way to address it and they are going to all the wrong places. Sin's death is before them. Sin's destiny of hell is in front of them. The Judgment Seat awaits them. They are helpless and hopeless, just like we were. That is how we see them for He brings salvation to all people. God told Abraham that through him He would give a seed and through that seed He would bring a Seed and through that Seed He would bless all the nations of the earth. And it has come bringing salvation to all the nations from which God will bring His people to Himself from every nation. Now salvation has been brought through a nation to all the nations whereby God builds the Royal Nation of His people who are saved by Jesus Christ for all eternity.

So here is the takeaway for this study. The grace of God in Christ our Savior not only brings salvation to sinners but also gloriously brings sinners to the Savior. There are two groups of people in this world both are probably reading this today. There are many reading this that are numbered in this first group and are getting ready to celebrate this coming Advent Season. We are reading this today because God has graciously brought salvation to us through His Son Jesus. God has not only brought salvation to us but God has graciously brought us to that Savior.

To come to that Christ to be saved is by faith and God graciously gave you the faith. Ephesians 2:8–9 says [8] *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* We at one time, helpless and hopeless in our sin, covered with the shame, guilt and condemnation of our sin, were met by the grace of God in the work of the Spirit and the church of Jesus Christ sent someone with the Gospel to talk to us and we heard.

Then God gave us eyes to see and ears to hear. On that day we said 'I'm helpless, hopeless, I need a Savior, I can't save myself, no religion can save me, none of my promises can save me but I heard Good News that God has brought salvation in His Son and now God has brought me from death unto life to that Son.' Now God gave you the ability to believe, not about Him but in Him, not simply to trust the Lord but the Lord has become your trust. Many of you reading this today are in this group where you know God has come for you, to you, in you, and among you. Jesus died for you. It is that wonderful grace of Jesus reaching the most defiled.

I was among the most defiled, helpless and hopeless and that is why He will go further in that Titus passage and say in Titus 2:14a, [14a] *who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness...* That is what I was. I was a sinner opposed in rebellion against God. It may have been covered up with cultural niceties but I had the clenched fist, 'You will not rule over me' and sin had brought me nothing that I thought it would. It only brought me despair, shame, guilt and death. Then I heard sweet Jesus, 'Come and heal my broken spirit' and on that sweet day we came to Christ who reached us, the most defiled.

There is a song I learned in my youth group that I have never forgotten. Every once in a while we would sing it on Sunday nights during big church. The song is called 'My Sins are Gone' and it goes like this;

Gone gone gone gone. Yes my sins are gone.

Now my soul is free. And in my heart's a song.

Buried in the deepest sea. Yes that's good enough for me.

I will live eternally. Praise God my sins are G-O-N-E, gone.

Gone! He paid for all of them. There is no condemnation. There are no charges against me. He has erased the charges. He has eradicated the condemnation with His shed blood. I have eternal life. You have eternal life. Our shame and guilt have been wiped away. It's gone! Our death has been defeated. The dominion of sin has been broken. Now you have a new heart, a new record, a new life, a new family and a new home. Wonderful is the grace of Jesus.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,

That saved a wretch like me....

I once was lost but now am found,

Was blind, but now, I see.

We're not here to see if the music director or preacher can play the tune or do the dance that we go home entertained for. We are here to praise the God of glory and grace who came with salvation for me and brought me to the Savior and gave me the faith to trust in Him.

But there is another group reading this and I praise God you are reading this because Jesus brought salvation for people like me and like you. You might be thinking 'pastor, you don't know what I've done.' That doesn't matter for there is no place He can't save you from. There is no person so lost that He cannot save you. I know that because He saved me and I know that He will save you. I have shepherds that went and heard a song, looked at a stone trough as they speculated 'what does this mean?' Decades later I have another song I'm preaching from that tells you exactly what it means for the grace of God has appeared bring salvation. Who writes that song that tells you what the shepherds looked to see? It was a religious terrorist and conspirator to murder. His name is Paul. God saved Paul and also sanctified him, secured him and sent him and He will save you.

Why am I pressing so hard on this? It is because every time in the Bible that such an opportunity as this arises, whoever is speaking and most of the time it's Jesus never says 'why don't you go away and think about it.' Today is the day of salvation. He would always press

home 'Come and follow Me.' I don't believe you are reading this by accident. I know there is a Jesus who brought salvation to men and women like you and me. He brought you here today to tell you of the One that you can come to who came for you and came to bring you to Him. Come just as you are. Nothing in my hands I bring simply to Him, His cross, we cling. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Take a few moments and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart. If today you are numbered with those who Christ has not only brought salvation but brought you to Himself by the faith that He gave you by trusting in Him, would you this day rejoice in the Lord! Oh Christian men and women rejoice! Today if you are reading this and you heard what you were looking for, you did not hear of a pathetic God pleading 'Give Me a chance' to do a patch work of coaching in your life but what you heard was that the God of glory went to the cross to save you. He humbled Himself because He loved you. There is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12) but at the name of Jesus you will be saved for He has come so now you come to Him and leave with Him forever. If you would like to pray with someone confidentially about this please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 or you can come and see me but come. I ask this in Jesus' Name, Father, Amen.

Power Point

FOR THE GRACE HAS APPEARED...

Bringing

Salvation

All Peoples

LIFE TAKEAWAY

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