

The Only One Who Can Deliver God's Gifts

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[0 : 00] So I wonder, boys and girls, if anyone's got presents from Santa yet this morning?! Put up your hands if you've already got presents from Father Christmas. Okay, I hope you were happy with them.

Were you? Because as a kid I was told that the presents Santa brings are really the best quality presents because they come all the way from the North Pole, right? And they're made by the elves in the big elf factory where all the presents come from. That's what I was told.

But more recently I heard that there are rival elves in the South Pole. I don't know if you've heard about these elves. And they make very similar presents to the North Pole elves but for a quarter of the price.

And so they undercut the North Pole elves. I'll show you some of the things that they make. So instead of the PlayStation that you might want to get, they make the, let's see it, the game station at a fraction of the cost.

And rather than expensive Lego Star Wars, they instead make Lele Starwart. Maybe you prefer Harry Potter. Well then you'll love the Justice Magician building set.

[1 : 13] Or do you want some action heroes? Well from the South Pole elves you can get Super Spitting Silk Man and the Transfigures.

But maybe as a grown-up you asked Santa for more mature presents. So maybe you asked for a Roomba. You know those robot vacuum cleaners? The South Pole elves, they get the sweep.

Now the sweep doesn't actually vacuum anything. But it looks just like the real thing. Oh and also the South Pole elves make a variety of snacks and drinks including burritos, Ditos, Catcot.

And if you need a boost you can always have some red goats. Now boys and girls, let me ask you where would you prefer to get your gifts from?

The North Pole elves? Put up your hands. The South Pole elves? No, nobody wants the South Pole elf gifts. So it does make a difference where you get your gifts from.

[2 : 17] Right? Where your gifts come from. Now this month we've been learning, all this month in Isaiah, about the amazing gifts that God wants to give us. Right? And that's what Christmas is about.

God wants to give us some amazing gifts. And these are things that we all need in our lives. And they are truth, joy, freedom and peace.

And we've been learning how God has sent Jesus into our world to bring us these things. Truth, joy, freedom and peace. The problem though, and why a lot of people still don't pay attention to Jesus, is that we tend to think we can get those same gifts somewhere else cheaper.

That we can get truth from the internet. Or we can get joy and peace from our money and possessions and the stuff we have. But when we rely on those things to get those gifts, all we actually end up getting are cheap imitations that don't really last.

And that is why in this passage, after Isaiah tells us all about the gifts that God wants to give us through Jesus, he also, in a very important verse that I want to look at this morning, he tells us why Jesus is the only one who is able to give us the real things.

[3 : 37] The real truth, the real joy, the real freedom, the real peace. And it's all because of who he is, which is described in four names. Right at the end of that reading that Dylan read for us earlier.

I wonder if you heard those four names. I'll read Isaiah 9 verse 6 again. It says, Four names.

And we've looked at four gifts. Because each one of these names actually shows us why only Jesus can bring genuine truth and joy and freedom and peace into your life and my life.

So let's quickly look at each of those. That's what we're going to learn this Christmas. We're going to learn what those four names mean. So firstly, Jesus gives us truth because he's the wonderful

counselor.

He gives us truth because he's the wonderful counselor. Now what is a counselor? Well, a counselor is someone who helps you to make the right decisions in your life.

[4 : 50] Now we often have people who counsel us. So boys and girls, you might have a counselor, a school counselor, who will help you to make decisions or help you to know how to deal with difficulties at school.

Grownups, you'll have counselors. You'll have maybe a psychiatric counselor, maybe a financial advisor who helps you to navigate the difficulties of life.

And we need these people in our lives. We need people to help us make decisions because we've got a lot of decisions to make. Each of us has to make decisions on a daily basis, right?

Some of them are not that important, like what toothpaste to buy. But some decisions that we make are much more important because they affect our lives. You know, what to study, what career to get.

I know some of you, many of you who are finishing school now have big decisions to make. And you'll ask people for help to make those decisions because they're going to affect the rest of your life.

[5 : 47] But you know, there are even more important decisions than those that we have to make in our lives. And these are decisions that affect our eternity. So we make some decisions that affect the rest of our lives, but we also make some decisions that affect our eternity.

Decisions like what to believe, what religion to follow, whether to worship God, whether you believe that there's a God at all. These are big decisions. And they, the Bible says, affect eternity for you and for me.

And so who's going to help you make those decisions? Think about that. Who in your life can help you make the right decisions then? The difficulty is that you can't just go to people who claim to know because so many people disagree on those questions.

There's so many different beliefs in the world. So how do you really know that what you believe or what you've been taught to believe is true? It's a really big question because it's a really big decision.

And everybody, you know, is brought up in a particular belief, whether that's Islam or Christianity or atheism, not believing any God. But again, how do we all know that what we were brought up to believe is really true?

[7 : 04] So imagine, imagine we were all in this big maze, okay? I don't know if you've seen those hedge mazes overseas. Sometimes those big gardens in Britain have these huge hedge mazes and you can get lost in them.

And lots of people do get lost and they need help to get out. But imagine we're all in this hedge maze, right? And we don't know. You've just been plonked in there and you don't know the way in, you don't know the way out. But now you've got all these people who are saying, no, no, no, follow me, I know the way out.

And then there's another person saying, no, no, no, follow me, I know the way out. But actually, nobody really does. They're all just guessing. Well, that's kind of how it is in life when it comes to what people believe about God.

What you need if you want to get out that maze, right, is you need someone from outside to come in who knows the way because they've come from outside the maze and they say, hey, I know the way, I've just come in so you can come with me.

And I'll show you the way. But do you know, that's exactly what Isaiah is claiming that Jesus does for us in the world. Why Christmas is so special. Why Jesus coming into the world is so special.

[8 : 11] He's coming into this maze that nobody knows the way to God. And he's saying, and what Isaiah is saying about him and what he says about himself is that he is from God and he has come to show us the right way to God.

But I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, well, how do we know he's true? You know, how do we know he's not just another religious leader like all the others that are making claims?

How do we know that he's actually from God, like Isaiah says and like he says? Well, the answer is God made that clear when he was born. That's why we have all these miraculous events taking place at Christmas.

They're not just magic tricks. They're meant to show us something about him. God is making a statement in that star and in those angels and in the virgin birth. All the things that break the laws of science. God does that when he wants us to pay attention. You see, he wants us to know that this one, of all the people who have ever been born, this one is no ordinary person.

[9 : 17] And these supernatural events that happened at Jesus' birth, they are called wonders in the Bible. Wonders. They're the real magic that Dylan was talking about earlier.

Wonders. And we see them in the Bible around the birth and the life of Jesus. And that is why Isaiah, here in Isaiah 9, doesn't just call him the counselor, but the wonderful counselor. That's what the word wonderful means here. Is that Jesus didn't just come to the world with claims and with words, but his words came with wonders to prove that of all the voices in the world, he's the one to listen to.

And the only people who don't listen to him are the ones who ignore all of those wonders and all of those signs that God has given us. When he was born, in his life, and also the prophecies that he fulfilled.

There's so much that God wants to show us about him throughout history in these wonders. To show us that he's the one who can tell us what is really true about life and about death and about eternity.

[10 : 22] That's why he gives us truth. Secondly, he gives us freedom because he's the mighty God. Now, boys and girls, I want to ask you another question. Who's your favorite superhero?

Is it super spitting silk man? As we saw earlier. No, is it spider man? Put up your hand if your favorite superhero is spider man. We've got a spider man. What about super man? Any supermans?

Yes. Superman. Good. Good. At least one knows the true superhero. No. Batman. Who likes Batman? Okay.

We've got a Batman as well. What about Iron Man? Oh, you see, Marvel. I don't know why. But, okay. I'm not even going to go through the rest. But, okay. So, different people like different superheroes.

What's really interesting, though, is superheroes have always been around. Did you know that? Way before Spider-Man and Batman, there was, in the ancient myths, there were superheroes. That people had these stories about these superheroes.

[11 : 21] We love superheroes. We love superhero stories. So many movies have been made about superheroes. So many comics. So many toys are about superheroes.

But why? What is our obsession with superheroes in our culture? Have you ever wondered that? Well, I think it's because deep down, we know that evil in the world is too strong for us to fight by ourselves.

And we need someone stronger who can do things that we can't. We all know that deep down inside. And that's why we make up these superheroes. And we love stories of superheroes coming and saving the day and rescuing the people who can't save themselves.

Well, that is exactly what Isaiah is claiming about Jesus when he calls him mighty here. That word mighty in the original language, Hebrew, that the Old Testament was written in, literally means hero. It's their word for the hero. And so Isaiah is saying, by calling him that, Isaiah is saying that he is able to overcome an evil that is too strong for us to fight.

[12 : 32] That's what Isaiah is claiming about Jesus here. That he's coming into the world as a real superhero. To overcome an evil that is too strong for us to fight.

And when he came, and we saw what he did. We realized why we can't fight it. Why we can't fight this particular evil.

And the reason is because it's inside us. It's inside us. It's sin. That makes us do and think and say things that are wrong and that we know are wrong.

That our conscience even tells us are wrong while we're doing them. And yet we can't help ourselves. The Bible says we can't overpower this sin. This rebellion against our God.

We can't not sin by our own willpower. But that is why Jesus came. You see, that is why Jesus died on the cross. Not just to take the penalty for our sin.

[13 : 29] For people's sin on himself. But also to do something else. There on the cross. To break sin's power over us. So that those who come to Jesus and are what he says, what he calls being

born again.

Can start to live a new life where they don't have to obey sin anymore. They're not under its power. And they are free to choose God's will. You see, that is true freedom in our lives. True freedom is to be able to choose God's will.

And only Jesus can give that to us because of what he did. He is the mighty God. He is the hero. Thirdly, Jesus gives us the third gift, joy.

Because he is the everlasting father. That's the next title that Isaiah gives him. The everlasting father. Now that's a strange one. Because Jesus, we know, is different from God the father. Jesus is God the son. But Jesus also said to his disciples, he said this. He said, I and the father are one. In other words, what he's saying is that Jesus is the one who represents God to us.

[14 : 38] He brings God to us. And he brings God to us as a father. He's the one through whom we can know God as father. Because of what he did. Because by dying for our sins that separated us from God.

Jesus can actually bring us into a brand new relationship with our creator. As we said in our prayer earlier, we can be made God's children by adoption and grace.

We can be actually brought into God's family. Because of what Jesus did. We can come into God's very family. And let me tell you, that is something that we as created beings all need.

Desperately deep down inside. Even if you don't realize it, that's what you need. Because that is the only place in God's family is the only place that you can find real joy.

Real joy. We are all spending our lives chasing joy. Right? And we try different things and they don't work.

[15 : 40] But what we do find is that real joy in life doesn't come from what we have. Right? But who we're with. And if you've lived long enough, you'll know that.

You'll look back and you'll go to the happiest times. The most joyful times in your life was when you were with special people. Someone once said this, and this is worth remembering as we go and celebrate this day.

Said, happiness at Christmas is not from what's under the tree, but from who's around it. See, being in a family, having relationships, is far more important than getting gifts.

Remember that today. Gifts are great. But the people around the tree, that's what really matters.

Well, being in God's family is far more important than getting God's gifts.

Now, we all want God to give us things. We pray for things. Oh, Lord, give me this. Give me that. I need this. I need that. But what he's saying in sending his son to us is, I want to give you myself.

[16 : 49] I want you to know me. And knowing God and being in his very family is far more important than all the gifts we can get from him. Knowing the actual giver is the ultimate joy of a human being to know our creator.

But in this, not just to know about our creator, but to know our creator in this relationship of a parent to a child where there is love and there is care from our creator to us.

It is the source of ultimate joy a human can ever have. That is where true joy is found. And it's because of Jesus that is a joy that you and I can have.

It doesn't seem possible that we can be in that kind of relationship with God. But Jesus came to make it possible that God can actually be your very father. And you can know him in real relationship.

And then fourthly and finally, Jesus gives peace because he is the prince of peace. The prince of peace.

[17 : 55] That's the fourth name that Isaiah tells us about Jesus. Now, as humans, we've worked out how to do a lot of cool stuff, right? We can, with phones, we can talk to someone on the other side of the planet instantly.

It's amazing what we can do. We can microwave our food so that it goes from cold to hot in two minutes. It's amazing. We can fly spaceships to the moon and to Mars.

We've worked out how to do so many amazing things. But there's one thing that through all our intelligence and through all our history and through all our technology, there's one thing that humans still haven't worked out how to do.

And that is to have peace. You see, there's still just as much wars and crime as there ever was. And all the kings that have ever lived and ruled and all the presidents and all the prime ministers, they still can't bring true peace to this world.

But that is why, long ago, and this is one of the amazing things that we learn in the Bible, and what the prophets tell us, long ago, God decided that His own Son would become a human and one day rule all the nations of the world as the King of Kings and bring God's true justice and peace to earth that other kings have never been able to do.

[19 : 28] And God promised this through the prophets, and the name of this king was called the Messiah. Well, that was His title. And the peoples and the prophets spoke about the coming Messiah who's going to make all things right, and He's going to bring the justice and the peace that we need in our world.

And people were waiting for Him for hundreds of years. And then He came. But when He came, people were confused. Because when Jesus came, He didn't come to take over the government like they expected.

He didn't come to start His rule like the prophets said. But instead, He did something no one expected. He came to die. Why?

Well, we learn in the Bible, the reason is, before we could have any peace between each other on earth, we needed to have peace with God.

And that is what Jesus came to do the first time He came. To bring you and me peace with God. So that when He does come back and start to rule, which He will, then we can have a place in that amazing world of peace to come.

[20 : 43] Because He is the Prince of Peace. The question I want to close with today is, are you going to be there? Are you going to be there in that amazing world that God has planned?

Because this, the world that we see around us is not God's ultimate plan. He's got amazing plans for this world. And He will bring them about. But are you going to be there one day?

Well, that all depends on whether you are looking to Jesus today to give you the gifts of truth and joy and freedom and peace. Are you?

Or are you just settling for the cheap knockoffs that the world can give you? They're not going to last. And they're not going to satisfy you.

And so this Christmas, I want to challenge you. Reject the imitations. They will only disappoint you. And come to Jesus to get the real thing. Come back to church.

[21 : 43] Come back to church. Because this is where you connect your life with Jesus. This is where we open God's Word and we dive into who He is and get to know Jesus. Come to discover Jesus. That course we're running in February.

Because that's where you will find Him. And that's where you, this at church is where you will be able to connect your life week by week again to His. Because we so easily drift away.

We so easily drift back to what the world can offer us. Even though it never satisfies us. And so regularly we've got to come back. To Jesus. To see Him again. To behold Him again.

And that's what we do whenever we come to church. We open up His Word. We see Jesus again. We find Him. And we connect our lives to Him. Because when you do that, then you'll also find all the real gifts that God longs to give you this Christmas.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that you are a gift giver. The ultimate gift giver. But Lord, we confess that we so often look to find what the world can give us instead of the gifts that you want to give us.

[22 : 49] And so Lord, help us this Christmas to look again to Jesus. Help us to realize again that only He can give us these true gifts.

Only He can lead us to eternity. Only He can free us truly from our sin. Only He can give us true joy by knowing you.

And only He can give true peace into this world and into our lives. And so Lord, help us to look to Him and to celebrate Him today. And to come back to church to connect our lives week by week to this amazing Messiah, this Your Son that You've given us.

And Lord, we pray that You'd bless us as we continue in this day to celebrate Him. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.