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“They have a lot of potential, but losing like this could take the heart right out of them.” That’s when the idea for his present came.

That afternoon, I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes and sent them anonymously to the inner-city church. On Christmas Eve, I placed an envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done and that this was his gift from me. His smile was the brightest thing about Christmas. Each Christmas, I followed the tradition - one year sending a group of mentally handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year giving a check to a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas.

The envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning, and our children would stand with wide-eyed anticipation as their dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents. As the children grew, the envelope never lost its allure.

The story doesn’t end there. We lost Mike due to cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was so wrapped up in grief that I barely got the tree up. But on Christmas Eve I placed an envelope on the tree, and in the morning it was joined by three more.

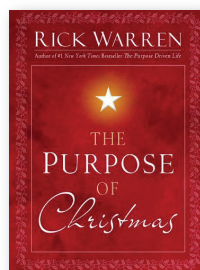
Each of our children had placed an envelope on the tree for their dad. The tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing around the tree with wide-eyed anticipation, watching as their fathers take down the envelopes.

Christmas Discussion Questions

- 1) What can you “rejoice” about this Christmas? What is stealing your joy, if anything?
- 2) Read through the 7 things Christ saved you from. Talk about lots to rejoice in! Which one of the seven stirs adoration for Christ in you this Christmas?
- 3) Now read Ephesians 2:1-10 and remind yourself of why and how Christ saved you. How else have you experienced His amazing grace?
- 4) Do you see yourself as saved for something? Think through the four purposes you were saved for and take time adoring Christ for the wonderful plan He has for your life!

Great Christmas Book!
The Purpose of Christmas
by Pastor Rick Warren.

*Read it as a family and give it away
to those who don't know Jesus!*



SERMON NOTES: WEEK THREE

JESUS is Christmas

A Christmas Giving Story

It’s just a small, white envelope stuck among the branches of our Christmas tree. No name, no identifications, no inscription. It has peeked through the branches of our tree for the past 10 years or so.

It all began because my husband, Mike, hated Christmas - oh, not the true meaning of Christmas but the commercial aspects of it: overspending, the frantic running around at the last minute, the gifts given in desperation.

Knowing he felt this way, I decided one year to bypass the usual shirts, sweaters, ties.... I reached for something special just for Mike.

Our son Kevin was wrestling at the junior level at the school he attended. Shortly before Christmas, there was a nonleague match against a team sponsored by an inner-city church. These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seems to be the only things holding them together, presented a sharp contrast to our boys in their spiffy blue-and-gold uniforms and sparkling new wrestling shoes.

As the match began, I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear. It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously could not afford.

We ended up walloping them. As each of their boys got up from the mat, he swaggered around in his tatters with false bravado, a kind of street pride that couldn’t acknowledge defeat.

Mike shook his head sadly. “I wish just one of them could have won,” he said.

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Adoring Jesus for What He Did

December 20/21, 2008

This weekend we are going to do one thing together to celebrate the birth of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ—**Rejoice!**

That's what the angel and heavenly host did the night Jesus was born! *Luke 2:8-14*

**That's what the shepherds did after seeing baby Jesus!
*Luke 2:16-20***

That's what Simeon did too! *Luke 2:25-33*

When you truly realize why Jesus saved you and what Jesus has saved you from, saved you with, and saved you for, you can't help but rejoice in God your Savior!

Adoring Jesus for What He Saved Us From

1) Our Sins, Guilt and Shame:

Matthew 1:21, Ephesians 1:7-8, 1 John 1:9, Jeremiah 31:34, 2 Corinthians 5:17 - This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

2) The Power of Sin's Grip: *Romans 8:2-3*

3) Being Lost: *Isaiah 53:6, Luke 19:10, John 8:12* - Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

4) Death-Eternal separation from God:

John 5:24, Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

5) God's justifiable wrath and eternal punishment over our sin:

Romans 5:8-9 - But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ***John 3:36***

6) Our core selfishness: *2 Corinthians 5:14-15*

7) Satan's destructive control over our lives:

1 John 3:8 - But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil.
Colossians 1:13, Hebrews 2:14-15

Adoring Jesus for Why and How He Saved Us

We are saved because of the amazing love and mercy of God and only through the amazing grace of God.

Ephesians 2:1-9, Acts 15:11 - We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus."

GRACE is God's Riches At Christ's Expense

Adoring Jesus for What He Saves Us For

1) Ever deepening, eternal friendship with Christ:

John 17:3 - And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.

2) Great relationships as we learn to love like He loves us:

John 15:12 - This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.

3) Good works we were designed to do that satisfy us and glorify Christ:

Ephesians 2:10 - For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. ***Titus 2:14, John 15:8***

4) Glorious Eternal Life:

1 Corinthians 2:9 - That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him."

Isaiah 60:19-20, Revelation 7:16-17

Christmas is our time to Rejoice in Our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ! Have you received Him and the glorious salvation He came to give you?

Romans 10:9-10 - If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.