

Guest Preacher Rev. Donald M Macleod

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Preacher: Rev. Donald M. Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn for a short time back to the chapter we had. It's a short time not because of lack of content to say, it's quite the opposite. We come back to the verses we know so well.

John 3, 16 and verse 17. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Now, I'm not bringing any new theology from Graver or indeed from Tolstah to Barvis this evening. This is a verse we've all heard and we've read so many times.

We've heard preaching, I'm sure, countless times. But just for, again, our short time this evening, given the day it is and given this week and given the events of this week, I want to look just very in one view of this verse.

And that is the view, quite simply, of Jesus being the gift from God. It's a very simple view. But brothers and sisters and friends, sometimes I worry that we, myself included, when I say we, that we overcomplicate the gospel.

[1 : 15] Now, when we deal with God and the person of God and the attributes and the various varieties and layers of the discussions that lay around who God is and what God does, there is infinite depth in that because we deal with an infinite God.

But the gospel itself is not infinitely complicated. At least it shouldn't be. The gospel itself is quite beautifully simple. Well, this morning in Tulsa, we had a family service, of course, and we were looking at the three gifts of the wise men.

And it struck me just how simple the gospel is. It's so simple it can be, as well, reduced down to the three gifts that the wise men brought. And here this evening, in our verses here, verse 16 and verse 17, mostly verse 16, the simple gospel, of course, is presented to us.

So three simple headings for our simple gospel. First of all, we see, of course, the giver. Then, of course, we see the gift.

And then the recipients. Now, I'm not Mordor Campbell. I can't think of three Gs that go together. If you think of a word beginning with G that is the same as the recipients, then please let me know afterwards. But the giver, the gift, and annoyingly, the recipients.

[2 : 35] First of all, the giver. Of course, we have the father. Taking the verses, we have it. For God so loved the world. For God.

As Jesus responds to the question of Nicodemus, of how we can be saved, of what does it mean to have eternal life, Jesus brings it quite simply back to the father.

For God so loved the world. Here, of course, we begin with the ultimate giver. Now, in a broader sense possible, the father is the best of gift givers.

As we stand here just now, and as we exist, as we breathe in and breathe out quite literally, as our lungs fill with air, we are experiencing the good gift of the father.

Every single day, every single hour, every single second, every inhalation, we are experiencing the gift of life that God gives us.

[3 : 38] So, in the broadest sense possible, he is a giver of all life. But even within our lives then, we know the father is a giver of all good gifts.

From our family circumstances, perhaps, to our personal circumstances, to our personal life, our work life, our home life, and so on, so on. All the good things, all the genuinely good things we have and we love in this world, they are, of course, a gift from the father, who is the perfect giver of all good gifts.

And note how the father gives in this beloved verse. For God so loved the world. He is the perfect giver who gives gifts out of love.

Perhaps, to our shame, sometimes when we think of the father sending the son or the father giving the son, we think of it as something mechanical.

Something the father somehow had to do. Somehow the father was accomplishing something that he did in a pure mechanical process.

[4 : 56] He was somehow obligated to do that, if we can use that word, carefully. That's not, of course, what we see here. The father is not giving the son out of some formal requirement.

Perhaps another fault we have when we come to think about the giving of the son is we somehow think, often perhaps, the father gives the son in order to make us lovable.

But in order for us to be saved, for us to be saved by the father, the son had to be sent to make us somehow bearable, somehow lovable to the father.

Again, what do we see here? Is that true? Well, no, of course, the opposite is true. True. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son.

We know, the verse is plain. It was out of his eternal abundance of love towards his people, the father sends the son.

[6 : 04] The son didn't come to make us somehow lovable to God. God looked on us in our misery, in our fallen state, in our backsliding, in our evil, in our continual hatred towards him.

And God looked on us in that condition and God loved us. Well, long before we loved him, he set his love on us.

Many years ago, I think my second or third time with you here, I was looking back to my daddies, and that wasn't yesterday, that was 12, 13 years ago. I was looking back and seeing what we preached on.

And Ephesians 2, some of the first sermons we looked at together, a very young and terrified Donald, but the same beautiful message we have today, these 10, 11 years on, whatever it is. Ephesians 2, verse 4, But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you've been saved, and so on.

[7 : 26] The gift the Father gives, it's not given begrudgingly. We know, as Christ tells us parables, as Christ shows us, reminds us, even the bad earthly fathers at times give half-decent gifts, and a good father, humanly speaking, gives good gifts.

Well, how much more glorious, and how much more willing, and how much more love does our heavenly Father, who made us and who knows us, how much more love does he have for us when he gives us the person of the Lord, Jesus Christ?

The Father gives us this gift, is given in love. And friends, the challenge this evening is, and the question, I suppose, this evening is, how is that gift received by you?

The gift of Jesus, and we'll see that in a second, the gift of the Son, the Son is given in love. It is given without any grudge towards it, as given freely.

How is that gift received in your heart? When you hear of the free gift of Jesus, do you sit and think, great, I've heard it before.

[8 : 46] I'm always in Tulsa on a windy night to tell us something we've heard a thousand times before. Or do you perhaps sit and think, great, I don't see why it's such a good gift, but I'm sure it is somehow.

When you hear of the free gift of Jesus, do you, in your heart of hearts, perhaps not publicly yet, perhaps not openly of anyone else yet, but in your heart of hearts, you think, that is good news. That's a wonderful gift, that Jesus came, Jesus was sent. The Father loved us enough to give us such a glorious, beautiful gift, such as His only beloved Son.

I can't answer that question for you. Your minister can't answer that question for you. Your nearest and dearest can't answer that question for you. But as you come to the end of this year, as you look forward, the Lord willing, to a new year starting, the question is, do you understand the free gift that's being offered to you?

Who is a gift in? Or what is a gift? Or who is a gift? For God's loved a world that He gave, of course, His only Son. Here we have, of course, the ultimate gift.

[10 : 02] And the amazing thing is that in Jesus, we find in His person, we find a gift. God gave His Son that is the ultimate gift. And then for those who receive Jesus, we then receive a greater, ongoing, continuous gift after gift after gift.

And we'll see that in a second. In Jesus, we find a gift that is both the person of Jesus Himself, we also receive from Him what He has purchased for us through His work.

It's the glorious truth of the gift of the Son. And we can't, and we'll be careful not to separate Jesus and the gifts He gives His people.

And perhaps some here, I don't know, but many people, many Christians even, before they were saved, they wanted the gifts Jesus gave without taking on Jesus Himself. In other words, they want to be somehow right with God.

They want to somehow get into heaven. They want to have eternal life. They want to know peace with God. They want to know that God is somehow pleased with them.

[11 : 16] They want to understand Scripture properly. But they don't want Jesus. They don't want to be under Him. They don't want to serve Him.

They don't want Him as Lord and King. They want His gifts, but we don't want Him. And the truth is, we will never receive the gifts that we get through Him without, of course, receiving Him in the first place.

And we see that ourselves. And for those here who know the Lord, before you were saved, perhaps this was your story. You puzzled, and you sat through months or years or decades in church, and you puzzled through how can you be right with God as you sat, perhaps even here, and listened to sermon after sermon saying, come to Jesus.

He's been given for you. He's been sent for you. And as you hear these sermons, you sit and you ask the question, how can I be made right with God? How can I know God loves me?

How can I know God cares for me? And year after year after year, you hear the same sermons and the same good news being offered to you until one day in the Lord's power, your eyes are opened, your heart is opened, your ears are opened by the Spirit, and you realize you can have none of His gifts unless you accept Him first.

[12 : 44] But once you have Him, then flows from Him all the gifts He has purchased for us. The only begotten Son.

Our discussion this evening is not the glorious doctrine of that, but that is one that is beautiful. But just to say in the view of the theme of the Son being the gift, we covered this before, but just to go on the edges of it briefly, of all the good gifts the Father could give and has given us.

Just think of how precious the gift of the Son is. All of eternity past, Father, Son, and Spirit, in perfect unity, in perfect glory, perfect fellowship, and we run out of words pretty quickly as we describe the perfection of our Godhead pre-creation.

And of course, creation takes place, and man falls. Of course, God has a plan and has had that plan from eternity past.

And we have to put human words to it, but of course, this is not how it took place, but human words to it would say in the courts of eternity, the Father, Son, and Spirit.

[14 : 11] It was said that the Son would be sent in down into this world, take on human flesh, become like us in all ways apart from sin, to live and to grow up and to be like us.

That the gift God would give would be born, of course, as a child, be dependent, humanly speaking, be totally dependent on the love and care of his parents, be fed by Mary, be changed by his parents, be looked after by them, taught by them how to speak and how to read and how to write and everything else, be taught by Joseph how to create and how to work with his hands.

He lived a normal human life. John tells us he grew in the stature of poor God and poor man, this was the gift God gave. And we see the eternal Son of God take on human flesh and enter into this world he himself created.

And I was reading the other day, these aren't my thoughts, but I wish I remembered whose thoughts were, they're not mine, but just the image, the image that whilst Jesus is there being tended to by Mary and by Joseph, he himself as God is still, as it were, tending to the whole world.

Such is the beauty of our Savior. He is the greatest gift the Father could send and has sent. And what the gift does he bring to those who know him?

[15 : 51] That he sent, he gave his only Son. that whoever, we'll go back to that in a second, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

If you come to know Jesus and those of us who have come to know Jesus, we are guaranteed that because his word is true, that because he is who he says he is, that we have been guaranteed the promise of eternal life.

And the glorious truth is, the glorious reality here is for the believers here this evening, for those who know and who love the Lord, our eternal life in one sense, in our real sense, of course, has begun already.

Yes, the day will come we will close our eyes in death and we will open them again in glory. But our eternal life has already begun. We are in Christ in the Lord.

We are safe and secure in Jesus. Nothing will interrupt that journey from point of our conversion, point of our salvation, forward into all the ages of glory. Our eternal life is ours.

[17:06] Yes, we live for this time in this world of all the pain and worry and sadness and sin internally and externally. But the truth is, and the glorious hope is, because of the gift of Jesus, we can know for certain at this very moment, we can know for certain we'll be with him.

New heavens and a new earth with him for all eternity, age upon age, with him in glory. That is the promise we have by the Father, that those who believe and trust the Son who has sent will have eternal life.

the glorious thing is, it's a free gift, we can't bargain it from God. This time of year, I'm sure you've seen plenty of things on the telly or online in the papers, so many scams, so many gifts for Christmas which look so good, but you buy them and they're a waste of time, they fall to bits or they require extra bits to be bought to make them work.

There's no scam here, there's no trick here, the gospel is that simple. God has sent the Son, that all who believe in him would not perish, but would live eternally, would have eternal life.

And this free gift, if it's so simple, then how do we receive it? Well, the same way you receive any free gift. This morning, again, family service, we had Advent boxes, we had Christmas boxes, sweet boxes, sweet selection boxes, selection boxes for our kids, and we handed them out to the back door.

[18:51] They were very polite kids in Tulsa, they all said thank you very much, and they all grabbed it, but they all grabbed it, they accepted the free gift, they didn't question how much they owed the church for the selection boxes, they didn't question where it came from, the free gift was offered to them off this box of sweets, they said thank you, and they grabbed it, and they walked off home, I'm sure we scoffed them quite soon afterwards, they took the free gift, that's still the example maybe, but that is the glorious nature of the gospel, it's a free gift, how do you take the free gift, how do you receive it, take it, receive it, it's as simple as that, come to know Jesus, come to cry out to him that you wish to be saved by him, that you long to have his salvation, come and know his love, and come and know the free gift of eternal life, you can't bargain God for it, it's been prepaid for you, if only you would come and take it for yourself,

I'll be bold, only because I'm visiting, I wonder if one of the main reasons you haven't yet received the free gift, is because you haven't actually ever truly asked for it, if you're waiting for a sign to come, my friends, I promise you, I can almost reassure you, if you're waiting for a sign, a voice from the clouds, you'll go to your grave without receiving it, if you want a sign, this is your sign, a boy from Graver and are living in Tulsa, preaching to you, this is your sign, from God's word, take the sign, the gift is a free gift for you, who's the gift for, if this gift is so easy to receive, then who's the gift for, who's the recipients, who have a catchment area of this gift, we'll close to this quite simply, for God loved the world, but he gave his only son, whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life, the qualifier is quite simple, friends, but whoever believes in him, now, you might say, well, can't that simple, well, we can go to the

Greek, and the Greek makes it even more simple, the word here, whoever, whosoever, in the Greek, it's just one simple, tiny word, three letters, P-A-S, pass, three letter word, P-A-S, and that small letter, that small three letter word, we have as whoever or whosoever, that takes in, it encompasses every person, everywhere, at all time, the gospel call is open to everyone, whoever hears it, just respond to it, that word tells us, it qualifies who can claim this very evening, the free gift of John 3, 16, it's all people, from this side to this side of the building, and those at home, from that side to that side of this district, and those further that way, and those further that way, from the youngest here this evening, the youngest listening in, the youngest of this community, to the very oldest, from the ones here this evening who are most eloquent in your scriptural understanding, to those who haven't a clue where to turn for half the books or any of the books in the Bible, from the most wise here this evening, to perhaps even the most foolish here this evening, the most concerned for your soul here this evening, to the ones who as of yet you haven't quite understood the danger you're in, to the strong and for the weak, to the big and the small, the full humanity that's

available here, you, my friends, are part of the word whosoever or whoever pass, every single person of every single type and language and background and story, the gospel is for you, the good news is for you, the free gift is for you, if only you would reach out your hands and take it.

You have a minister who I have heard and watched over many years, plead passionately, a minister who I know pours himself into the gospel work of this village, and the truth is neither Myrtle nor myself can plead you into heaven.

We can't beg you into heaven. If we would, we could, and we do our very best to get close enough to it. The reality is we can't do it. We can lock the doors, and we can go to every sermon here.

[24 : 10] The brother here, every sermon he's ever preached, it won't save you. If you do not receive for yourself the truth of who Jesus is.

Our hope at this time of year, and the Christian here this evening, our Christian hope would be that you would receive this free gift, and you be able to say along with the apostle the wonderful words, I have been crucified with Christ.

It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Our prayer is you would know the Savior who loves you enough to give himself for you. That is the beauty and simplicity of the life-giving free offer of the gospel.

It is yours this evening to take it up. It's yours this evening to receive it for yourself. If you haven't yet even considered these things, then please do. Speak to your elders, speak to Myrtle.

[25 : 21] Take the time to seriously consider at the end of this year where your priorities lie, where your purposes in life lie, and see and receive for yourself.

As we sung just before, taste and see that God is good. Come and see and know that this free gift is for you, that Jesus would be precious to your souls.

Let's bow our heads now, a word of prayer. We thank you for the gift of your word. We thank you for the promise that we find in it. We come to a Savior who has given of himself his very life for the salvation of his people, sent by you.

Out of his obedience to you, out of his love for his people, he came down into this world. He took on human flesh. He became like us in all ways apart from sin.

In order for having lived that clean, perfect, sinless life, he might be on that cross for us, a perfect sacrifice, taking on to himself the full wrath of all the sins of all his people, that all who come to him would then know for certain that they receive a free gift he gives, their sins are forgiven, cast as a well into the depths of the sea, never to be seen again.

[26 : 42] Help us, Lord, this evening to have an understanding of this glorious gospel. Pray once more, Lord, for our brothers and sisters here this evening. Encourage us as we are reminded us of the beauty of it.

Pray also for any friends this evening here or online who as of yet haven't received this gospel message for themselves. Lord, that they be awakened by your word even this evening to come and to read and see and take up for themselves the beauty of the free offer of Jesus.

Ask all these things in and through and for his precious name's sake. Amen. We can conclude our time together in Sing Psalms and Psalm 72.

Sing Psalms, Psalm 72. This, of course, is a psalm that speaks of a future reign of our glorious Savior. Psalm 72, we can sing verses 1 down to verse 9 of the psalm.

Psalm 72, verses 1 to 9. Endow you the King with justice, Lord, the royal son of righteousness, your people, your afflicted ones. He'll judge with truth and uprightness.

[27 : 55] The mountains will bring peace to them, the hills the fruit of righteousness. He will defend and save the poor and crush all those who them oppress. Psalm 72, verses 1 to 9.

To God's praise. Christ. Endow the King with justice, Lord, the royal son with righteousness, your people, your afflicted ones.

He'll judge with truth and uprightness. The mountains will bring peace to them, the hills the fruit of righteousness.

He will defend and save the poor and crush all those who them oppress.

As long as sun and moon endure, so will he live time without end.

[29 : 41] He'll be like showers on the earth, like rains that on moon field descend.

The righteous then will blossom forth throughout his everlasting reign.

Until the moon no longer shines, peace in above and will remain.

from sea to sea he will hold sway and from the river to her sand his enemies will make and dust a desert tribes then he will bend.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, with you now and forevermore. Amen. amen.

[31 : 26] salary I