

12/21/25

Sermon Title: A Christmas We Receive Without Deserving It

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: John 3:16

(John 3:16) For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Merry Christmas!

This is the day we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

It is the day when the Son of God—indeed, God Himself—laid aside His throne in the highest heaven and came to this earth in the lowly form of a human being in order to save us.

Had this day not come, we would have had no choice but to face eternal condemnation.

For us, therefore, this is a day of incomparable joy.

But how was it from God's perspective?

Was He simply happy at the thought of saving us?

What about Jesus, who had to leave His Father's house?

And what about Mary, the mother of Jesus?

Was she simply happy to be pregnant with the Son of God?

As I have lived my life, I have come to realize one thing: people often lack a sense of shame and moral conscience.

Unlike animals, we go to school, receive education, and are taught character and ethics—but it often seems to make little difference.

People tend to care only about their own benefit, with little concern for fairness, justice, or the perspective of others.

Perhaps this is because we are born as sinners.

Even if the whole world lives this way, my hope is that at least the members of Church of Godly Dreams desires would live with decency and moral responsibility, by the help of the Holy Spirit.

Today, I would like us to consider—thoughtfully and with humility—the perspective of God, who had to send His one and only Son into the world; the perspective of Jesus, who obeyed the Father completely; and the perspective of Mary, who had to give birth to Jesus as a virgin.

First, let us consider Mary, the earthly mother of Jesus.

A virgin becoming pregnant—can you imagine that?

Today there is even a joking saying that premarital pregnancy is a ‘gift’ to the in-laws, but in the time of Jesus, premarital pregnancy was not something that could be brushed aside so easily.

Moreover, she was pregnant by someone other than her betrothed.

If that were the case, it would have been considered adultery, and adultery at that time was a grave sin punishable by death by stoning.

Thankfully, Joseph was a righteous man of good character and faith.

After listening to the angel, he set aside his intention to divorce her quietly.

Even so, Mary would have carried a lifelong burden in her marriage.

In addition, the stares and whispers of the townspeople must have been unbearable.

At that time, the world did not recognize that Jesus was the Son of God and the Savior.

The world mocked Mary, saying, “So you claim a virgin can become pregnant? And you say the child you carry is the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit?”

They mocked Jesus as well, saying, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

Mary, a powerless and ordinary young woman, had to endure all this shame and humiliation.

What about Jesus?

Jesus is the Son of God.

Why did the Son of God have to leave the embrace of His Father—the King of kings—and come into this lowly world, not as the son of a nobleman, but as the son of an ordinary carpenter?

And when He came, foolish humanity did not recognize the Son of God.

Instead, they spoke nonsense and ultimately nailed Him to a cross.

Though He was the Son of God, Jesus took on the lowest position, wearing a frail human body, and was hung naked on the cursed tree of the cross, enduring unimaginable shame, suffering, and pain, and there He died.

And what about God the Father?

As parents, would it not be easier to die ourselves than to send our children to die?

All of us who raise children can easily imagine the pain in God's heart as He gave His Son over to death.

Yet God willingly gave His one and only Son so that we might live.

The gospel began in this way—through the sacrifice and suffering of others.

The essence of this gospel is summarized in today's passage:

(John 3:16) (NIV)

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The gospel begins with God.

The one who initiates and accomplishes human salvation is not humanity, but God Himself.

Salvation is not something people achieve; it is something God accomplishes.

It is not that I believed in Jesus and therefore received salvation.

Rather, God chose me, and by His grace I came to believe in Jesus, and through that grace I received salvation.

(Ephesians 2:8) For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

(Ephesians 2:9) not by works, so that no one can boast.

Many people think that if they keep the law well or do good deeds, they will be saved by their merit.

But that is not the case.

Salvation is not received through human works; it is entirely God's grace and a gift from Him.

There is nothing that we, as human beings, can do to earn salvation.

Salvation is accomplished within God's precise and sovereign plan.

(Ephesians 1:3) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

(Ephesians 1:4) For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love

(Ephesians 1:5) he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—

(Ephesians 1:6) to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

(Ephesians 1:7) In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

Our salvation was planned before this world was created—before the foundation of the world.

God, who created the entire universe, who is alive and actively governing all things even now, planned salvation, accomplished salvation, and continues to preserve that salvation.

Next comes the phrase "the world."

The word world in Greek is *kosmos*, which refers to the universe.

The universe is God's creation—His workmanship.

It is the very universe that God created and declared to be "very good."

Since it is the world He personally made, how dearly He must love it and be attached to it.

In a broad sense, *the world* refers to the entire universe, but in a narrower sense, it refers to humanity.

It includes not only the Jews but also the Gentiles.

At that time, the Jews believed that they alone were God's chosen people.

They could not imagine that God's love would extend to the Gentiles as well.

That is why they did not hesitate to treat Gentiles with contempt, even calling them dogs.

However, when Jesus came into this world, the object of salvation was expanded to all humanity.

The gospel was opened to every nation and every person.

God loves not only the Jews, but the whole world—all of humanity.

Next is the phrase "so loved."

The words 'so loved' mean that God loved us so much that He was willing to give His one and only Son.

Yet humanity, whom God loved enough to give His one and only Son in exchange for our lives, was never worthy of such love.

(Isaiah 1:2) Hear me, you heavens! Listen, earth! For the Lord has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me."

(Isaiah 1:3) The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.

(Isaiah 1:4) Woe to the sinful nation, a people whose guilt is great, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the Lord; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him.

What awaited such humanity was judgment alone.

The wages of sin is death, and therefore all people deserved to die.

(Ephesians 2:3) All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

(Romans 3:23) For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

But God gave His one and only Son in order to save sinners who had no choice but to die.

(1 John 4:9) This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

It is vitally important that we truly understand this love of God.

The more deeply we grasp His love, the more truly happy we become, and the more we grow into mature children of God.

Next comes the phrase “he gave his one and only Son.”

God knew what we human beings need most in this world.

The most urgent and important thing we need is not to make a lot of money and become wealthy, nor to seize power and rule the world, nor to enjoy honor and fame.

All these things will melt away and disappear like dew in the end.

What we need most in this world is to receive salvation and obtain the ticket to eternal life.

However, in order to achieve this, the problem of sin must be resolved.

And the only way to resolve the problem of sin is for someone who is completely without sin to take upon Himself our sins and die in our place, paying the penalty for our sins.

For this purpose, God gave His one and only Son, Jesus, who knew no sin, as a sacrificial offering.

Next comes the phrase “whoever believes in him.”

The gospel is open to all humanity, to every person.

However, that does not mean the power of the gospel is automatically applied to everyone.

The saving effect of the gospel is given only to those who believe.

We are saved simply by believing that Jesus is our Savior.

No other conditions are required for salvation.

There is no requirement to have money, to be highly educated, or to have attended church for many years.

The only requirement is to believe that Jesus Christ came into this world as our Savior to atone for our sins.

(John 1:12) Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Finally comes the phrase “shall not perish but have eternal life.”

All humanity is born with a sinful nature and lives in sin, and therefore is destined for destruction.

But God sent His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, and had Him die on the cross in our place to pay the price for our sins.

As a result, whoever believes in Him will not perish, but will be saved and receive eternal life.

This is the gospel—the Good News.

But why is the gospel called *Good News*?

First, because it is free.

Salvation is a free gift given by God’s grace.

Because people rarely experience anything truly free in life, the fact that salvation is free often becomes a stumbling block to belief.

Nevertheless, salvation is indeed a free gift that God gives to those who believe. There is nothing we have done to earn it.

From the beginning, God planned salvation, sent His Son, and had Him bear our sins and die on the cross in our place.

We simply believe in what He has done.

Even that faith itself is not something we produce by our own effort; it is made possible by the help of the Holy Spirit.

Second, because its effect is immeasurably great.

Those who believe in Jesus Christ and receive salvation are given eternal life, while those who do not believe face eternal destruction.

Though we live together in this world now and may not see the difference clearly, the final destiny of the saved and the unsaved will be as different as heaven and earth.

Beloved members of Church of Godly Dreams,

Through the birth of Jesus Christ, we have received salvation.

We, who were born with a destiny that could only end in death because of sin, have been given eternal life through Jesus Christ and no longer face death.

We have received this precious gift freely, without cost.

Yet, in truth, it was not free at all.

In order to give it to us, God had to give His one and only Son over to the cross. Jesus laid aside His heavenly throne, came down to this lowly world, endured humiliation and suffering, and shed His blood on the cross.

Mary carried a child as a virgin and lived under the scorn and accusations of the world.

Salvation has been given to humanity at the cost of their sacrifice and suffering.

And yet, if we refuse to receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and fail to obtain salvation and eternal life, then why did God have to give His one and only Son to the cross?

Why did Jesus have to shed His blood and die on the cross?

Why did Mary have to endure the world's scorn and bring Jesus Christ into this world?

On this Christmas Day, rather than rejoicing thoughtlessly, let us reflect on the noble love and sacrifice of these individuals and give thanks for the grace we have received through them.

Let us live in such a way that their sacrifice in bringing us the gospel—the Good News—will not be in vain.

Let us proclaim this gospel widely to the world.

Let us share it with our families, our friends, and our neighbors, so that they too may hear the gospel and enjoy the same grace that we have received.