Christmas is for Worship

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us.!

The Gospel of the fact that God is holy. We are sinful, but in Christ, God has made a way for us. And that really is our hope, not just at Christmastime, that's our hope every single day.
That in Christ, God the Father has covered our sin. And my hope and prayer for you today, above all else, would be that on this Christmas Eve and tomorrow on Christmas Day, that you would truly understand what this is all about.
That you would really understand the truth that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, took on flesh, walked on this earth as a sinless man was our perfect substitute on the cross.
And the reason He went to a cross was because God is holy, we are sinful, and our sin demands a payment. And while that may seem strange and that may seem odd, what we have to remember and understand is that we have no other thing to compare a perfect holy God to.
[1:45] He alone is perfect, and He alone is perfectly holy. It is His holiness that cannot allow us as unforgiven sinners in His presence.

But rather than casting us off for all eternity, though our sin had earned that, in grace and mercy, God made a way for us.
And Christmas is the celebration of God keeping His promise to make a way for us. Salvation is not given to those who have earned it.
It's not given to those who are nice. It's not given to those who are merely generous or benevolent. Salvation comes to those who have been saved by grace through faith by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
And this morning, if you understand that, you have everything you need to enjoy what this Christmas season is about.
[2:50] And this morning, if you don't understand that, there is nothing that could be purchased, given, or received other than the gift of salvation that would make up for what is missing.

Our perfect joy, our perfect peace, our perfect hope is found in the perfect love of God shown to us through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
And the Bible records it for us like this, that God demonstrated His love in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
So I understand it would be perfectly possible to be in a room with a thousand people and look around and feel like, I must be the only person here who doesn't really understand the gospel.
Or to think, I must be the only person here who's not truly a Christian. I'm here because it's Christmas Eve. I'm here because I often go to church.
[3:54] I'm here because a family member asked me to come. I'm here because a grandchild invited me to come to church. I'm here for any number of reasons. But it would be possible to not know Christ and to wrongly conclude that you may be the only one in here.

That's certainly not the case. There would be many in this room who enjoy the traditions of Christmas, and those things are good. They're not bad.
They're good. But they get their value and their meaning not in the shadow of the songs or the shadow of the gifts, but in the substance of the true gift, the Lord Jesus Christ.
And so this morning, as you have gathered with us, and we're so grateful you have, I do want you to know and hear clearly that if you don't know Christ as your Savior, we're so glad you've come today.
You may have questions. You may have doubts. You may consider yourself to be a skeptic. You may consider yourself to be someone who used to think about these things and no longer you do.

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[5:12] You may consider yourself someone who's been hurt one too many times. Or maybe you've been through so much tragedy and trauma in your life from the world that you live in that you have even stopped believing that there's a God who knows you or a God who loves you.

Maybe at Christmastime, you see so many people with smiles and joy and you've tried to even fake it yourself. And deep down in your own heart, you feel lonely.
You feel sad. Maybe even scared. Maybe it feels so dreadfully out of place.
But the truth is, the height of the Christmas story is all about Christ coming to earth, taking on flesh. It's God drawing near to people, hurting people, sinful people, lonely people, disillusioned people, frustrated people, religious people, angry people.
[6:33] In Christ, God has come near so that all who would believe in Jesus and confess Christ as Lord, no matter their past, no matter their present, no matter what they've previously thought, no matter what they've previously done, that in Christ, sinners like me and like you could find true hope.

Not a fleeting hope, a lasting hope. True peace. Not a peace that's dependent upon the news of the day, but a peace that remains no matter what.
True love. Not a love that says I love you when you do this and I don't love you when you don't do that. Not a love that's based on the world that says my love to you is conditional.
But in Christ, we could find a true lasting love that is so secure and holds us so tightly that as long as God is God, God's people will be secure.
that's where we find true love. It's a joy, it's a peace, it's a hope, and it's a love that is all centered upon Christ.
[8:14] And when you believe that and understand that and have had your life changed by that, then you understand what Christmas truly means.

But I do understand that not everyone in this large gathering believes that yet. Not everybody's had their life changed by God's grace yet. Maybe for some, you've never heard the gospel.
Maybe for others, it's brand new to you. You're just learning it. Maybe for some, you're familiar with it, but you don't really think about it often.
And maybe for others, you may even say you once thought you believed it, but no longer a part of your life. I want to remind all of you, no matter what your background is, that as sinners, there is nothing we can do to accomplish salvation.
It's impossible. But by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is nothing you need to add to His sacrifice.
[9:36] He's done it all. On the cross, accomplished everything necessary to pay for your sin. For you, the Bible tells us that we are to receive that gift to believe in what Christ has done.

And isn't it painful and truly tragic to think that at Christmas time, when so many people are receiving gifts, some gifts are great, some gifts you just smile through, and some gifts you just pray there's a receipt in the bag because it's going back tomorrow.
At Christmas time, while there's so much receiving of gifts, isn't it tragic that for so many people, they will hear and be offered the gift of all gifts?
and just walk away. It could happen in this room today. You've heard the Scripture read already about the Gospel.
You've heard songs sung that depict Christ coming to earth and being born for the purpose of our salvation. You've seen believers' baptism and heard two testimonies as these new believers have articulated the Gospel for you.
[11:16] And it would be possible to have that gift of salvation offered to you. And even this day to think what beautiful music, what lovely lights, what sweet, gracious people, and yet to leave this sanctuary, get in your car, return to your house, and have neglected the greatest gift you could ever be offered.

The gift of salvation. The gift of everlasting life. And my plea to you today is that you would, right as you sit this morning, acknowledge to the Lord that you're a sinner.
Even among those that are with us today who would not call themselves believers, I doubt I would get any pushback from that reality. That we've all sinned, that we're all imperfect. We know that. We do things that we shouldn't. We say things that we shouldn't. We think things we shouldn't. We don't do other things that we should do. Even among those who really have no heart for Jesus or no love for the Gospel, I would think we could probably agree without any debate that all of us at least

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have this in common, that all of us in this room are imperfect.
The question simply becomes this. When you die, and I bet we could agree on that one too, we're going to, and you stand before the Lord, this really becomes the dividing line between us.
[13:13] what then? What happens when you stand before the Lord? Now, some are tempted to say, I'll deal with it when it comes.

Some will say, well, I'm going to rest on my good works, but just understand that the Bible has already spoken clearly to that, that your good works apart from faith in Jesus are filthy rags.
I don't want you to be surprised when that day comes when you take your last breath and stand before the Lord and you wonder, what am I going to say? Will I be able to rest on the fact I made good grades or I loved my parents or I was a good grandfather or I was benevolent or I gave good gifts?
The answer is no, because apart from faith in Christ, the best that we do in an earthly sense, the Bible says, would be nothing more than filthy rags and no amount of filthy rags, however small or high, is good enough to get you into heaven.
So what then? Some will say, well, I was religious, I went to church. But salvation is not given to those who simply go to church.
[14:28] No doubt, some will say, well, my family were believers or maybe rely on the nation they're from or maybe rely on their intellect or maybe rely on the fact that you've been able to always problem-solve in business so you'll just be able to wing it and figure it out when you stand before the Lord.

But let me assure you that when you stand before the Lord, there is no debate. There is no discussion. And there are no deals.
The way that we approach the Father has already been given to us and graciously preserved to us by the Spirit of God in His Word. Salvation is given to those who through the gift of repentance believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and belong to Him having been saved by grace and through faith.
Now, it would be tempting perhaps for you today if you're not a Christian to say, well, that sounds a little easy. I've done a lot of bad things. I should probably do some things to earn that salvation.
And I understand the mindset. That's kind of our culture. you have to earn certain things. You have to sacrifice a number of things to be able to achieve a goal.
[15:58] But dear friends, please hear me clear. That's not the way salvation works. You don't earn it. You don't clean yourself up. You don't better yourself.

You don't improve yourself. You don't do anything to make yourself more acceptable or presentable to God. That's what Christmas is all about. That God has done that. In Christ, God came near.
In Christ, God has made a way. In Christ, God has offered to you the only gift you truly need and the one gift you can never lose.
Salvation through Jesus Christ. Christ. And if there's never been a time in your life where you have repented of your sins, there's never been a time in your life where you have simply in your heart expressed to God, I have done wrong.
I need forgiveness. forgiveness. I can't think of any better time to receive the gift of salvation than at Christmas time. A season at its heart that is about gift giving and gift receiving, but not so much about us giving gifts to each other, about God offering His Son to us.
[17:26] That's the essence of Christmas. That's the heart of the Gospel. and that is the hope for every one of us in this sanctuary who know the Lord Jesus Christ and it can be the one thing that would change not only your life, but literally change your eternity from this second forward if you this day would call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.

Everything you've heard today is an expression of that truth of the Gospel. Our hope and our prayer for you today is that if you don't know Jesus as Savior, that this day you would cry out to Him, trust in Christ alone, and have your life truly transformed forever.
Now, I want to be very honest with you. If today you were to call upon the name of the Lord and be saved, that does not mean that the world around you changes in an instant.
It's still going to be a hard world. It's still going to be filled with sin. you're still going to have people who let you down and disappoint you. What changes is you.
And what you receive is a peace and a joy so rich and so real and so lasting that you don't need the world around you to change because you yourself have been changed by a God who Himself is unchanging.

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[19:16] And that's our blessed hope. And you say, but does the world ever get fixed? Does the evil and the violence and the wickedness, does it ever cease?

Do the unrighteous ever get judged? And the answer, of course, is yes. That day is coming.
And you say, if that day is coming, why hasn't it already come? My answer would be, it might just be because of you.
because there are some in this sanctuary that if God had dealt completely and finally with sin a month ago for some in this sanctuary, it would then have been too late for you.
But in patience and in kindness, the Lord has given you this day. this very moment.
[20:29] Yes, God will one day deal with sin and it will be complete. And the wicked who have rejected Christ will be judged.

And as you've already heard read in Revelation 21, things will be made new. And it will be a life without death, without sorrow, without tears, because the former things have passed away.
Behold, all things have been made new. So why not yet? Maybe just for you. Maybe so that this day, this Christmas, you upon hearing the gospel would repent and believe.
You who are in church every single Sunday and no one would ever know that in your heart you've never trusted Christ. Everybody would assume that you're a believer but in your heart you know that's not true.
For you, He has been patient. For you, this day, to call upon the name of the Lord and be saved. Or for you who have never even been in a church.
[21:46] Maybe this is the first time you've ever been in a church sanctuary. And you came in kind of nervous, unsure of what was going to happen. And maybe, through the hearing of the gospel, you understand what Christmas is about.

Maybe for the first time. God has been patient so that this day you could hear the truth that you could believe.
If you want to understand what Christmas is all about, understand this. That God is holy. We are sinful.
But God gave His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, that all who would trust in Him would find everlasting life.
And that gift is offered to you this morning. And my prayer is that by faith you would believe and you would receive all that God has offered to you in Jesus.
[23:00] And that you would never forget Christmas 2023 when you, as an imperfect person, for the first time, understood, believed, and obedience responded to the amazing truth that Christ was given to you.

And that's why we celebrate. That's why we gather each Lord's Day. If you've ever wondered, why do all these people get up early every Sunday, don't they know they don't have to?
We do. It's just that we have to. It's not that we have to. It's that we have to. We have to come here and sing and worship and celebrate because our hearts long for this.
And not because we're better than you or smarter than the world, but because our lives have been changed and saved by the grace of God. We need to come and express our worship.
Now, I admit it. If you're not a believer, it does seem a bit odd. People could sleep in, but they get up. And they come sit among people that you don't even always know that are new to the church and you stand and you sing and you listen to some guy talk.
[24:37] And if you don't know Jesus, you might be tempted to think that that's such a strange way to spend your weekends. But I will say this, that when you understand that as sinners, we deserve judgment.

But God in grace has forgiven us, changed us, and promised us eternal life, how could you do anything less than joyfully express praise to the God who saved you?
So if your idea of coming to church is about just gathering to try to impress God or to try to impress other people, if that's your idea of church, I understand why that would get wearisome.
But that's not what this is about. This is about a group of people who are sinners just like you reminded day after day that what we have been given is so different than what we deserve and that we are living our life not so much by a list of religious rules to try to please some nameless, faceless deity, but we are living at our life as an expression of praise and love to the one who saved our soul.
And that's why we gather. And that's what we invite you to gather with us each Lord's Day. To come and to say I just need words to express my praise to the Lord.

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[26:30] And that's a biblical thing. For just a moment let me show it to you. If you'd open your Bible to Luke chapter 1. We've taken a few weeks away from our study for the Gospel of Mark to look at just a short part of Luke chapter 1.

And I want to for just a moment show you in verses 46 to 55 a song of praise. This is Mary. This is the lady chosen by God to give birth to Jesus.
Jesus. And as she has been selected by God for this most incredible role, she can't help but praise the Lord.
Luke records for us Mary's song of praise and if you're familiar with your Old Testament you'll recognize that this song of praise that Mary offers up is filled with many Old Testament references because Mary knew the Scripture.
She's a teenager but the Scripture is inside of her. It's in her mind. It's in her heart. And moms and dads as you raise your children you can do nothing better for them than to make sure that the Bible is in their heart and in their mind as they sit under the teaching of God's Word as they learn biblical songs as they memorize Scripture.
[28:08] We want the Word of God to be in our hearts and in our minds. Now understand though Mary does many things that are exemplary understand Mary is just like you and just like me.

She's a sinner in need of a Savior. There are many heroes in the Scripture that do things that are very respectable and noteworthy and worthy of us to emulate them but our heroes in the Bible are sinners.
Our heroes in the Scripture need a Savior. Mary is no different than that. There's a lot of things about her that we see here in Luke 1 that are very praiseworthy but she is a sinner in need of a Savior and that's what Christmas is all about.
And as she begins to consider and to ponder all that the Lord is doing she lifts up this song of praise known often in our circles as the Magnificat.
The reason it's called that is that's the Latin translation of the first Greek word in this song that says to magnify or to exalt.
[29:21] And what she begins to recite for us shows us a few things. One shows us that God has demonstrated His goodness to Mary.

God has demonstrated His goodness to Mary. Mary said my soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
Her worship is sincere. it comes from the heart. The word magnify means to declare to make great to celebrate it's a word that speaks of the intensity of her worship.
And notice she says my soul magnifies the Lord this is what true worship does it makes much of God. I pray that's true in this place every Sunday.
Biblical worship doesn't magnify a musician it doesn't magnify the singer it doesn't magnify the preacher it doesn't magnify a performance true biblical worship magnifies God.
[30:32] That's what Mary's song of praise is all about my soul magnifies the Lord for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

Mary was a poor peasant girl from Nazareth. she was a nobody from nowhere. Maybe you feel like that today.
I mean one of the realities of Christmas is sometimes you hear the stories of people who have all these big grand gifts. I mean it's in the commercials you've seen them just like I have.
The wife comes out and surprises the husband and he says oh there's two brand new trucks you want the blue one or the red one. I mean unless they're Tonka trucks I'm not familiar with that kind of a lifestyle.
Maybe you've heard stories of people you work with that their Christmas gifts were just so extravagant or maybe you see pictures online of other people's gatherings and they look so perfect.
[31:38] Just understand nobody puts pictures online about their living room looks like after the party. it's as trashed as your house is. But see real worship is understanding that God in Christ has come down to people right where they are to the lowest of the low to the poorest of the poor and even if you may describe yourself today as broken and frustrated angry Mary reminds us that God can meet us right at our place of need he looked on the humble estate of his servant she says for behold from now on all generations will call me blessed and yes Mary is blessed she is highly favored by God but Mary needs a Savior and so do you and that's what Christmas is all about

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God demonstrated his goodness to Mary and she gives praise to God for that but as she continues to praise the Lord we see a second thing is that God has displayed his character to the world and I want you to notice three specific parts of the character of God that have been put on display his power his holiness and his mercy let me show them to you in your own Bible here verse 49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me this speaks of God's power his character has been put on display as the world sees his power and Mary acknowledges that as she says you are mighty and you have done great things when you walk outside in just a few moments to your car and you look up and you see the sky think of psalm 19 1 that tells us the heavens declare the glory of God and the skies proclaim the works of his hands our God is powerful our God is mighty and Mary says he has done great things now if you're tempted to say well I know why Mary can say that because God chose her to carry Christ the son but you're not pregnant with the Messiah I'm not going to be the father the earthly father of Jesus so maybe God was powerful to Mary but how is he powerful in my life I want to say to you if that's your question today is just take time to notice his power and his might all around you and if you wonder about his kindness to you look no further than the fact of two things one you woke up this morning and two you're in a place this morning where you've heard the good news of the gospel that can literally change your eternity

God was so powerful and so kind that he sustained you through the night and has brought you to a place where you literally today in song by testimony and in preaching or hearing the most important words of your life it's no exaggeration yes he who is mighty has done great things and his power is displayed to the world she goes on to say not only his power is displayed but his holiness for he who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is his name his name is holy that's why how we worship matters that's why everything we do in this room is done purposefully because it's not as though

God has revealed his character to us and then said but you just approach me however you want to now the Bible is very clear we're to worship in spirit and in truth we're to worship in a way that magnifies Christ not man he is powerful and he is holy and his holiness humbles us his holiness would completely undo us and condemn us if not for his mercy and the great news of the gospel and Mary gives voice to this is that yes he is powerful and yes he is holy and again if it stopped there it would be true but it would be bad news for you to stand in front of a judge who has all the power and is perfect if that's where the story of

[37:17] Christmas ended you would have no hope but look at verse 50 and his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation he is powerful he is holy but praise God he is merciful and that's what gives us hope God's people will always know God's mercy it's true life will be hard for the Christ follower but you'll never know a day without his mercy and as a believer when your life comes to an end and you stand before the Lord you will no doubt be in awe of his power you will no doubt be stunned by his holiness but you will be welcomed into his presence through his mercy and

God has displayed his character to the world as he has shown you and helped you to see the truth of his power his holiness and his mercy God has demonstrated his goodness to Mary God has displayed his character to the world and then a third thing we see in Mary's psalm here is that God is determined to keep his promises to his people God has determined to keep his promises to his people verse 51 he has shown strength with his arm he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he sent away empty he has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers to

Abraham and to his offspring forever God keeps his promises to his people in fact if you were to take a look at this short song of praise that Mary offers to the Lord you just see the footprints of Genesis and Deuteronomy and 1st and 2nd Samuel and Job and Psalms and Isaiah and Ezekiel and Micah and Habakkuk and Zephaniah 12 different old passages and all alluded to here in this song because she has the scripture in her heart one of the things I've been inviting our church you for last month is to read the Bible with me in its entirety in 2024 that reading plan that I'm using that I'm inviting you to join me with has been available in our newsletters online out here at our ministry connection there's a table with some handouts for the reading plan that I'm using and I invite you to read along with me in 2024 because we need the

Bible in our heart and on our mind and if you say I need to commit my days to the Lord my day by day by days to the Lord the best way to do that is to be in his word every day and the best way to do that is to have a plan so when you wake up you know what you're going to read certainly you don't

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have to do this you may have another way you're studying the Bible and that's wonderful but if you're looking for a plan and a way to organize your year to get the word and whoever wants to join me in that at the end of the year by this time next year we'll have read through the entire Bible together as we strive to deeper and more deeper get the word of God into our hearts and minds but look back at verse 52 in this song of prayer
Mary says he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate she says there's a big change there's an exchange that's happened here those who in the world's eyes are strong and powerful and mighty and undefeated have been brought down low by the Lord and those who were nobodies have been lifted up by the Lord think of Pharaoh think of Nebuchadnezzar think of Herod the mighty indeed have fallen haven't they and the same thing is true in our day there is no king there is no president there is no dictator there is no ruler there is no nation who is more powerful than God never and Mary looks at the world around her and looks at the past and looks forward to the future and just proclaims that those who are mighty on their thrones will be brought down and those who are lowly and humble and grace will be lifted high and then look at verse 53 he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty in other words everything man boasts in his intellect his position his money all of it one day will be destroyed and demolished then what it it it it it's a!
[43:22] it's a good thing to learn all you can it's a good thing to fill your mind with truth and going to study and reading and getting an education these are wonderful gifts that the Lord has made available for us I just beg you to not ever buy the lie of the devil that you can become so smart you no longer need a relationship with the God of the universe knowledge is not the problem the problem is when mankind thinks they've outgrown their need for God because the smartest among us when they stand before the Lord if not for grace found through Christ in less than one tenth of one hundredth of one second they're undone those who on this earth seemed mighty from their thrones they will be brought down but again praise God for his mercy because he has exalted he has lifted up he has put together those of humble estate verse 54 he has helped his servant

Israel in remembrance of his mercy I can't read this without thinking of Habakkuk in chapter three when Habakkuk has gone through his transformation and he's come to understand that God is going to judge the sinful people among him and Habakkuk says this Lord I have heard of your fame and I stand in awe of your mighty deeds and I fear but Lord in our day revive it in the midst of the years make it known and God in wrath remember mercy this has always been the hope for the people of God that our God is merciful this has always been the hope of those who have salvation that God has been merciful and the best news
I have for you today is that on this day these are still days of his mercy if you even this day would call upon the name of the Lord you would be saved so Mary in her prayer says God opposes the proud but watch this in verse 51 he helps the helpless in verse 52 he helps the humble in verse 53 he helps the hungry those who are the lowest of the low the Lord has come to save if today you feel like everything's passed you by and you look around and you say all my friends have gotten married and I haven't and my friends have had kids and I haven't and my friends have got great jobs and I don't and my friends go on great vacations and I don't and my friends have great homes and cars and I don't and my friends have peace and safety and I don't you feel like the whole world has passed you by let me tell you who still knows who you are and where you live the God of the universe and he has reached down to you even in your humble estate this day and has done the most merciful thing he could ever do for you bring you to a place where you could hear or be reminded that Jesus saves and you know what strikes me that for those that are with us right now it just strikes me that Christmas 2023 is a
Christmas you will never forget every unbeliever in this sanctuary right now without exception you will never forget Christmas 2023 either because it will be when you give your life to Christ and you'll never forget when salvation changed your soul or one day when you stand before the Lord having rejected him you'll remember this day it will be too late for salvation at that point but you will remember this day when the gospel was sung when the gospel was testified through baptism and when the gospel was explained when the gift of salvation was offered this will be a
Christmas you'll never forget it will either as the entrance into your everlasting life or an eternal reminder of rejecting the greatest gift offered here's my hope my hope for you at Christmas this year that you would realize that there's really nothing of this world not ultimately that's going to satisfy now I understand real life and if you know me I'm not too proud to admit to you I like receiving gifts I

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do if it's wrong I'm wrong but I just do I still get really excited to open gifts and it's not too late for you I mean I still enjoy getting gifts I do but gifts are a funny thing because some in this room will get gifts today or tomorrow that you really will think
[50:24] I'll never want anything else until your birthday or your anniversary or Valentine's Day I mean has there ever been a wife in history that said you know what your gift at Christmas was so good let's just skip Valentine's this year I don't recommend you try it man it won't go well for you gifts aren't bad but by their very nature they wear out they break they get outgrown they grow out of style that's okay because gifts are supposed to be temporary earthly wise anyway but there is one exception to that isn't there the gift of God the son taking on flesh coming to earth walking among us for the purpose of living a perfect life that we could not to lay down his life as a ransom that all who would believe in his name would find salvation and everlasting life and in him receive a gift that never ever runs out that's not fairy tale that's the gospel and I have no greater hope on this day than that this

Christmas you would understand and receive a God who has shown his power his holiness and his mercy to the lowest that all who would trust in him would find it true that he is faithful as verse 55 says to his offspring forever forever may you rest in the hope of Jesus Christ this day and every day if you need help with that our church would love to help you and the simplest way for us to be able to help you is to take that bulletin that you have when you came in on the side as a connection card and just tear that out and just put on that card that today I've trusted
Christ as my savior just put on that card today I've given my life to Jesus we'd love to respond with you and sit down with you and help you to know how to continue to grow in your walk with the Lord or to say here are my questions here are my struggles would you pray with us about these things and you just communicate to us how we can serve you and it would be our greatest delight to respond back to you and help you in any way that we can how to know the gospel how to live in the gospel how to dedicate your family to the things of God in this new year whatever it may be you take that car on your way out just put it in one of our wooden giving boxes we'll respond to you we'd love to be able to help you as you make this year a Christmas you will never forget we pray that for each of you Lord we thank you today for your word and we thank you for your kindness we thank you for what you have done for us and given to us through
Christ your son as we continue to celebrate this amazing gift you've given to us we celebrate with our church and with our families I pray those gatherings would be sweet I pray they would be focused on Jesus and I pray that even the things that we have heard this day would stay with us and remind us of our greatest need and our greatest gift we give you the praise for it all in Christ's name amen before you're dismissed just a couple of very brief things number one we've got our church bookstore right out here in the lobby and on the table there we've pulled out a number of resources that will help you in Bible study if you're just looking for a way to be able to have organized Bible study with the new year there's some daily devotions there there's some Bible study guides to different books of the Bible if those would be a blessing to you I want to recommend that you go by there one of the hardest things to do is be consistent in your quiet time if you don't have a plan those resources will help you with a plan so
I encourage you to go by there and pick those up one final reminder! as Jeff mentions our Christmas Eve candlelight service totally different service than this morning 730 the string quartet begins to play you're welcome to come before that you're welcome to come between 730 and 8 that's fine too but we do encourage you to come early to get a seat you'll enjoy hearing them play we'll spend about an hour together singing some great Christmas songs our worship team will lead us we'll study God's word together when you come in the sanctuary tonight grab a candle at the exit door bring it inside with you we'll use that about the last 10 minutes of our service we'll light candles and sing together it's just a beautiful wonderful time to worship if you at all can be here you need and will want to be here tonight for 8 o'clock Christmas Eve candlelight service I love you so much
[56:08] I'm thankful for you I'm grateful for you if you are not normally with us on Sunday and you're here today because you're just in town for the holidays thank you so much for coming to worship with us we are so grateful that you've done that today and we want you to know even if you're not normally in town you are welcome here and wanted here every time you're in town it is our honor and delight to have friends and family of our church members here with us all right church family I love you dearly God bless you Merry Christmas

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