

2008- CHRISTMAS EVE—NIGHT OF SURPRISES

LUKE 1:8-20

Rick Warren has been asked by President Elect Obama
To say the inaugural prayer- creating quite a stir,
But Pastor Warren is a sound pastor and book writer.
I was blessed this year with his book "The Purpose of Christmas"
I want to share his outline tonight.

Christmas is the biggest celebration around the world.
All the other holidays get a single day,
But Christmas gets an entire month
What makes Christmas so exciting is the **surprises**.
What's in the boxes? Bags?
As a child I remember that the most difficult part of Christmas
was waiting to open the gifts.
Days seemed like weeks.
Weeks felt like seasons.
Time seemed to stand still.
Sometimes we couldn't wait and peeked at the gifts?
Ha, ha, now they have peek proof bags at Hallmark?
An alarm goes off when it's peek in.

"Surprises come in many forms and guises: some good,
some borderline, But one thing for sure: surprises aren't boring."
Did you hear about the four stages of life:

1. You believe in Santa
2. You don't believe in Santa
3. You are Santa
4. You look like Santa

I was surprised this week hearing about a old tradition.
A German tradition of hanging a pickle in the Christmas tree.
ON Christmas morning the first child to find the pickle,
Gets to open a second gift.

Friend on that first Christmas night.
God didn't hide a Kosher dill, but
A Kosher baby in a manger
That gift has changed the traffic in NYC, TOKYO, and RIO DE JANEIRO.
Born in a manger two thousand years ago
From which every event in history is dated on your calendar
As BC –before Christ, AD-in the year of our Lord.

**8 There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night
watches over their sheep. 9 Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's
glory blazed around them. They were terrified. 10 The angel said, "Don't be afraid.
I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody,
worldwide."**

God surprise to the world was a great and joyful event
That was meant for everybody worldwide.
First of all the angels announced

I. CHRISTMAS IS A TIME FOR CELEBRATION

“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Luke 2:10 NIV

Christmas is a time for celebration,

But unlike the celebration you and I go to on Christmas

That after the dinner, after the gifts, it is boring.

That’s what Lou Holtz said as coach of the University of Arkansas football team that was playing in the bowl game, on Christmas, in Tempe, Arizona.

He was asked how he felt about being here rather than at home with his family.

He said: I would rather be in Tempe. After all, once you have been to church, had

Christmas dinner, and opened the presents, Christmas is the most boring day of the year."

When we are invited to the part of the King

Life just gets started in its glory.

The more you know about Jesus,

The more you get.

Unlike watching Frosty the Snowman, Santa Clause, and the Grinch

As soon as their over your checking the schedule

To another special.

We are complete in Christ.

The psalmist reminds us:

“This is the day of the Lord’s victory; let us be happy, let us celebrate!” Psalmist says: 118:24 TEV

We don’t have to be on our guard with the present of the King.

We don’t have to feel like we might be cheated.

These are skeptical days: We don’t trust anyone.

It reminds me of the woman who receiving her medication from the pharmacist, asked him, "Are these time release pills?" The pharmacist replies, "Yes. They begin to work after your check clears."

But the angels came singing and saying.

“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people”. Luke 2:10 NIV

The good news is that:

First: It is personal: “I bring you.”

Second: It is positive “Good news of great joy.”

Third: It is universal “For all the people.”

It doesn’t matter who you are,

What you’ve done,

Where you’ve been

Or where you’re headed

This good news is for you.

That is the biggest surprise of all.

That it is for you.

From a God

Who loves you

Who is with you

Who is for you.

**The scripture say: The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.
Psalms 145:9NIV**

If you feel alienated from God
It is not his desire or fault.
because he loves you.
Sometimes God calms the storm,
But God always will calm the child in the storm.
Christmas is a time of celebration.

II. CHRISTMAS IS A TIME FOR SALVATION

When the right time finally came, God sent his own son. He came as the son of a human mother and live under the Jewish Law. Galatians 4:4 TEV

Even children know instinctively that God is out there to help them.
Take the little 3 year girl who was sitting strapped in her seat in the back of a car.
She and her daddy were waiting for their mother to come out of the store from shopping,
It was a hot day and the wait was getting long, and she was limited in her car seat. She
hung her head out the window and yelled "Please God, Get me out of this."

That little girl was smarter than most adults.
She was crying out for a savior.
Because she couldn't free herself.
She cried: "Please God, Get me out of this."

Slide -----Maybe that is exactly what you want to cry out right now.
"Please God, Get me out of this."

Maybe it's a sin that has caught up with you.
An action that is now reaping a consequence
There is no escape. All you have left is to cry out.
"Please God, get me out of this."

Wal-Mart solution to more life is: "buy more so we will "live better."
(Unless, of course, we get trampled to death buying more).
Sears says the secret to happiness is to buy more to "fulfill all the "dreams" of others."
An electronic store says the key to your salvation- "Change your TV...Change your life."

Jesus came to deliver us,
But Jesus also came to gives us the freedom and power to grow up,
To move on and fulfill the purpose God has for your life.
The angel said:
**"Today....there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11
NASB.**

When you ask Christian what they have been saved from,
Many will say:
"From hell.
Worry,
Anger,

Bad habits”
 But those who have been redeemed will say:
 God has saved me from myself
 From purposelessness.
 From boredom
 From insignificance.
 Or from a past that I couldn't seem to let go of.

Without Christ,
 We are left without hope,
The trouble is that your sins have cut you off from God. Isaiah 59:2TLB

The biggest surprise is that,
 God didn't come to save you because you were good.
 He didn't come to save you because he cared about your problems.
 He came because he cared about you.
**I was in trouble, so I called to the Lord. The Lord answered me and set me free.
 Psalms 118:5NCV**

This past month I knelt at the bedside of one of our elderly men who is dying.
 His kidneys had failed, he was in pain,
 He was very distraught as he rolled from side to side,
 I said: “What's happening Jim?”
 He said: “I am afraid, I don't know what is coming.”
 We talked and he reaffirmed his faith in Christ.
 He was a lifelong choir member in our church.
 We sang together “Precious Lord take my hand.”
 He sang in his great tenor voice.
 It wasn't but moment later that
 Faith was rekindled.
 He couldn't stop saying; “Oh Thank you thank you, thank you!”
 When the family of faith gathers,
 Faith gathers its family around us.
 That why today as the children of God
 tonight we experience:
 Love, joy, peace, patience, confidence,
 assurance of salvation, and blessing of sins forgiven.

He canceled the debt, which listed all the rules we failed to follow. He took away that record with its rules and nailed it to the cross. Colossians 2:14 NCV

The surprise of Christmas is relived through
 Every gift you give
 Reminding us that
Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the lord.

III. CHRISTMAS IS A TIME FOR RECONCILIATION

Now we rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God---all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done...making us friends of God. Romans 5:11 TLB
 Christmas is a time for Reconciliation
 For healing with God and with others,

We all get stressed out over the Christmas rust,
 With the economy and the recession bearing down on us.
 We get short tempered,
 Were strapped for time,
 Stretched for energy,
 Its easy to snap back at our loved ones.

Reminded me of a **woman and her daughter were out Christmas shopping.**
 the crowds were awful. They had to skip lunch; schedule was tight, by the end of the day,
 Mom was hungry, tired and her feet were killing her. She was getting more and more
 irritable. As they left the last store, she turned to her daughter and asked, "Did you see the
 nasty look that salesman gave me?" Her daughter answered, "He didn't give it to you,
 Mom. You had it when you went in." Billy D. Strayhorn, Collected Sermons,

When Christ comes as the peacemaker
 He reconciles conflict and relationships.
 He turns chaos into calmness.
 Quarrels into quiet interludes,
 Stress into serenity
 Tension into tranquility
 Panic into peace.

Angels sang' I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

Luke 2:10

**"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2;14
 KJV**

I trust tonight in the pause of this candle light service,
 You would sit back and let God touch your life.
 There is no heart too empty, no life too lost,
 No home too broken, no soul too soiled.
 That God in Christ cannot make a difference when we give ourselves to him this
 Christmas

**God was in Christ, making peace between the world and himself. In Christ, God did
 not hold the world guilty of its sins. II Corinthina 5:19 NCV**

Once we have made peace with God
 You and I can began to make peace with one another.
 But giving the best gift we can.

Watch this clip of a little sister who goes all she can,
 To help out her brother.

Let us now join as we share our light with one another.