

THE REAL MEANING OF CHRISTMAS
1 Tim. 1:15

Intro: A word of welcome to visitors, and appreciation for the ladies of Central Bible Church.

Ill. The man in Atlantic City who walked up and down the Board Walk with a sign bearing the letters, "BAIK."

Confusion is the word which seems to me to describe in the best way the people of our generation.

We are confused about war, about nationalism, about racism, about poverty, about moral standards, ABOUT EVERYTHING!
drugs, abortion.

And this confusion is sometimes most evident in our leaders. Our politicians are confused. Our preachers are confused. Our teachers are confused. Parents are confused. So it is little wonder that our children are confused!

TEACHERS WHO SAY THERE ARE NO ANSWERS!

EVERYBODY WOULD BE CONFUSED IF IT WERE NOT FOR ONE THING! Peter says, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, unto which ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Pet. 1:19).

Long ago the Psalmist said, and he said it to God:
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105).

Our Lord added another statement which completes the picture that I want you to see this afternoon. Obviously for us to find such statements in the Scripture must mean that the world in is darkness!

He has given us His Word to give us a light in that darkness, but He has also indicated in Matt. 5:14 that we, His people, are "the light of the world."

I want to serve as a light today--if the Lord will grant me that privilege. I want to throw some light on the real meaning of Christmas.

Already we are beginning to see Christmas lights on the streets, in the stores, and in our homes. HOW WONDERFUL IT WOULD BE IF THIS CHRISTMAS THE LIGHT OF GOD WOULD PENETRATE THROUGH THE SPIRITUAL DARKNESS OF THIS WORLD AND BRING LIGHT TO THE HEARTS OF MANY WHO ARE STILL IN DARKNESS--AND CONFUSED!

I want to center my remarks today on just one verse of Scripture--a verse which you might feel is very strange for a women's luncheon.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS VERB.

It is pointed out by the expression, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation."

Paul uses this expression, "a faithful saying," five times in the Pastoral Epistles. Cf. here, 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Tit. 3:8.

These were the last of Paul's epistles, and since this expression is found only in these three letters, it would seem to indicate that it was a saying which developed as the truth of God was passed orally from person to person and from city to city and from country to country in the Roman Empire. Much false teaching was also being circulated, and so this expression was "evidently regarded as a familiar summary of Christian doctrine and precept" (Gurney, p. 45).

But it meant that these things had been proven true, that they were absolutely trustworthy, and so people could accept them and depend upon them without the slightest hesitation, or concern.

In short, here we have some light.

And, it is not only true, but it is a message of such tremendous importance that it can be accepted by all people with all confidence because it has direct meaning for every person of every age in every nation!

II. THE STATEMENT OF TRUTH.

Here it is: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

There is nothing where men are more confused than about Jesus Christ and what He has done.

Let us divide this statement into three statements:

- (1) Who He was (and is).
- (2) What He did.
- (3) And why.

A. Who He was (and is). It is seen in His name: "Christ Jesus."

There are three names, or titles, which are given to our Lord: the Lord Jesus Christ.

But these are often shifted around or used separately

because the writers of Scripture have a special emphasis to make.

Here it is "Christ," pointing out His Deity (cf. Matt. 16:16; John 11:27; 20:31), and "Jesus," His human name which is also expressive of the reason for His birth. Cf. Matt. 1:21.

The two together means that God became man without ceasing to be God. The emphasis is upon His Deity.

B. What He did.

Paul sounds a lot like John, but the Gospel of John had not yet been written. Cf. John 9:39; 11:27; 16:28; 18:37. It is important to note that three of these are quotations from the Lord Himself. This is the way He expressed His own birth.

It is what you would expect of God. It speaks of His pre-existence. Cf. 1 Tim. 3:16; Phil. 2:5-11.

Think of the difference between "Christ Jesus" and "the world."

C. And why.

"To save sinners."

Possibly out of all of the words of Scripture there is more misunderstanding about these words than about any others.

"Sinners" - this word describes what men are as well as what they do. Basically it means one who has departed from God's way, one who has missed the mark. And he commits sins because he is a sinner. He might change his ways, but he cannot change himself.

And because man is a "sinner," he is under divine judgment--the judgment of a holy, righteous God.

Cf. Rom. 3:9-20, 23; Isa. 53:6; Heb. 9:27.

"Save" indicates:

- (1) To rescue from danger.
- (2) To keep them safely (and, here, eternally).

Cf. Luke 19:10; 2 Tim. 1:9-12; Rom. 1:16; Eph. 2:8, 9; Tit. 3:5.

How did He do it? By His death and resurrection.

What is it necessary for "sinners" to do? Cf. John 3:16.

III. THE EMPHASIS OF THE TRUTH.

This is very emphatic. If we are identifying "sinners," Paul says that he must stand at the head of the list--and he speaks by inspiration.

Therefore,

- (1) All NEED to be saved.
- (2) All CAN be saved.

Concl: What light this sheds on the world! What light this sheds on our own needs! What a different view this gives us of the reason for the birth of Christ. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19).

What an occasion for those of us who have trusted the Lord to praise Him! And it is wonderful to know that those who have not received Him can still trust Him to meet their needs with God.

THE NAME OF THE SON WHO BECAME A CHILD
Isa. 9:6

Intro: When Mrs. Goetz asked me to speak today, I asked her if she had any suggestions for the message. She said that she did not. But then she said something like this: "Whenever we speak about the Lord the problem is to know what to include because there is always so much more that we have to leave out than there is that we can say!" How true! When we have said all that we can say if we had hour after hour to speak, we are not even beginning to say what could be said.

But I want to speak to you about the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want to use the one verse in the OT which contains the greatest collection of His names to be found any place in the Bible:
Isa. 9:6,

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

This verse is never quoted in the NT as applying to Christ, neither is the Lord Jesus ever given any of the names listed in this verse as they are given here. YET THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT THIS AND V. 7 ARE SPEAKING PROPHETICALLY OF THE COMING OF CHRIST, THE MESSIAH. Why is this so?

Part of the answer is to be seen in the verses themselves. They speak of the Messianic hope which is found throughout the entire OT.

Part of it is due to its connection with Isa. 7:14 which is quoted and applied to the Lord Jesus Christ in Matt. 1:23.

Part of the answer is to be observed in the fact that NO ONE BUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HAS EVEN COME CLOSE TO FULFILLING THE STATEMENTS THAT ARE MADE HERE.

Let us look at the verse very carefully and note every detail as we have the time.

I. THE VERSE BEGINS WITH A WORD WHICH INDICATES THAT IT IS A VERSE WHICH EXPLAINS SOMETHING: "For."

But as I look back to find out what it explains, I see that v. 5 begins with the word, "For," and so does v. 4! BUT AS I CONTINUE TO GO BACK I FIND THAT I HAVE THREE EXPLANATIONS FOR THE GOOD NEWS OF VV. 2 AND 3. (Read.)

--In v. 4 the enemy is defeated.

--In v. 5 the enemy is destroyed.

--In v. 6 a new King is predicted.

Together, then, vv. 4-6, give us the explanation for the joy expressed in vv. 2, 3.

II. THERE IS ONE PHRASE WHICH IS FOUND TWICE IN THE VERSE, GIVING IT SPECIAL EMPHASIS: "Unto us."

The Person the Psalmist is speaking about here is being given "unto us," i.e., unto the people of God in the OT.

Note this same emphasis in the NT:

- 1) Luke 2:11, "For unto you is born this day . . ."
- 2) Peter speaking to the Jews of Jerusalem says in Acts 3:26, "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son, Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."
- 3) The same idea is in Rom. 5:8, "But God commendeth his love toward us in that, . . ."

When this prophecy was made in Isa. 9:6, God had in mind the people of Israel, but ultimately the whole world.

III. WE DISCOVER HERE A VERY STRANGE BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT: "A child is born . . . a son is given."

The Apostle Peter in the NT makes it very clear that the OT prophets did not understand all that they wrote (1 Peter 1:10-12), and so this must have been one of those passages which Isaiah pondered again and again.

"A child is born" obviously means a human birth. Isaiah has spoken of a someone who is going to be born. Possibly he went back and read again 7:14. We know now that "a son is given" means that the child who was to be born was to be the Son of God given by God for men. "The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world" (1 John 4:14b).

So we have a prediction here in the OT of that which was fulfilled 700 years later when Jesus Christ was born: the son of Mary, but also the Son of God--man and God in one person!

IV. WE ARE TOLD WHAT POSITION HE WILL HOLD: "The government shall be upon his shoulder."

This means that the full responsibility for government--the government of the world--will be upon Him. And He will have all of the authority to do what He needs to do to establish His government over all the earth.

This is a subject which goes far beyond my purpose this afternoon, but when I get finished with my message you are going to be very thankful that "the government shall be upon his shoulder." You will not have to worry about inflation then, nor pollution, nor war, nor crime, nor poverty. He is going to make all things new, and He will have all of the

power necessary to do it! And we will not have to worry about how many Republicans and how many Democrats are in Congress, nor what kind of a government nations have. It will all be under Him. "The government will be upon his shoulder."

— But now we come to the main part of the verse. It has to do with His name (singular).

V. WE LEARN THAT THE NAME OF THIS COMING KING HAS EIGHT PARTS TO IT (in the Hebrew language). (In the English there are twelve parts.)

How many names do you have? Most of you probably have three. If you are married, you may have four. BUT IF YOU ARE EVER ASKED FOR YOUR NAME, YOU MAY BE ASKED TO GIVE YOUR FIRST, MIDDLE, AND LAST NAMES, BUT TOGETHER THEY MAKE UP YOUR NAME! We do not say, "My names are"; we say, "My name is."

There is no greater collection of the names of the Lord in the OT than we have here, BUT THEY ARE NOT HIS NAMES, BUT HIS NAME! One is not more His Name than the others are. You will not know Him as you should unless you know His full name as it is given here.

A. "Wonderful." Some feel that "Counselor" should go with it, but the Hebrew language indicates that they should be kept separately.

In Judges 13
When Manoah,
Samson's father
asked the angel
of the Lord his
name, he said,
'Why askest thou
thus after my
name, seeing
it is wonderful.'
i.e. my name
is wonderful.

From what we have already seen we can see why this is a part of His name. It means that He is a Person that men will wonder at. THE EMPHASIS IS UPON HIS NATURE. He is so incomprehensible that men cannot figure Him out. He is not natural; He is supernatural. He is a miracle, a wonder. There never has been and never will be a Person just like Him!

"No man knoweth the Son, but the Father" (Matt. 11:27).
"What manner of man is this," said the disciples in Matt. 8:27.

B. "Counselor!"

On one occasion when the Lord was in the synagogue teaching, and the people were so astonished by what they were hearing that they said, "From where hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary?" (Matt. 13:54b, 55a).

On another occasion He was in the Temple teaching, "And the Jews marveled, saying How knoweth this man letters,

having never learned?" He had never been to the school for the rabbis! Cf. John 7:15.

In Rom. 11:33 Paul writes, "Oh, the depth of the riches . . . For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor?"

Have we not all been amazed at the teachings of our Lord? Did any man ever speak like He did? F. C. Jennings has a very significant statement in his commentary on Isaiah: "Never was there one instant's hesitation, never a reversal, modification, or regret for anything He ever said" (p. 117).

He never gave a bad word of advice. His discernment and judgments are infallible, and no one ever need be concerned when they follow His Word.

C. "The Mighty God."

This not only indicates unmistakably that He is God, but it also indicates that He is actively accomplishing His purposes in the world.

Did the Lord ever fail to perform a miracle?

Think also of what He said.

- 1) Cf. Matt. 16:21--the first time He spoke of His death and resurrection. Also John 10:17, 18.
Was He raised? In spite of all that was done to do away with Him and to raise Him from the dead, He arose and left the tomb!
- 2) Cf. John 14:1-3. Will He keep His promise? The fact that He never failed on any other encourages us to believe that He will be faithful in this too. He cannot fail!

D. "The Everlasting Father."

This is not to confuse Him with God, the Father. This means that He is the Father of eternity, i.e., through time and eternity He is the one who will determine what shall be, and He is the One who will continue to care for His people in the future as He always has in the past!

E. The Prince of Peace."

He will banish all that disturbs and opposes the peace of His people, and then will make sure that nothing will ever disturb our peace again.

Concl: Can you think of any part of His name that you would like to leave out? Or, can you think of anything that has been left out?

As we look at His name, we stop first at His Person, then we listen to His teaching, and next we look at His work, only to see that He is going to be like this throughout all eternity AS OF NOW and that His authority guarantees eventually a peace in a new heaven and a new earth which nothing will be able to destroy when He makes all things new!

Is it any wonder that this is the third and most wonderful reason for the joy of Isa. 9:2, 3. May it be the source of our joy too! For anyone who has not received the Lord, you can turn to Him right now and enter into all of these wonderful truths which have to do with Him!

GIFTS

John 3:16

Intro: Have you ever noticed how much the Bible has to say about God's gifts to us?

— "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16).

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

"He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).

— "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:3, 4).

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7).

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter. 4:11).

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands: Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:24, 25).

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6).

— "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven" (John 3:27).

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (Jas. 1:5).

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. 1:17).

"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (Jas. 4:6).

"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17).

"The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it" (Psa. 68:11).

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6).

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14).

"Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things" (2 Tim. 2:7).

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7).

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (Eph. 4:7, 8).

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11).

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John 5:10, 11).

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

"But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation,

but the free gift is of many offences unto justification" (Rom. 5:15, 16).

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5).

"**The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (Psa. 29:11).**

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psa. 84:11).

"Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase" (Psa. 85:12).

"For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Psa. 91:11).

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (Isa. 50:4).

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Cor. 2:12).

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12, 13).

"**Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (John 4:10).**

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John 6:32, 33).

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).

These are not all of the verses where the word give is used, but we could add to them other verses which speak of God giving but where other expressions are employed, e.g.:

"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou

didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. 4:7).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

From all of these, and from others which we might read, what can we say about the gifts of God?

In answering that question, let me give you an acrostic -- an "arrangement of words" in which the first letters in each word, "when taken in order spell out a word" (Webster's New World Dictionary, p. 7).

The word is GIFTS.

Let me give you a word for each letter which will describe for us the gifts of God.

I. G -- GOOD. MT. 7:11 "IF YE TAEN, BEING EVIL..."

Some gifts can be a disappointment. Some can become positively harmful. Illus: When I was a boy, my friend next door was given a gun. He used it to take his life.

The gifts of God are never bad for you! In fact, they are so good that you cannot get along without them.

William Cowper wrote:

"O, Thou bounteous Giver of all good,
Thou art of all Thy gifts Thyself the crown.
Give what Thou canst, without Thee we are poor;
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away."

Solomon said:

"The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it" (Prov. 10:22).

This truth finds its greatest realization in salvation. Do you have this gift? Cf. John 3:16.

II. I -- INFINITE.

Solomon also said,

"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18).

Instead of the blessings of the Lord getting worse, or getting less, they always increase. John the Baptist said, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16) -- or, grace upon grace, **grace** and more **grace**!

We will be like the Queen of Sheba who commented after her visit to hear Solomon's wisdom and to see his riches,
 ". . . behold, the half was not told me."

"His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,
 His power has no boundaries known unto men;
 But out of His infinite riches in Jesus --
 He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again!"

Do you know this in your daily experience as a child of God?

III. F -- FREE.

This is suggested by the words gifts and giving.

When we apply this to God's gifts -- all of them -- this means:

- 1) We cannot earn them.
- 2) We do not deserve them.

Cf. Rom. 3:24,

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

"Freely" means without a cause.

The same word is used in Rom. 8:32,

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give give us all things?"

This is why the word grace is so important in the Bible.

Cf. 1 Cor. 15:10a.

IV. T -- TRUE.

This is in contrast with that which is false.

Everybody has some kind of a philosophy of life -- something which they think is true. They either place their hope on that which will please them now, or on that which will be right for the future.

How important it is to be right -- especially where eternity is concerned!

There is no need for us to make a mistake when we have the testimony of a man like Solomon in the Bible. Note what he has written in Ecc. 2:1-11.

What was his conclusion? See Prov. 9:10, "The fear of the Lord . . ."

Our Lord said, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall

gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

And He also said, "I am the way . . ." (John 14:6).

Finally . . .

V. S -- SAFE.

How thankful I am that I can say this! What a tragedy if, after all of these wonderful things, I would have to say that it could all be lost if we are not careful!

What better passage could show this than 1 Pet. 1:3-9?

Obviously Peter is not only happy for the moment, but he has peace for the future.

This was even true in the OT. Solomon (who has had much to say to us today) wrote:

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe," or, as in the margin, and is set on high.

Cf. Rom. 8:38, 39.

Concl: The gifts of God are GOOD,
INFINITE,
FREE,
TRUE, and
SAFE.

All of these gifts were guaranteed to us on that dreadful day when our Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross. But it all began to unfold on that Holy Night when our dear Saviour was born. As Eleanor Yost sings about that Holy Night, will you consider carefully where you stand in your relationship to God's gift to men -- the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you know Him? If not, will you not here and now receive Him as your Saviour?

And if you do know Him, let your heart go out to Him in worship for all of the many gifts that are yours, and will be yours for all eternity, because HE is yours, and the gifts are yours in Him!

THE VIRGIN MARY'S SONG

Luke 1:46-49

Intro: Possibly a little risky to talk to ladies about a lady since I am not a lady.

If we were seeking to determine who the most wonderful lady of all time is, the mother of our Lord would doubtless be #1.

And yet she is not as wonderful as many would have us believe. There is nothing in the Bible that would lead us to believe:

- 1) That she herself was born without sin.
- 2) That she lived a sinless life.
- 3) That she was an object of worship while she was here on earth. The disciples did not teach it. Nor is there one word of Scripture to indicate that she ever encouraged it.
- 4) That she is a mediator between men and her Son, the Lord Jesus Christ -- not a word to indicate this in Scripture.
- 5) That she was taken up bodily into heaven after the same manner as the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ -- not a word!

If we want to know the truth about Mary, we must get that truth from the Bible -- and that is what I want to do in these few moments immediately before us.

Her song is the passage in Luke's Gospel which we will consider -- yet not the whole song. Just the first 4 verses: vv. 46-49.

(Have the ladies repeat it phrase by phrase.)

The first thing that impresses us about this song, if we know our Bibles is this:

I. IT IS PRACTICALLY ALL SCRIPTURE.

Only part of v. 48 seems to have been original with Mary.

There is an amazing parallel between this and the song of Hannah in 1 Sam. 2 when Hannah spoke of her joy in the Lord after her baby, Samuel, had been born. It shows that Mary had a heart like Hannah, and that Mary had longed to be a mother just like Hannah had.

But above and beyond this, you can find parts of Mary's prayer in JOB, THE PSALMS, ISAIAH, JOEL, ZECHARIAH, and probably in some of the other OT books. In fact, I would venture the guess that there might be no other passage in the NT which has more of the OT in it.

Mary was a lowly girl from despised Nazareth whose mind and heart were literally saturated with the Word of God!

But not a second thing:

II. IT WAS A SONG OF JOY -- GREAT JOY!

Not all songs are joyful songs. Practically every mood has been expressed in song. But this is a joyful song.

Note the word, "rejoiced."

It is expressive of more than ordinary joy.

It was an overflowing joy, an exuberant joy, an abounding joy, an uncontrollable joy -- an inner joy which has to be expressed outwardly.

It was a joy like the joy that filled the heart of David when he brought the ark of the covenant into "the city of David," and 2 Sam. 6:14, 16 tell us that "David danced before the Lord with all his might" and that he did so "leaping and dancing."

There is no evidence that Mary was doing as David did, but this is the kind of joy that she had.

How would you like to be happy like that? Do you not think that an investigation would be worth your while -- especially when we live in a world where there is really so little to be excited about?

Oh, you say, it was because she was to be the mother of the Saviour!

That was obviously a part of it, but let me ask you not to jump to conclusions before you examine the evidence to be found in her praise to God.

Note as an illustration: the article in Abbott's report by C. Northcote Parkinson.

III. IT WAS A SONG OF JOY ABOUT SALVATION.

Now some of you may feel that we are really off on the wrong track -- especially with Mary!

Did Mary need a Saviour?

This is what she says! See v. 47.

But, you say, a "Saviour" from what!!!

Do you remember what the angel of the Lord told Joseph when he was explaining to Joseph what had happened to Mary? Here

are the words taken from Matt. 1:21,
 "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call
 his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their
sins."

These are two words that we do not like to talk about today:
sins and Saviour. But this points us to the reason for all
 of the tragedy and heartache that we have in the world today,
 and you and I will never see what our need really is until
 we are willing to recognize that we are sinners and that we
 need a Saviour.

And -- if we had no other evidence that we are sinners (but
 we do), let me say this very plainly and yet I trust graci-
 ously, if Mary needed a Saviour, then there is no escaping
the fact that you and I need a Saviour too!

But now let us ask: Where do we get that salvation?
 Is there something for us to do?
 Is there a price for us to pay?
 Is the salvation of every man from the
 penalty of his sins a matter that everybody has
 to take care of for himself, or herself!

IV. IT IS A SONG WHICH GIVES THE BASIC TRUTHS OF SALVATION.

Let me mention four simple and yet very important truths
 taken from Mary's song.

A. This salvation comes from God -- not from anyone else,
 not even from ourselves.

(Read the 4 verses emphasizing the names of the Lord and
 the pronouns that refer to Him.)

See our verse on the platform: John 3:16.

And this is why we call Mary's prayer, THE MAGNIFICAT.
 She said,

"My soul doth magnify the Lord."

Mary would be deeply grieved if she knew what men have
 been teaching about her throughout the history of the
 Church. She would tell me this **afternoon**,

"Don't tell those ladies about me. Tell them
 about my Son, my Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.
 The best I can do is to point the way. He is
 the One Who can save them from their sins. He
 is the One Who must be magnified.

Oh, how concerned Mary was (and would be today) that we
 think correctly and highly and lovingly of her Son, God's

Son -- the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us magnify Him. No words of mine can make Him as great as He really is.

To know the truth about salvation your thoughts must be God-centered, not man-centered!

But what are the other details?

B. This salvation is by faith.

Notice what Elisabeth said in v. 45, describing both Mary's faith and the confidence in God which is always our guarantee.

Faith is not what I do for God. Faith is that work of God in my heart which results from my hearing the Word of God.

Do you remember what I said a moment ago about Mary and her knowledge of the Word?

Perhaps some of you have been feeling in your own heart for the first time that these things are true, that this is the Word of God, that Jesus Christ after all is the Saviour and the only hope for this world! Cf. Rom. 10: 17, "So then faith cometh . . ."

There is no doubt at all in Mary's song -- all speaks of the deepest confidence, of absolute assurance.

But here is a third thing:

C. This salvation is by grace.

You might feel that you could never be saved because you are not like Mary.

If you think like that, you have not read this song carefully enough.

Listen!!! Mary was not saved because she was Mary. She is not in heaven because she was the mother of our Lord. What did she say? Note v. 48:

"For He hath regarded the low estate of His hand-
maiden."

Let me speak of the word "regarded." It is the same word used by that father who approached our Lord after His transfiguration on behalf of that demon-possessed son. He said, "Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child." To "look upon" means to

(Lk. 9:38)

look with compassion, with mercy, with tenderness. It is the cry of a person who has no other claim apart from the grace of God.

That is what Mary meant when she said,
"For He hath regarded the low estate of His hand-
maiden."

Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9.

But note this last characteristic in our text:

D. This salvation has to be personal.

(Read the text emphasizing the words that have to do with Mary, i.e., "my," "me," etc.)

In spite of the infinite value of the death of Christ, no one is saved until they believe. See John 3:16 again and note, "that whosoever believeth."

Many people love the 23rd Psalm, but they have never paid any attention to the one word which fills that Psalm with blessing and peace: "my" -- "the Lord is my shepherd."

Concl: Back in 1864 Christmas came on Sunday, like it will this year of 1977.

On that Christmas Sunday morning Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached in his church, the Metropolitan Tabernacle, in London, on the first two verses of Mary's song. He brought out many of the truths that I have mentioned today, and some which I have not mentioned.

But as he concluded his message, he asked a question which I would like to ask you as I conclude today. The question is this:

"SHALL SHE SING ALONE?"

Shall Mary sing alone? Is this song only for her? Or is it for you?

There are two kinds of ladies here today: those of you who know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, and those who do not.

Do those of you who know the Lord have this song in your heart today? You had it once; is the joy of the Lord still there? Out of all the things that you sing about, do you sing the loudest and the longest about this -- at least in your heart? If not, that song can be restored in your heart today by letting Him be the One and only One Who is pre-eminent in your life. Turn your heart back to Him today if it has turned away.

If you do not know Him, you can -- just as Mary came to know Him as her Saviour -- "by grace through faith" -- personally. Possibly as I have been speaking, the Lord has been drawing your heart to Himself. You have come to understand today for the first time what it means to be saved, and how important it is that you be saved.

"SHALL SHE SING ALONE?" May God grant that we all leave today singing the song of salvation that filled the heart of the mother of our Lord!

THE TRUE BLESSEDNESS

Luke 11:27, 28

Intro: Appreciation for all who have made the luncheon possible. Get the men out for their dinner on Dec. 14.

The message: How my text was given to me -- after a great deal of uncertainty: I was supposed to read Matt. 11, but read Luke 11 instead.

In vv. 27, 28 we have an incident which is not recorded by any of the other Gospel writers. It certainly is not to be confused with Luke 8:19-21.

"And it came to pass" indicating something unexpected which happened next -- an event of special importance, and so it is introduced in this way.

There are two statements:

- 1) From an unidentified woman.
- 2) From the Lord -- his statement in response to hers.

We can always be sure of anything that the Lord says, and so we can accept His statement without question.

However, unless a person is speaking under the direction of the Spirit of God, we must examine human statements to determine whether they are true or not.

Let us examine each part of these two verses to make sure that we know what they mean.

Note the hostile context -- as well as the content of what the Lord was saying.

The statement made was:

- 1) With reference to what He had been saying.
- 2) Friendly, not hostile.
- 3) From a lone, unknown woman -- not a man.
- 4) She manifested a lot of courage in speaking out -- but she was not speaking to the crowd, but to "him," the Lord.
- 5) Her two statements include the time before birth as well as after. The NIV does a poor job here with its, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth." This is a paraphrase, an interpretation, not a translation!
- 6) How wonderful it was to have a reaction like this!
- 7) "Yea rather" is a good translation. It means, "Yes, you are right, but not completely right." Cf. Gabriel's word to Mary in Luke 1:26. Also Elisabeth in Luke 1:42. Mary's own word in Luke 1:48.

But if this woman were looking for the true blessedness,

she still is looking only at the external and the physical. No one can get to heaven; no one can have his sins forgiven -- by being in a blood relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ -- not even His Mother!

But it certainly must have been wonderful to have been His Mother -- anticipating His birth, and then holding Him close as she nursed Him and cared for Him in those early days.

How such thoughts stagger the mind -- for all of this to happen to the Son of God, the eternal One, Creator of the heavens and the earth!

- 8) The words of the Lord are true, and can be accepted without question.
- 9) Instead of limiting blessedness to one person, his Mother, He opens it up to all who "hear the Word of God, and keep it."

How unusual and unexpected this is! "The Word of God," i.e., the Word which has come from God, a divine Word, and an unchanging Word -- the expression is used 5x by Luke, only once each by the others.

- 10) What is involved in hearing it?
 - a) Finding out what it has to say.
 - b) Understanding its message.
 - c) Obeying it by faith -- yielding to it.

- 11) What does it mean to keep it?

The NASB says, "observe it."

The NIV says, "obey it."

The KJV says, "keep it."

The Greek means to guard, to protect from outside assaults, to keep it in safe custody. It undoubtedly includes the others, and possibly it is through obedience that it is going to be kept, but we need to understand this aspect of what the Lord said to the woman.

What the response in the woman's heart was, we do not know. The important thing at this moment, however, is not her response, but ours.

Note the following:

I. THE INTEREST THAT ALL PEOPLE HAVE IN HAPPINESS.

We are constantly searching for it. This is a desire that God has placed in our hearts. The problem is that we are seeking it in the wrong places, and in the wrong ways.

The Lord intends to point us in the right direction.

II. THE AUTHORITY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Do you accept what He says as being true? Would you put His Word above and give it more authority than anyone else's word?

Do you put any difference between the woman's comment, as compared with the Lord's?

III. THE SOURCE OF BLESSEDNESS: THE WORD OF GOD.

Is this what you believe it is? It is whether you believe it or not, but it is important that you understand this.

What are you doing in order to hear it? Do you read it? Do you go where you can hear it taught?

How much of it do you understand?

Do you believe it?

How much does it have to do with the way you live?

IF YOU REALLY BELIEVED THAT YOUR ONLY OPPORTUNITY FOR TRUE BLESSEDNESS, TRUE HAPPINESS, WAS TO BE FOUND IN HEARING AND KEEPING THIS BOOK, SHOULDN'T BE IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO YOU TO FIND OUT WHAT IS IN HERE?

This "certain woman" felt herself excluded from true happiness because she could never have been the Mother of the Lord. But the Lord was showing her that there were no such restrictions.

But now let us come finally to:

IV. THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK.

What does it contain?

- A. It is a message of a Person: the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. It is a message concerning what He has done -- and why! It does not leave you in Bethlehem at the manger, but takes you to Calvary and the Cross -- and then to the empty tomb.
- C. It is a message to be preached -- and to be believed!

Concl: See the context following our text.

Happiness never comes in that which is not pleasing to God, and we can never be pleasing to God as long as we are in our sins.

Oh, "hear the word of God, and keep it."

OUR LORD'S FOUR STEPS DOWNWARD
Phil. 2:5-8

Intro: The theme verse which the ladies have chosen for this luncheon is Psa. 34:4,
"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

Note that the emphasis is on "the Lord" (which is Jehovah) and "his name." It is not on David, or Israel, or any other human being -- but on "the Lord."

But David is calling upon the people of Israel to join with him in magnifying and exalting the Lord! This is the place where they needed to be unified and where their unity began.

In Psa. 34 David is doing just this -- magnifying the Lord, exalting His name.

The two Hebrew verbs that he uses here are very suggestive:

- 1) To "magnify the Lord" means to make Him great in the eyes of men, to show what He has done for us, how much He means to us, how precious He is (the dearest of all) -- and thus to praise Him!
- 2) To "exalt his name" means to lift the Lord up from the low place that men usually give Him, to show how great He is, to honor Him -- and thus to glorify Him!

If David is going to do this, he obviously has to speak about the Lord -- and, as I have said, this is exactly what he does in this marvelous 34th Psalm.

I want to take this verse and write it over four verses found in the New Testament -- verses written by the Apostle Paul -- verses which have to do with the Lord Jesus Christ.

These verses are found in Phil. 2:5-8.

This is one of the greatest of all passages in the entire Bible on Christ -- His nature (or Person), and His humiliation in coming to the earth.

It has been one of the greatest of all battlefields for theologians who have sought to arrive at a proper understanding of Christ -- His Deity and His humanity.

While Paul is not writing a particularly doctrinal letter to the Philippians, he does seem to delight to take this opportunity to speak of Christ. Paul and David had one thing in common. They both loved to speak and write and even sing about the Lord! We should be like that, too. I like what Matthew Henry wrote about this:

"It is observable that the apostle, having occasion to mention the Lord Jesus, and the mind which was in him, takes the hind to enlarge upon his person, and to give a particular description of him. It is a pleasing subject, and a gospel minister needs not think himself out of the way when he is upon it; any fit occasion should be readily taken" (VI, 732).

So let us talk about Christ.

I am intentionally omitting the glorious side of this passage (vv. 9-11) because that has to do specifically with God's work. Verses 5-8 speak of the entire earthly life and ministry of our Lord -- not as a sacrifice for our sins, but to depict His relationship to God and His dependence upon God. It speaks of what Christ did!

And the practical side of it is seen in the opening words of the passage, in verse 5:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

So let us examine these verses,

- 1) First of all, as they speak of Christ, and then
- 2) Secondly, as they relate to us -- those of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour!

I. WHAT PAUL HAS TO SAY ABOUT CHRIST (Phil. 2:6-8).

He speaks first of all about:

A. His nature, or His Person:

1. That He is God -- and that He has always been God.
2. That He became a man -- a truly human person.

This means that He had a human body -- that it had all of the essential parts and organs that go to make up a body. He ate man's food, and wore man's apparel. He spoke, walked, thought, and did the things that are usually connected with being a human being.

But Paul wants us to know by the statements that he uses here, e.g., "in the likeness of men," that He was more than just human. HE ALSO CONTINUED TO BE GOD.

By "the form of God" Paul means the manifestation of the divine glory. This is what He emptied Himself of -- not laying aside His Deity (He could not do that), but voluntarily giving up the display of His

glory -- that which He prayed to have restored in John 17:1, 5.

It is important that we be clear on these truths that set forth the Person of Christ, the God-Man.

But the important part for us from a practical standpoint has to do with . . .

- B. His incarnation and death -- or, to state it in one term -- His HUMILIATION.

Paul mentions FOUR STEPS DOWNWARD which our Lord took, made all the greater because of the Person He was and still is.

Here they are:

- 1) He became a man.
- 2) He took on "the form of a servant."
- 3) He died, manifesting His obedience to God.
- 4) The manner of His death -- "even the death of the cross.

Look at each of them for just a moment with me.

1. He "was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man."

Is there a one of us who can fully appreciate these words? I am sure there is none.

The Creator became like those who He had created -- and by this very fact there would be more who would give Him full identification with man, even with man's sin, and make Him no more than a man -- completely failing to see Who He really was!

2. How did He come -- in regal splendor, as King of kings, and Lord of lords? NO! He "took upon him the form of a servant."

When the disciples got into a big argument about who was the greatest, they must have been shamed by His words when He said, ". . . but I am among you as he that serveth." Cf. Luke 22:27b.

Do we not all tend to sympathize with Peter when he at first refused to let the Lord wash his feet?

He came as a servant!

But that is not all.

3. He died.

But notice the emphasis in this passage. It is not that Paul is speaking here about our Lord's death as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, but of His death as the capstone of His obedience to the Father.

And then to make it even worse, we have . . .

4. The manner of His death -- "even the death of the cross."

This speaks not only of the pain, the suffering, that He endured, but the shame, the disgrace, the greatest possible humiliation.

And so it was not only the fact that He died, but it was also the manner of His death.

You and I cannot get this just with a hasty reading, nor by hearing a message or two on this. We need to read it over and over. Read Philippians over and over. And pray for understanding from the Lord as you seek to comprehend what these glorious, and yet terrible, words mean!

But now we are ready for the practical application:

II. HOW DOES ALL OF THIS RELATE TO US?

Now we must go back to the first verse of the passage:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

A. The meaning of "this mind . . . in you."

This expression points to the fact that the things which follow were not just the things which came to our Lord as He sought to obey His Father, BUT THESE WERE THE THINGS WHICH HE DELIBERATELY SOUGHT. The expression teaches us that what He suffered was not just the Father's will, BUT IT WAS HIS OWN WILL -- a will which He would never change, from which He could not be dislodged. This shows the depth and the reality, the unswerving determination in the heart of Christ to do all of the will of God because of His love for the Father.

This is why He so severely rebuked even His disciples when they tried to spare Him from the Cross!

Now we are ready to see . . .

B. The application to us: "Let this mind be in you, which

was also in Christ Jesus."

Is it? Is this the way you are headed -- not up, but down? Are you so determined that nothing will ever be able to turn you away from it? Does it mean more to you than anything else that you do the will of God -- even though it means for you humiliation, suffering, disgrace, and possibly even death?

This is the place where we find the Apostle Paul as he writes to the Philippians. And with it overflowing joy and absolute contentment.

But let us look finally at . . .

- C. The details to be taken care of in making the application.

Let me mention 4 important things:

1. The continual contemplation of Christ -- what He did in coming into this world.

We get into trouble when we lose sight of Him.

2. Our humanity.

Do not get these first two points reversed, or you will object to what I am going to say?

Have you really seen yourself as you actually are? Are you proud of what you see?

Perhaps you are not more amazed at the incarnation of Christ is because you have never seen the weakness as well as the corruption of the heart of man.

3. Our necessary humility.

Concerning our Lord, Paul says, "He humbled himself." You would expect to see this said about men, or even about angels, but not about our Lord.

This is the same idea that you will find in our Lord's words when He said, "I am . . . lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29).

It means this: That our Lord had entered fully into the creature's place of utter dependence upon God. It is an expression (according to Trench) which means that we have nothing in ourselves, that we receive all things from God, and that our lives here

are "a constant living on the fulness of" our "Father's love" (Trench, p. 151).

Do you live this way, or is God Someone you call on in times of trouble, but most things you seek to do for yourself?

One reason we have so much trouble with each other is because we have never learned this simple lesson from our Lord Himself! See Phil. 2:2, 3. Matthew Henry says:

"If we were lowly-minded, we should be like-minded; and, if we were like Christ, we should be lowly-minded" (VI, 732).

But there is one other thing:

4. Obedience. He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

The word obedient means to have your hearing under God -- that you give Him your ear, and then do what He says.

And note: You do not do it because it will get you out of your troubles. It may get you into more -- as it did with our Lord. You do it because that is all of the light you have -- and then you leave the outcome to the Lord.

Most of the time we do not see immediate results from our obedience, but that is where we have to leave the outcome with the Lord. Our Lord was determined to obey God, and nobody could turn Him aside from that!

Concl: Do you have the mind of Christ?

May I point out one thing in closing which may make you feel even more uncomfortable? Paul mentions all of this, not only concerning our relationship to God, but in our relationship with each other! That is where our obedience is going to be tested -- in our homes, in the church! Let us remember that we are unworthy human beings, absolutely dependent upon God for everything, and that our highest honor, as well as our greatest need, is to do the will of God -- not because we have to, but as the Lord did -- because He could not be satisfied with anything else.

Let us pray that the mind of Christ may be seen in us at this Christmas time -- and throughout the rest of our lives!