

**Christmas 11pm**

**12-24-08**

**“Simply Givers, Simply Receivers!”**

I. **INTRO:**

- A. I was listening to **PBS Radio**, a show caught my attention: A man decided to **ride a donkey** from *Nazareth to Bethlehem* (about 80 miles). It took him 3 donkeys to do it!
1. Said couldn't even get the 1st one to go. *They were stubborn & wouldn't comply!*
  2. I'm yellin at my radio, “now try it **9 months pregnant**, when your **poor & can't afford a second donkey.**”
- B. Our **7pm service** we talked about *Simply Christ*, making just **Jesus** the focus, stripping away every else.
1. The wise men got it...**read Mt.2:11.**
- C. We are both **givers & receivers** at Christmas. Let's just remember which comes **first**.
1. Uhh, which one comes first?

II. **SIMPLY GIVERS!**

- A. **Christmas is about giving! Right?**
1. James said(1:17), **Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.**
  2. And what about John's famous 3:16 **For God so love the world that He gave His only Son...**
    - a) **So Christmas must be about giving! Right?**
- B. **Yes**, but **who** is doing the **giving?** & who is doing the **receiving?**
1. We find in the Christmas story we are the **unlikely recipients** of a **divine gift** of which we are **totally & completely unworthy!**
  2. **The Giver** in the story is **God**, not us.
  3. **We** are the **receivers** who did nothing to deserve this tremendous gift.

III. **SIMPLY RECEIVERS!**

- A. This Christmas, focus **not** on what you are able to **give**, *whether great or small*, but on what you have **received!**

- B. **The Christmas Story, by Charles Dickens** makes us **feel better** about ourselves, & offers the hope that even the **worst** among us, *even Ebenezer Scrooge*, can become a **better person** through **unselfishness & generosity**.
- C. **The Christmas Story, according to Luke** is not about how blessed it is to be **givers** but how essential it is to see ourselves as **receivers**...
1. It tells us of an **unimaginable gift** from a **stranger**, “a God whom we **hardly even knew**.”
  2. This strange story tells us how to be **receivers!**
  3. **Matter of fact** we’re told you **must be receivers** before we can even be **givers!**
- D. So after 400 years of silence, this God *whom we barely knew* now springs onto the scene:
1. The God who had always been viewed **over** us (Mighty One); **above** us (on throne); **before** us (pillar of fire); **on the mountain** (Sinai); **in the Temple** (Shekinah glory); **in the cloud** (pillar of cloud). **But** never before had it been **God with us!**
  2. A God we can now know...**in the flesh**/incarnationally!
- E. Look how he teaches us on **receiving** in that first Christmas Story!
1. He chooses **Bethlehem** - Not a large, successful, significant city. No, just the opposite.
    - a) Micah 5:2 **But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.**
  2. He chooses **Shepherds** - Not honorable characters, bad reputations, with no spiritual depth.
  3. He chooses **Mary & Joseph** - Not because of their great achievements, or for the opportunities they could offer Him.
    - a) They each had received **mercy & grace** from God.
    - b) Angel to Mary, “**rejoice highly favored one**.” (graced one)
    - c) **We love Him because He first loved us!**
    - d) **Freely you have received, freely give.**
- F. **Christmas** is an **appropriate time** to express the love of Christ through **special giving & acts of compassion**.
- G. **We are both givers & receivers** at Christmas. **Let’s just remember** which comes **first**.
1. We can only **give** because we first **received**.
  2. Christmas is about **receiving** God’s great love, **& then** about **giving**.

### 3. Have you received the **indescribable gift...Jesus Christ?**

- H. Jesus said, **Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.**
1. The Greek word for **Inn** in our Christmas story is **kataleema**, & it can be translated, “a place to loose one’s burdens”. (explain an Inn)
  2. **Jesus invites you tonight to join Him in His Inn...**  
 “loose your burden” of **sin**;  
 “loose your burden” of the **cares**/anxieties of this world;  
 “loose your burden” of lifes **uncertainties & what lies ahead.**
- I. **Hark! The Herald Angel Sings:**  
**Mild he lays His glory by, Born that men no more may die;**  
**Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth.**
- J. **Pray** - Salvation.
- K. **Candle Lighting!** (symbolism)
1. **Read** words to “**Oh Holy Night**” 2nd Stanza.
  2. He is the light of the world – Once reconciled, we are the lights of the world.
- L. **We are both givers & receivers** at Christmas. **Let’s just remember** which comes **first.**