

Christmas Eve Services 1,3,5pm

12-24-25

The Road Ends and Begins in Bethlehem

I. Slide1a **Announce:**

A. Welcome to those *watching online* 1pm. Out in Fellowship Hall or LC.

B. Prayer:

II. **Intro:**

A. **The Road Ends (and Begins) in Bethlehem.**

B. For the last 6 weeks we've been walking together *on the long road* to Bethlehem.

1. A road of *promise, preparation, surrender, obedience, wonder, worship*.
2. But it doesn't just **end** at Bethlehem - it **opens** a *brand-new road* for the world. Christmas is both **God's Arrival to us**, and **His Invitation for us**.

C. The 1st Christmas is a hinge moment: Everything before points to Bethlehem; everything after flows from it. [Bethlehem isn't a finish line; it's a **doorway**]

D. The **manger** says something shocking: God didn't wait for us to **climb up**, **He came down**. Christmas is not about us finding God, it's about **God finding us**.

E. See, God Wrapped Hope in a **Promise**.

1. The 1st Christmas *wasn't* a *surprise party*, it was the unveiling of a **promise** God had been *slowly unwrapping* since Eden.

F. Slide1b **The Power of a Wrapped Gift**. [*hold blue box]

G. Christmas Eve is about *Anticipation*. There's something about a **wrapped gift** - even before it's opened.

1. You don't know exactly what's inside. But you know ...
Someone **thought** about you. Someone **planned**. Someone **prepared**.
2. And the longer a gift sits under the tree, the more **meaningful** it becomes.

H. What if I told you the very first Christmas gift *didn't* sit under a tree for days ...
It sat under the story of humanity *for thousands of years*.

1. Slide1c This gift was not like Amazon's next Day Delivery! [nope not until *The fullness of time had come* / not until the right time set by the Father]
2. Christmas wasn't God improvising. It was God unveiling a gift He had been wrapping since the beginning. [Let's reenact the slow unveiling]

III. Slide2 1 THE GIFT ANNOUNCED [set box down]

- A. Gen.3:15 *He* (Jesus) *shall bruise your head* (satan), *and you* (satan) *shall bruise His heel* (Jesus)
1. The world was just broken. Sin had entered. Shame, fear, separation ... all rush in. And right there (*not after* humanity cleans itself up) God speaks.
 2. This is *the very first whisper* of the gospel. A promise of a Child. A promise of a Victor. A promise that *evil will not have the final word*.
 - a) God didn't wait for us to find hope ... He announced Hope Himself.
- B. Visual: [hold up the first wrapped layer] This is where God started unwrapping the gift. Hope spoken into a *hopeless moment*. [open up blue]

IV. Slide3 2 THE GIFT DESCRIBED

- A. Isaiah 7:14 *The virgin shall conceive & bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.*
- B. Now the wrapping gets more detailed. God doesn't just say a rescuer *Is* coming - He says *How* He's coming.
1. A virgin. A son. Immanuel (God with us). This is huge ...
 2. Not God shouting instructions from heaven. Not God sending another prophet. God Himself is coming!
 - a) The promise of Christmas isn't just *rescue* - it's *presence*!
- C. Visual: [*Pick up Silver] Unwrap the second layer.
1. God lets His people *peek at the gift*. Not fully opened, but clearly promised.

V. Slide4 3 THE GIFT DELIVERED [*Brian that's a poor wrap job ... I know!]

A. Micah 5:2/Mt.2:6 *And you, O **Bethlehem** ... for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.*

B. **Now** the wrapping has a **label** - **Not** Jerusalem. **Not** Rome. **Not** a palace ...

1. **Bethlehem**. *Small. Overlooked. Ordinary* ... *and that's the point!*

a) **Gift Tag** says ... **To:** Bethlehem. **From:** The Father.

2. Oh and **God** wrapped the greatest gift in *the **Humblest Packaging***.

C. **Visual:** Kids have you guessed what the gift was from God? unwrap the final box to reveal ***Jesus in the manger***.

1. What **God** promised ... **He delivered!**

D. **Slide5a The Meaning of the Gift.**

E. This gift **wasn't** wrapped in *gold*. It was wrapped **in flesh**.

1. **Not** placed on *a throne*, placed in a feeding trough. **Not** admired from *a distance*, given to be **received**.

2. *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.* Jn.1:14

a) **Christmas** is proof that: **God** keeps His Promises. **God** enters our Mess. **God** comes close!

F. **Slide5b*** Thanks be to **God** for His **Indescribable** gift! - Do you know where that shows up?

1. **2nd Corinth**. After a long discussion on *giving and generosity* (ch's 8,9).

a) Paul wraps up both ch's with that statement.

2. **Slide6a** Paul seems to have coined **Indescribable**, (**not** in NT, **nor** in the Gk OT).

a) **Inexpressible** gift ^(esv); **Too wonderful for words** ^(nlt); **No language can praise it enough** ^(msg). [Paul is confessing *inadequacy*]

(1) This one word protects us from 2 dangers: Reducing the gospel to *slogans*. Losing awe through *over-familiarity*.

b) **This Gift from heaven is** *Unutterable. Indescribable. Unquantifiable. Undefinable. Incommunicable. Ineffable. Unspeakable.*

3. All of it wrapped in **the plan of God** in giving us **His Son ... His Indescribable Gift.**

G. **Slide6b Personal Application**

H. Some of us tonight are carrying: *disappointment. unanswered prayers. long seasons of waiting.*

1. And Christmas whispers this truth: If God **kept His promise then...** He can be **trusted Now!**

I. The same **God** who wrapped **Hope** through centuries, **is still working in the waiting rooms of our lives.**

J. **Slide6c Invitation:** Every road demands a response! - *The shepherds **went**. The wise men **followed**. Mary said **yes**. Joseph **obeyed**.*

1. Will you stay where you are, **or** step onto the road God has opened?
See, the road begins *wherever a heart turns toward Jesus.*

2. The road to Bethlehem ends at a manger, **but** the road of *following Jesus* - begins there!

K. **Tonight**, the road has led all of us **to** Bethlehem. **But** the real question is ... **What** will you do with **Jesus**?

1. **If** tonight you sense God **inviting you to step onto that** new road ...
To receive **His** forgiveness, **His** grace, and new life.

2. **To Trust** and **Follow Jesus**, to receive **His** free gift, **Salvation**.

3. I want to invite you to raise your hand in a moment. This is simply you saying, **Jesus, I want to follow You.**

L. Keywords: gift, Jesus, Bethlehem.