

Well, good morning, everyone. Merry Christmas. I feel like we're still there. I've still got one Christmas party to go to. I didn't know it.

It was not on my schedule, but I was invited to it. And by golly, you know what? You're invited to a Christmas party. You go, right. So we got one more this afternoon.

So for me, it's still Christmas, which is convenient because we're still in our Christmas series. He became. Today, we're looking at how he became our savior. So I'm glad you all are here. Did we all have a good Christmas?

Did anyone. Is anyone brave enough to say I had a horrible Christmas just stand up and say I did? It was. It was not. It was not.

I know people been sick. It's not been the best for a lot of people. They've been fighting some stuff. So I'm glad you're here. If you're not here, I hope you're enjoying it someplace cooler than Indiana is right now.

Because, honestly, I want to take my jacket off. I want to open those windows. I wish they. I wish we could get a little breeze in here. It is stuffy.

Carly was working the thermostat, but I don't know that the thermostat is mentally prepared for the weather that we're in right now. So we'll just. We'll suffer through it. We had lots of Christmas parties. Our family has this tradition.

I know we're not the only ones who have this. We call it Trash Christmas. Other people call it White elephant. Anyone do a white elephant with their family? Maybe dirty Santa.

You do that sorts of things for us. Trash Christmas got named that way because my niece didn't want other people see stuff. She wanted new stuff. And she said, I don't want your trash for Christmas. And we love that.

We thought that was hilarious. So now it's called Trash Christmas. It's not literal trash. It's. It's useful things.

Things useful from your life, from your house, your garage, maybe your workplace, your closet. Things that are useful but no longer useful to you. They're not broken. They're not worn out. If so, we would.

That's trash. We don't do that, despite what my niece would say. But it's no longer useful to you. And so you wrap it up and you take the Mimi and poppies and we exchange it with other people. And you always find something funny and interesting that they'll bring.

And so that's exciting. I love it. Mostly because I get. I get to get rid of stuff I get to get rid of stuff that I don't need. I free up some cabinet space.

I don't have to spend money. Can anyone say amen to that? Not to spend money. But if I'm honest, at least 80% of the time, I walk home with something that I don't particularly need either. You know, eventually it gets tossed to the back of the closet.

Maybe I donate it to Goodwill. Maybe it finds its way back into trash Christmas next year, and I re gift it to the person who gifted it in the first place. But gift exchanges are like that generally, aren't they? You buy something generically useful, maybe a candle, maybe a small tool set, maybe some oven mitts, you throw them in a gift bag, you throw them in the pile and hope that someone gets it and just loves that generic gift you bought. Y'all with me so far?

I'm not. I'm not down on Christmas gift exchanges at all. But we just need to be honest about what they really are. It's not a lot of thought. It's pretty easy.

And we get to check off one Christmas duty off our list. Anyone with me on this, or am I just. Am I the scrooge in the room right now? You're with me. You're with me.

Absolutely. But thankfully, this is not how God sees gift giving. He. He does not believe in trash Christmas like my niece. He's like, no, we don't do trash for Christmas.

His gift is perfect. We're going to open the scriptures and read today. Before we do, let's just pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the way you love us, for the way you know us, and you know exactly what we need. Your gifts to us are good and perfect.

And we are so thankful this morning for Jesus, that perfect gift for us in his name, we. We. We christen the morning with his. With this prayer, acknowledging his presence in Jesus name. Amen.

Well, let's go back to a verse that we might have read a dozen times so far this month, but we're going to look in Matthew, chapter one and in verse 18. And here's how Matthew recounts this very, very familiar story. He says this is how the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, came about. His mother, Mary, was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph, her husband, was a faithful to God, to the law, he did not want to expose her to public disgrace.

He had in mind to divorce her quietly. There's a whole bunch of stuff right there in that verse. We're not going to touch it. Verse 20. But after he considered all this, his faithfulness to the law of God, the

fact that he was a kind man, and he didn't want to expose Mary unnecessarily to public ridicule, he thought, maybe I'll just divorce her.

And he's thinking through all of this. And after he's in the middle of this consideration, the angel of the Lord appears to him in a dream and says, joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. And this is the part where, if you've got a Bible open, you can underline this. You are to call his name Jesus because he will save his people from their sin.

Give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sin. Now, this account of the birth of Jesus is so familiar that sometimes it's easy to skim over what we assume we know about it. But as I was reading through the various Christmas accounts through this month and doing a little research on some upcoming sermons, I came across this little reminder that the way God describes this gift, the way God describes Jesus in scriptures, reminds us about his intentionality and purpose behind gift giving. There's no random candles. There's no scented blankets.

There's none of that with Jesus. I did not get a scented blanket, by the way, although I think that could be a thing. His gifts are purposeful. They're anything but generic. They are exactly what we need.

And the first thing we need is a savior. So he gives us a savior. That's what the angel announced to Joseph. He says, you're going to give this child the name Jesus. Not Bill, not Bob, not Ephraim, not Manasseh.

You're going to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. This Jesus name is a very specific name. In Hebrew, you would say Yeshua. Yeshua. It's a common name.

You might think you only know one Jesus. In fact, in Spanish cultures, they call their children Jesus, which is weird for Anglo cultures, but. But it's not in Hebrew cultures either, because lots of people had the name Yeshua. The first person that you might come across with this name was the successor to Moses way, way, way, way back in the Old Testament. Now, his name was Yeshua, but we know him more by what name?

Joshua. Joshua. That's how we pronounce his name in English. But he's a primary figure, and he was a military figure. He saved his people and brought them into the land that God had given them.

There's another Yeshua. Yeshua in Hebrew culture, he's an author. He

wrote a book. We don't use this book in our Bible, but some Christian traditions do. The book of Sirach.

And Yeshua of Sirach wrote, the son of Sirach wrote that. Sirach wrote the book, and Yeshua was his son. So he was a wise man. And. And some people think he might have even been part of the lineage of Jesus.

In Luke chapter three, Paul mentions a Joshua. And some people think it might be this Yeshua. Then there's a Yeshua that we see in the New Testament. He travels with Paul. He travels around with Paul and they call him Yeshua or Justin just to avoid the confusion.

Because it can be confusing when you're preaching about Yeshua saving us from our sins. And there's. Here's your buddy Yeshua standing right there, and you're like, not. Not this guy, not this guy. There's another one.

There's a better one. I'm not that. You're. You're fine, you're good, you're good. But there's a better one than you.

So Yeshua is a pretty common name in that. In that way. But this Yeshua was different. He would have a very common name, but a very specific and very distinct purpose. And his purpose was to save people from their sins.

That's what Yeshua, Joshua, Jesus means salvation. But only the Jesus of Nazareth will be the fulfillment of this name. Now what. What do we mean when we say that he is our Savior? The angel made it clear that he will save his people from their sins.

So who are his people? That's a big question. Who are Jesus's people, the people that Jesus will save from their sins? Well, Jesus himself describes these people. He describes them while he's at dinner hosted by a young man named Matthew.

Anyone seen the Chosen series? I love how they depict Matthew. Just a quirky kind of guy, isn't he? But he's at this. He's at this feast hosted by Matthew.

And Jesus has this conversation. So here's how. Here's how Luke describes this, this. This get together. Says Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them.

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples. Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners? You ever meet Someone like that. Mm. Mm.

They're asking the question, but they've already got the answer formed in their head. Why do you do this? And Jesus answers them. It is not

the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. He says, I'm not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

This is where the perfect gift of Jesus comes into play. Because, you see, God gave us a Savior because he knows we need a Savior. And if you want to experience him as Savior, you have to acknowledge that you need a Savior as well. He doesn't come to those who refuse to acknowledge their need of a Savior. He comes to those who are.

Who are sick and know it, who are dead and know it. Who. Who need a great physician. And they know they need a great physician. He only saves sinners and those who know they are sinners.

He only redeems lost men who know they are lost. He only raises the dead. He only raises men who know they're dead. He only heals those who know they are sick. And if you refuse to acknowledge that you are sick in your sin and sick of your sin, if you can't admit that you are lost, if you don't realize you need a Savior, then.

Then you can't receive him as Savior. But if you do, then Jesus says, ask of me. I will be your Savior. He gives us a savior, a perfect gift, and he also gave us a Savior as a sacrifice. In fact, this is the way Jesus becomes Savior.

One of the main features of trash Christmas is that it isn't much of a sacrifice. I randomly go around, find stuff that it's not really using, and I'm not using it. And. And it's still fine, and I wrap it up, but I'm literally giving something that's sort of worthless to me. But the practice of sacrificial offerings in the Old Testament is anything but worthless stuff.

No, it is the first fruits, the first harvest, the firstborn son. Jesus said, God requires this or required this. And this is the things that we've asked you the most that God says, I want. I want you to give this to me, the first lamb. I want you to give me your best.

Don't give me your least best. Don't give me the thing you're tired of and no longer want. Give me the thing that is gonna. It's gonna cost a little bit to give. Now, in Leviticus, when God institutes this idea of sacrifice among the Jewish people, the Hebrew people, this sacrifice is a way of experiencing atonement.

And it's A way of experiencing forgiveness. These sacrifices covered your sins for the year. It foreshadowed that perfect sacrifice that Jesus would become. The sacrifices also established this forever. The Bible calls it a covenantal relationship.

The sacrifices established this connection with God that couldn't be broken as long as the sacrifices were being made. The covenant relationship was being held fast and you could approach God even

though you were sinful. Your sacrifices made it so you could go into God's presence. It was a show of your faith in God and your obedience to his commands. It expressed gratitude for what God had done and how he'd taken care of you.

It symbolizes the idea of perfect purification. Purification and make. Make the amends for your. Your guilt that you carried with you all the time. So the Hebrews would do this annually, sometimes many times during the year.

Because while sacrifices addressed sin and addressed guilt, it never destroyed the power of sin forever. It never. It never undid sin completely. It had to be done again and again and again. Like a hamster on a wheel.

You could see it coming. There was another feast, another sacrifice we had to do to make sure that this year we are in right standing with God. And you don't see it just with the Hebrew children, but across cultures, many cultures, you see this idea of how do we keep the God or the gods happy with us, keep the harvest coming in, keep health coming, keep sickness away, Everyone, everywhere on this hamster wheel, trying continually to figure out what does God want, what does God demand? That's going to answer his holiness. Because we're not holy, he is.

How do we keep God happy? Some cultures actually sacrifice their firstborn son. I don't know. Sometimes we get the idea that we need to give everything away to sacrifice, make God happy with us. Maybe we think we got to remove ourselves away from the world and go live in a cave somewhere just so we're not tempted by all this stuff.

And somehow, if we can isolate ourselves from the world, then somehow we can please God and satisfy his righteous demands. And if we did that, would that be the perfect sacrificial gift for God? Would God be pleased with us? Maybe you have your own thing you do to make sure God stays in right standing with you and you stay in right standing with him. But the writer of Hebrews tells us that this is not God's.

This is not God's eternal plan. Yeah, it's satisfied for the moment, but only as a precursor to God's real plan, his perfect plan. In Hebrews, chapter 10, verse 14, the writer says this through that Single offering. The cross. Jesus has perfected for all time.

All time. Those who are being sanctified are made right. Did you catch that? There's a lot there. But basically it says this.

Through the cross, through the sacrifice of Jesus, the perfect gift. The perfect gift. Jesus became our atonement. He made us right with God. Through Jesus, we have forgiveness of sin.

And we have this now forever covenantal relationship with God established at the cross. Jesus and his sacrifice. He purifies us from sin. Yeah, we're still pretty dirty, aren't we? We know.

But when we stand before God, God sees us through Jesus. We're pure in Christ. Jesus became not trash Christmas, but the perfect love offering Christmas gift. God could give us that once and forever sacrificial. Sacrificial gift of God in Christ.

Jesus is the perfect gift for us. But. But that's not it. That's not all. He also gave us a sovereign.

Anyone know what a sovereign is? A sovereign is a king. When the wise men arrived in Jerusalem on their quest to find Jesus, they were looking for one born. They called it. They said it this way.

The King of the Jews. Now, kings today are a little more than celebrity figureheads. But. But to these wise men, kings would have had the absolute rule over those under Him. They were.

They had unquestioned and unchallenged authority. If the king said it, you did it. Here's the deal. We don't like to think about kings in our world, but Jesus doesn't shy away from this idea of kings. In John, chapter 3, verse 35, Jesus tells us this.

He says, the Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. The Father has entrusted everything to Jesus. All things. Nothing. Nothing remains that the Father is not entrusted to Jesus.

And whoever believes in the Son, the one whom the Father loves, has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life. But the wrath of God remains on him. We don't talk about the wrath of God much, but the Scriptures say that if you are not in Christ, if you have not submitted to the lordship of the One who the Father has entrusted everything to, the Father has said, listen, see Jesus. And he's the King of it all.

You all submit to Him. He is the One you need to obey. And if you obey him, you will experience eternal life. If you refuse to acknowledge and obey the Son, you remain under the wrath of God. God gives us the eternal, gives us eternal life through the perfect gift of Jesus.

And Jesus becomes our perfect gift when we accept him fully as our sovereign. As Our king. And as king, Jesus demands unchallenged authority, but he offers life and life abundantly as a benefit to those who become citizens of his kingdom. So the question this morning, is he your king? Does he have control over every aspect, all things in your life?

Because eternal life is promised to those who receive him as king. So

he gives him to us as savior, as the perfect sacrifice, as our rightful sovereign, and as the good shepherd. He gives him as a shepherd. Matthew 2, 3, 6. The king, Herod, the king hears this from the wise men and he is troubled.

He's like, what's this about? Not only is the king troubled, but seeps down to his courtiers, to his cabinet, finally to their families, and then out into the streets of Jerusalem. Because Matthew records that all of Jerusalem is a little bit concerned, consternated, about what the wise men come looking for. They're looking for a king. And Herod says, well, I'm the king, here I am.

Are you looking for me? They say, no, not you. There's another one. Oh, that causes trouble in town. All the assembling, all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

They told him in Bethlehem of Judea. For so it is written by the prophet. And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah. For from you shall come a ruler, a sovereign, a king, who will shepherd my people Israel. God gives us a shepherd.

What does a shepherd do? A shepherd keeps watch. A shepherd protects. A shepherd leads. A shepherd makes sure we have food.

A shepherd fights for us, he defends us. He tenderly cares for us when we're sick and weak. The prophet Isaiah wrote this about this good shepherd. He will tend his flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom, and he will gently lead those that are with young.

He's a good shepherd. In Ezekiel, chapter 34, God says of himself, he says, I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. Jesus says this in John, chapter 10 of himself, the fulfillment of Isaiah and Ezekiel. And even David says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, runs away, and the wolf snatches him and scatters them. He flees because he's a hired hand. He doesn't care anything for the sheep. But I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me just as the Father knows me.

And I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. David knew the Lord as his good shepherd. Do you know Jesus as your good shepherd? Today is the day you can make him your good shepherd. Today is the day to accept him as your Savior.

Today is the day to recognize him as your perfect sacrifice and to kneel your knee today to him as the perfect sovereign, to recognize him as your king and to trust your life to him. And if you're ready today to receive this gracious and perfect gift, we have people here who will pray with you and make sure you do not leave without surrendering your life to Jesus. We can baptize you this afternoon.

I love a good gift. I love a perfect gift. A gift that you open and go, oh, my word. How did you know? How did you know I needed this?

You must really know me well to know this is the perfect gift. And James says, this is how well our Father knows us. He says, every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights. You see, when God gives us his gifts, they are perfect gifts. There's no trash Christmas with God.

As we prepare for time of communion, Matthew, if you read his gospel, he begins with a long list of names, people who are associated with the family lineage of Jesus.

And I love what JC Ryle wrote about them. He said, included in that list there are kings and scoundrels, there's notables and nobodies. There's men and women, there's Jews and gentiles, those who were faithful, and many who struggled with faith. There's a prostitute, there's nomads, there's warriors, there's prophets, there's farmers, there's statesmen, there's ordinary Joes, those who lived in ease and those who lived in poverty, those who accomplished a lot. And we can recount their feats today.

And those who left nothing behind but their names that we read about in Matthew's Gospel. There were the shunned and the accepted. There was the creatives. And then those who were just. Yeah, we appreciate what they do somewhat.

There were intellectuals and there were a lot of people who were completely uneducated by our standards.

And that lineage points to this truth that Jesus Christ came in the likeness and the lineage of all these fallen, broken, sin, cursed, ordinary people.

That's kind of why he's the perfect gift for us, because it points to the fact that there's no one rich, poor, young, old man, woman, scoundrel, celebrity that can't be brought back to the Father through Him. The Savior can save anyone, anytime, even you. The sacrifice can answer the righteous demands of perfect holiness. The Sovereign King reigns over all and blesses eternally our obedience to Him. And this good shepherd guides, protects, provides for keeps and brings home all who are safe to their heavenly home where we will dwell in the

house of the Lord forever.

David wrote, this is the perfect Christmas gift. And today as we take the bread, as we take the cup, we give thanks to Jesus for this perfect, perfect Christmas gift. Heavenly Father, I'm thankful that we offer our ordinary stuff and the Scriptures indicate that our righteousness isn't any better than most of our trash Christmases in our family. It's not worth a lot, but you, you give perfect, perfect gifts. And the most perfect gift you gave us is Jesus.

So today, once again, as we take the bread and the cup, we acknowledge you as our Savior, the perfect sacrifice, our Sovereign King and our Good Shepherd. We give thanks for that. In Jesus name, Amen.

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