

“For All The People”

Luke 2:10

Pastor Jarrett Stephens

I hope you have enjoyed our *Good News* Christmas series. We are finishing it up today and then heading right into our Christmas Eve services on the 24th. If you are in town, I hope you will make plans to be here. We have services at 4:00 and 6:00. And I want to encourage you if you are planning on coming to either of these services to get here early.

As a staff we met together on Tuesday morning and prayed together and then we canvassed neighborhoods and put door hangers on nearly 3,000 homes inviting them to the Christmas Eve service. I really believe this is going to be one of the best services of the year!

- It's going to be an hour long...
- We are going to sing together some of the great carols of Christmas...
- We'll have a time in the service just for our children – think old school children's church – that'll be a good time.
- I'm going to preach about an 18-20 min message...
- And then we will light our candles as we sing Silent Night together – I. Can't. Wait!

And so, hope you'll be here...again, 4:00 and 6:00 and if you have family coming in town, bring them with you, it's going to be a GREAT time together.

We've looked over the last several weeks in detail at **Luke 2:10 - "And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."**

In week one we discussed the context surrounding and the specific content of this “good news”. The second week we looked at exactly why this “good news” announcement brings such “great joy”. This week we are going to look at the final phrase of (v. 10). It's also the title of the message today.

It's a powerful phrase and let's just say it together...it will be on the screen for us: **FOR ALL THE PEOPLE.**

It really is an incredible thought...that this message of good news - that God has come in the flesh! It brings GREAT JOY...and it is for EVERYONE. It is universal in its scope.

Now, we know this...we know this from Bible verses like:

John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Jesus is God's gift to the whole world. And he is the perfect gift for anyone walking this earth.

Illus. Gifts hard to find - Speaking of gifts, we all have people in our lives that are hard to buy gifts for, don't we? Either they appear to have everything they need or they don't tell us what they want. We want to get them the perfect gift, but just can never seem to find it.

Well, I have you some ideas for that person. I don't know if you have seen this or not, but for 30 years *PNC Financial Services* has price indexed the gifts from the 12 days of Christmas Song. If you are looking at that perfect gift, maybe one of these will work, but just a warning here: If you go this direction, be ready to shell out some cash!

Partridge in a Pear Tree - \$222.68

Two Turtle Doves - \$450.00

Three French Hens - \$255.00

Four Calling Birds - \$599.96

Five Gold Rings - \$895.00 (up 8.5% due to retail price increases)

Six Geese-A-Laying - \$660.00

Seven Swans-A-Swimming - \$13,125.00 (this price has remained the same since '19, so that's good)

Eight Maids-A-Milking - \$58.00 (federal minimum wage has not changed so this rate stayed the same from last year)

Nine Ladies Dancing - \$7,552.84 (they weren't available last year due to the pandemic, but have returned at the same price as 2019.)

Ten Lords-A-Leaping - \$11,260.00

Eleven Pipers Piping - \$2,943.93

Twelve Drummers Drumming - \$3,183.17

The total Christmas Price Index if you get them every gift mentioned in this song which totals 364 presents if you count each repetition of the song: **\$179,454.19**

See, when it comes to Christmas and gift giving – we think about the perfect gift...we pay sometimes extraordinary amounts of money...and for every person it's a gift that fits them the best.

Well, in Jesus, God gave a priceless gift! And his gift is the perfect gift for every person that walks the earth. His gift is "FOR ALL THE PEOPLE."

And what I want to show in today's message is how this gift "FOR ALL THE PEOPLE" was in the heart of God from the very beginning AND then I want to help us personalize this gift and at the end of our time together show that regardless of where you come from, what you have or don't have, how seemingly significant or insignificant you are or you feel – God's gift of Jesus is for YOU! YOU are included in "FOR ALL THE PEOPLE".

And so, let's get to work and see how this gift of Jesus "FOR ALL THE PEOPLE" was in his heart of God from the very beginning! And to do this, we will have to go back to the very beginning – the Garden of Eden in Gen. 3.

Now, you know what happens. God creates the heavens and the earth and everything in them and on the final day before he rests – day #6, he creates man and woman. They are created and given charge over all that is in the Garden.

God gives them authority over every creature that has been created. They are told to be fruitful and multiply the earth with their offspring, but there is one thing God tells them they are NOT to do and that is they are NOT to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they eat of this tree, they will die.

Well, you know the story. They are tempted by the serpent to eat of the tree and when they do, their eyes are opened...they have now sinned against God and immediately they know something has changed.

They hide from him. They feel shame for the first time. And as a result, the curse of the fall ensues!

- Adam's work is going to get tougher...
- Eve's child-bearing is going to get more painful...
- There will be a struggle now in this most intimate of relationships between the wife and the husband...

And when God curses the serpent (which is a manifestation of Satan, the Devil) we read of the very first prophecy regarding the Messiah to come. Scholars call Gen. 3:15 the "proto-evangelium" or the "first gospel". It's the first glimpse we'll see of this gift God is going to send to the earth...and this gift will be a person!

Gen. 3:15 – "I will put enmity (strife...war...there will be a battle!) between you (Satan) and the woman (Eve), and between your offspring (Satan and unbelievers) and her offspring (ultimately Jesus – Luke 3 genealogy so important!); he shall bruise your head (death blow), and you shall bruise his heel. (wound, but it's not mortal – we see the cross in this!)"

So, from way back in the beginning...this is the first glimpse we get of a Savior to come (human offspring) that will deliver mankind. But we don't know much about that Savior/Deliverer...that offspring until we get to Genesis 12 and the call of Abram.

Gen. 12:1-3 – "Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth (underline this! Here we see it spelled out – ALL the families of the earth – that's "ALL THE PEOPLE" shall be blessed."

NOW we know from THIS passage that the promised one to come will be from the offspring of Eve (i.e. a human) and from the lineage of Abraham (i.e. He would be of Jewish descent).

And we are given more hints or prophecies throughout the Old Testament to what this Messiah would be like. Moses even makes the point that this “servant”...this “prophet” to come would be like him in many ways.

Deut. 18:15 – “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers (Jewish...a prophet...a great deliverer).—it is to him you shall listen...”

And so for years...we’ve talked about this – the people of Israel waited on their Messiah. It’s never been a secret and never was a secret that Jesus came first and foremost to the Jewish people. The prophets foretold this.

Paul, himself was a learned man. Remember we was a Pharisee. He would have been trained in the scriptures, known the Law and prophets.

He would write in **Rom. 9:4-5 – “They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵ To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”**

THIS is again, why the lineage that we are given in Matthew and Luke’s gospel is so important and why they went into extreme detail to give it to us. They are showing Jesus is of Jewish descent.

And while he came to save the world – Jesus was for everyone – “for all the people”, he first came from a priority standpoint to save his people (the Jewish people) from their sins.

But guess what? God’s people...Israel...those of Jewish descent for the most part rejected Jesus.

John put it like this in **John 1:11 – “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.”**

They were blind. Their heart was hard. Jesus would say of them, they have eyes but do not see and ears but can’t hear. And for the most part, it’s true today – The majority of the Jewish world does not believe that Jesus is the Messiah – they are still waiting for him to come.

This is why the message of Christmas is so important because we believe in Christ, the Messiah has come – and he has come to the Jew first, but again...that promise to Abraham – in him the families of the earth will be blessed! That’s not just Jews, that’s Gentiles too...Jesus was God’s gift to the world!

Rom. 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

There are really only two classifications of people in the world: Jews and Gentiles. And Jesus came to save both!

The nations – all peoples - has ALWAYS been in the heart of God. God didn't just change his mind one day when Israel for the most part rejected him and said, "We'll, I guess I'll just take my message elsewhere! I'll move on to plan B."

NO, NO, NO...the peoples of the world has ALWAYS been in the heart of God. Go back to the promise he made to Abraham!

Gen. 12:3 – “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

You see God in the Old Testament sending the prophet, Jonah to Nineveh – a pagan people in a pagan country...and what did God send Jonah there to do? Preach a message of repentance.

And Jonah didn't want to do it why? He knew the love in the heart of God for people.

Jonah 4:10b – “...And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from the left?”

God has ALWAYS had in his plans for Jesus to not just save Israel, from their sins, but to save everyone. He has always been “FOR ALL THE PEOPLE”.

When Jesus is presented in the Temple, there was a man named Simeon who the bible describes as “righteous and devout”. He was an old man and the Holy Spirit had promised him that he would not die before he saw the Messiah.

Joseph and Mary bring the boy, Jesus in and look at what Simeon does and says (baby dedication)!

Luke 2:27-32 – “And he came in the spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

The gift of Jesus has ALWAYS been for ALL THE PEOPLE. For goodness sake, just look at the ministry of Jesus. It was one of light to the Gentiles:

- He healed a gentile demoniac in Matt. 8.
- He healed a Samaritan Leper in Luke 17.
- Gave that Samaritan woman living water in John 4.
- Wondered at the faith of a Canaanite, Gentile woman whose daughter needed healing in Matt. 15.
- Healed the Roman Centurion's servant in Matt. 8.

The last words of Jesus...what we know as the Great Commission shows he is a gift to the world!

Matt. 28:19-20 – “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations (all ethnicities/all people groups), baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

And we see the disciples doing just this...they start in Jerusalem taking the message of Jesus to the Jews first, but then they begin taking it to the Gentiles as well and in one chapter:

- Acts 8 - we read of Samaritans and an Ethiopian coming to know Jesus as the Messiah...
- Acts 9 – a Jewish man named Saul comes to know Jesus and changes his name to Paul who God calls to preach to the Gentiles.

Acts 9:15 – “But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.”

And we see throughout the rest of the Bible the GIFT of Jesus being offered to all who will come to him by faith.

The gift of Jesus was from the very beginning meant for EVERYONE!

Illus. All-skate

And check this: Jesus is NOT just for everyone within the classifications of Jewish and Gentile – Jesus is for all social and class structures within those races of people. Meaning Jesus is for the:

- Rich..
- Poor...
- Successful...
- Outcast...
- Powerless...
- Weak...
- Religious, non-religious...

Jesus is for “FOR ALL THE PEOPLE. Hey, is there anything worse than being left out?

Illus. Left out – being picked on a team, going out with friends Nothing worse than being left out...as kids or as adults. See that social media pic with people in it, and think, “Why wasn’t I invited!”

There’s NOTHING worse than being left out! I’m so grateful that God didn’t leave anyone out when he gave the gift of Jesus and we see this in the story of Christmas.

Look at the shepherds – outcasts/powerless. You think God leaves the outcast and powerless out? NOPE!

He delivers this all-important message to them. The shepherds weren't even allowed to worship in the Temple; they were considered ceremonially unclean. Their testimony was not considered reliable or credible in the court of law.

In fact the Talmud, which was the written ceremonial and civil law of the day clearly states:
“Give no help to a heathen or to a shepherd.”

Outcast, no-names...and the gift is for them! Tell me, are you here today and feel like a shepherd? You feel like an outcast...a loser...like no one knows your name or cares about you?

I've got some good news that will cause great joy in your life? The gift of Jesus is for you!

Just look in his genealogy (Matt. 1) – there are some knots on that family tree! You see the names: Tamar – Canaanite woman that posed as a prostitute. Rahab – she was a pagan prostitute. Ruth was a Moabite woman – a worshiper of idols. Bathsheba committed adultery with King David – ALL in the family tree of Jesus!

Anyone here today feel like you've gone too far...done too much wrong for God to love you? Don't think God is for you? Well, the Christmas story says different...it proves he's for the worst sinner in the room!

This GIFT of Jesus is for everyone! It's for the outcast...the sinner...the one who to the outside world is dirty and unworthy. The gift of Jesus is for YOU! I'm telling you, he's for the down and out and the up and out!

We see the “up and out” in the wisemen. They see a star arise and studying the prophecies they might have been aware of **Numbers 24:17** – **“A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.”**

These Gentiles (again, in the heart of God from the very beginning – WORLD) – they want to see the newborn king of the Jews.

Probably from Persia or Babylon they would travel with a large group of servants or attendants. In our Christmas Spectacular they came on camels and elephants...we might have taken a little liberty with the story, but who knows!

These men were men of prestige...considered very wise. They were wealthy and respected. And this “good news of great joy” is for them as well.

You hearing me on this? It's for the wealthy...those who have it all yet know they are missing something on the inside. Outwardly, they have everything, but inwardly there is no peace. Some of you here today are like these wisemen...you're searching for answers, you're just looking in all the wrong places.

Peace, and joy and hope and purpose – it's NOT found in that next relationship or that next "hit" of whatever it is that you think keeps you going. It's not found in the second home or the nice vacation – what you are looking for is found in that infant that was lying in a manger all those years ago – Jesus is for you!

All you have to do is recognize your need for him...surrender to him and give him your life...Jesus is God's gift is "FOR ALL THE PEOPLE".

It's for the outcast and powerless like the shepherds...it's for the pagan sinners like Rahab, Tamar, and Ruth and Bathsheba...it's for the wealthy and sophisticated like the wise-men. It's also for non-religious AND the religious like Mary and Joseph.

These two young people were God-fearing people. We are told that Joseph (Matt. 1:10) was a "just man". We are told that Mary had found "favor with God" (Luke 1:28).

Growing up in the region of the Galilee, they would have gone to their local synagogue. We know just 40 days after the birth of Jesus they took him to the Temple in Jerusalem just as the Law of Moses commanded.

They were very devout...very religious...and the gift of Christmas was for them. However, in their religion, they too needed a Savior. This is why Mary prays/sings in her Magnificat:

Luke 1:46b-47 – "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

Mary was religious, but she too needed a Savior. And listen, we know this – religion doesn't save. In fact, religion can drain and some of us know this all too well.

Trying to be a good person in order to attain God's favor is exhausting. Doing all the right things outwardly in order to be approved by God grows tiresome to say the least. Religion robs people of joy more often than not and it takes more than it gives.

The gift of Jesus is about a relationship. He didn't come to force you to live under a set of rules. He came to free you up to be in a relationship with him. And for all those that grew up in religion and you say, "I don't want anything to do with that!"

I agree with you...and the good news that brings great joy is for you because the gift is for the religious who are tired of trying to be good...to obey all the rules...thinking that if you do, then your life will be satisfying to God.

It doesn't work that way! Jesus came FOR you and TO you so that you could see it's not about religion, what you really need is a personal relationship with him.

This gift is "for all the people": It's for the Jew, the Gentile. The outcast. The wealthy. The pagan sinner. It's for the religious and the non-religious. This good news of great joy is FOR ALL THE PEOPLE.

And listen, whatever you do, don't miss this: This gift is for you! And what you find as you unwrap this gift is unconditional love, forgiveness of sin, a right relationship with God. There is NOTHING better than this gift named Jesus.

But here's the deal: In order for it to change your life, you have to: **Receive the gift.**

See, it's personal. **Luke 2:11** – “**For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.**”

It doesn't do us any good to be aware of the gift...acknowledge the gift is there...talk about gift. What matters is that we take the gift – this is when it becomes ours.

Illus. Christmas gift with your name on it!

Well, this gift has your name on it! I told every person at the Christmas Spectacular to personalize John 3:16! “For God so loves you...”

All you have to do is receive this gift by faith and the Bible teaches that your life is changed forever.

John 1:12 – “**But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.**”

Illus. Christmas gift to child

Notice they didn't say, “I don't deserve the gift” - It's called grace. They didn't say, “let me think about it!” They didn't bargain with me, I'll get you something! They just took the gift...they received it!

God is offering you the most priceless gift in his son, Jesus – don't put this gift off...don't set it to the side and say, “I'll open it later.”

NO! Receive the gift of Jesus today and I'm telling you your life will be changed forever – and this gift doesn't wear off like all those other gifts you get at Christmas...this truly is the gift that keeps on giving – so receive Jesus, the gift today.

And then if you have received it, well then here is your next responsibility: **Enjoy the gift**

Let me explain what I mean by this. What brings me joy as a father when I give my children a gift?

Illus. Souvenir/Christmas gift – What brings me joy is to see my children enjoy with the gift...play with the gift...use the gift...

This is what God wants us to do with the gift of his son. He wants us to enjoy him...to be in a relationship with him. When I think about prayer and worship, it must put a smile upon the face of God as he sees us interacting...believing...worshipping the greatest gift he could ever give.

Our God really is an amazing God. He gives us his Son and with his son come everything! God's riches become our riches! We become the heir of all things!

Look at **2 Cor. 8:9** – **“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”**

In Christ we are rich...you need hope this Christmas? It's such a dark time...a sad time for so many during this time of the year?

Illus. Day of Comfort – Monday 1-7 in chapel.

? - Do you need hope today? Well, guess what? Jesus gives hope...as you enjoy his presence, he can make you rich in hope!

? - Are you fearful right now? Fearful of the future? Fearful of what may be next in your life? Well, guess what? Jesus gives strength and peace! As you enjoy his presence, he can make you rich in strength and peace!

? - Do you need to forgive someone? Make right a relationship with someone that has offended you or harmed you? Guess what? Jesus gives you forgiveness and so by his grace he can make you so rich in love and forgiveness for others!

Don't waste the gift of Jesus! So many trust in Christ for their eternal salvation, but then they put the gift of Jesus on the shelf and don't allow him to lead their lives!

Illus. Elf on shelf/Jesus on a shelf

The reality is so many are suffering the consequences of a life not being led by Jesus and therefore there is no abundance of life...no joy...no peace...Jesus is on the shelf!

You don't want to give the gift back, but you're sure not enjoying the gift...you're not benefiting from it! Question for you: What's the point in having it?

Receive the gift. Enjoy the gift. **Col. 2:6** – **“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.”**

Third and finally: **Regift the gift.**

You all know about regifting, right? See, most of the time, we regift something that we don't want or can't use. But, you know where I am going with this.

The gift of Jesus is FOR ALL PEOPLE. And when we come to know him...when we receive the gift, the very first thing we want to do – it's the sign that we have truly been saved - is we want regift and give it to others.

And that's what I'm calling on us to do today. We can do it in giving to the World Missions Offering. We can regift in inviting someone to Christmas Eve service. Any time we share this good news of great joy, we are regifting the gift.

? – **Who can you regift this for this week?** (invite)

? – **Have you received the gift?** (personal – unto you!)

This is what Christmas is all about! Receiving and regifting Jesus – the Savior FOR ALL THE PEOPLE.

Let's pray.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.