

12-24-25 Candlelight Service Message

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SPEAKERS

Speaker 1, Pastor Dow Boyer

Good see you all tonight. It's a joke. I can't see any of you right now, but I did receive this message a little earlier. I thought it might be a decent icebreaker. But what can we say about the incarnation? Well, it was God's most down to earth moment. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. Somebody on staff sent me that. I won't, I won't tell you who, but he's big and he's beautiful. Well, we are certainly glad to have you all here tonight. And you know, we think about this time of year, right? And it's the incarnation of Christ. Obviously it's him coming down to earth, but eventually it would be the greatest gift, and that is really kind of where I wanted to focus on tonight for the few minutes that we have together. I remember when I was little, and sometimes my mom has to fact check me later, but as I remember it, I guess the best way to say it. But there was this one Christmas when we lived in Shelbyville, and I got this barn like this, me and my brother, I think both did, but it was like this red barn. I believe the roof was white, but, but it would actually open up where you could, like, store the stuff inside. I think there might have been a fence with it. And I'm like, Why do certain things that you get right? Why do they stand out so much? And if we went around the room, it might have been a baby doll, it might have been a puppy. We did that kind of thing three years ago. That was great for about 10 minutes. But there is probably around this room, there are memories attached to Christmas, there is that gift that stands out and that maybe makes you a little sentimental. Maybe it's not something you receive, maybe it's something you gave and it was the response of the other person. It was how it impacted somebody else's life. And then sometimes they're corny, right? How many have been to the like, gift exchanges, where they've been like, ornaments, and they've been ugly ornaments? I mean, our teens just did this few weeks ago, so if they're not raising their hands, I guess they weren't there that night. But I went to one of these a few years ago, and I was like, I don't really know what to come up with. I think we were coming out of covid. And so I think I went to Hobby Lobby, because one of the few places where elder get wear a mask, and so I bought a little ornament that was a picture frame. And I was like, What am I going to do with this thing? How can I maybe make this funny or entertaining? So I took the little insert out, and I grabbed a marker, and I wrote Epstein didn't kill himself, and I wrapped it up, and that was my gift. And lo and behold, nobody tried to steal that gift. In fact, the person who got that gift, I think they tried to give it away. It maybe an ashtray today, I don't know, but so that was not one of my bright moments. So sometimes gifts fail. Sometimes. They're memorable for the wrong reasons, but one thing that we'll be able to talk about tonight is a gift that only had a positive effect. There is no negative attributes to the gift we're going to talk about tonight. There is no sad story with this gift. There is no why, not so much why, but there is no why Christmas. When it comes to this gift, it was given, and we just have to receive it. In Ephesians, 289, it says, For by grace, are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the

gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast and a couple observations about this, and this idea of a gift, first of all, gift is being contrasted with not of yourself. And I think it's very important that we are able to separate tonight gift from merit, and I hope, if you pull nothing from tonight, that you'll pull that. And the second observation is, if not a gift, then mankind would boast of himself, you know, and we kind of live in that world where we want to tell everybody why we deserve something, why, why we deserve another excuse me, why we deserve another chance? Right, why we deserve a raise, right? We want to convince the world that we're good. We've earned something, we've worked hard, and so. We deserve some sort of award or some sort of recognition for our merit, and there's a lot of positive things that happen from an earthly standpoint with that, but what God's saying here is that what we're talking about is a gift. That means it can't be of yourself. It's a gift. So that means that mankind can't be put in a position to boast or brag that they've done enough. But at the very beginning of this, he says, By grace, are you saved? And the and the question would be, what does this mean? What? What does it mean to be saved? Saved from what and I think to understand that, you have to understand something about yourself, and you have to understand something about God to really understand what it means to be saved, right? We could think about it from earthly standpoint, right? I remember a time when I took the youth group, or I was with the youth group, and we went down to Lake Monroe, and all of a sudden the storm came out of nowhere, and we were trying to get all the kids up on on the boat. And I remember that April barn horse was having a hard time getting up, so I lifted her up out of the water, and I put her on the boat. And we were talking later about how the fact that, man, we were lucky to get all those kids out, it started lightning, and we're in this pontoon boat, and from that human standpoint, right? They were safe. We saved them from the danger, right? I think we understand typically, what the word saved means in our everyday life. But when the Bible's talking in this context about being saved, it's talking about something much greater. And so here's the thing I said. It involves something about yourself and something about God. Here's the part about you, the part about me, and that is in Romans three nine, we start here, but we're a sinner. This is the ugly truth about us, no matter how much makeup, no matter how many surgeries, we are sinners and sin is ugly. Romans three nine says, What then are we better than they NO and NO wise for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that we are all under sin. And if you know anything about the book of Romans, these first three chapters have basically placed everyone guilty and under sin. Starts out with the Jews, the Gentiles, mankind. There are no exceptions to this. In fact, in Romans, 3:19 it says, Now we know that whatsoever thing the law, say it that say it to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. There is this guilt that comes before God because we are not innocent. We are sinners. Galatians, 3:22, the Scripture hath concluded all under sin. We know in Romans, three, it talks about how we've all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Isaiah tells us that our righteousness is as of filthy rags. We're also reminded in Romans There is none righteous. No, not one as a result of the fact that you and I are sinners. The second part of this is that sin demands a payment. Rule. We need to understand this to understand what it means for us to be saved in Romans, 6:23, the first part of it says the wages of sin is death. That idea of wages is the same back then as it is for us today. Like when we go to work, we punch the time clock and then however much we worked, we multiply that times our wage, and that's how much money we receive, right? This is there is a payment due because of sin, and that payment is death. It's a physical death. It's why we die, because the curse of sin. It's also a spiritual death, separated from God in a real place called hell. So we've learned that we are sinners and that sin demands a payment. But the third part of this is the thing we have to know about God. The first two is what we had to know about us when it comes to being saved. But the third part is God made the payment. God paid the price so that we would not have to go to hell and pay that price ourselves in torment for all eternity because of our sin, God made the payment. It says in First Corinthians, 15, three and four, says, I delivered unto you, first of all, which I also received. How that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried and rose again the third day, according to. To the Scriptures. And in fact, Ephesians 1:13, talks about us trusting what we've heard, and then we believe. And after we believe,

we are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. We receive, we accept God's payment. This is what it means to be saved. So when he starts out in Ephesians two, by saying, By grace, are ye saved? You understand from what we just looked at, it couldn't possibly have been because of you. God had to come down and pay the price for us. He came down in sinless perfection, and when he spread his arms out and shed his blood on the cross that was sinless, blood that was spilt, and when the father saw that sacrifice, he says, we don't ever have to have another sacrifice. I accept that. And the and the son was able to say, It is finished. We are saved by grace, through faith. By grace, through faith as a result, we're we now have forgiveness. We have been pardoned, and Christ's righteousness has been put to our account as our sin was put to his account at Calvary. This is what it means to be saved. And he says the only way to do that is by grace. See salvation as we just looked at is completely a gift by grace. And when you have a gift, you open it, and you can't wait. Several of us tomorrow, we're going to open gifts, and we're going to be excited, and we're going to tell stories about it, and we're going to rejoice in what we got, and hopefully not cry if we didn't get what we wanted, but the gift we're Talking about tonight, if I can do it, is grace. It is by grace that we have the gift of salvation. Through faith, it's placing our faith in the grace that God provides in the form of this gift of sending Jesus. Now leave it to me to choose a font that would make this word hard to read or understand, but that's exactly what we do. We don't understand grace. It's right in front of our faces. It's those five simple letters, but we still can't read it, we still can't comprehend it, we still don't get it. We don't understand what it means. So Imma tell you what it means. Grace literally means benefit or unmerited favor. Most would say getting what we don't deserve. So maybe let's talk about why grace is so hard to understand, since it's hard to read for us tonight, there are three reasons for this. The first one is we bring zero merit, or it is no longer grace. We bring nothing to the table, zero merit, Zero good behavior, or it ceases to be grace. And that's probably why grace is hard for us to understand, because that doesn't seem fair. Romans four. Four says Now to him that worketh is the reward, not reckoned of grace, but of debt. If you're working for it, it is a debt. But yet so many churches today are going to tell you you have to do something. You have to get cleaned up. You have to be good enough. You have to do something well, doesn't that defeat the idea of it being a gift? Romans 3:24 says, Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ. Jesus now as receivers, yes, that grace is freely given, but as God gave it, the price that was paid was quite substantial. But remember Romans, three, 6:23, says, The wages of sin is death. But the last part of that says, but the gift of God is. Is talking about that gift again. See wages, because the wages of sin are always tied to merit. You work and you get paid, but gifts are not tied to merit. Last Friday, Aiden and Elena got married. It was a sweet ceremony. They had a bridal shower. There was gifts there, and they had the wedding, and there was gifts. And I can promise you not one of those gifts said, if you're a bad husband, I want you to return the RE gifted Blender. I know what you do. It's why people get seven of them when they get married. Not one card said, I want this money back if you too, do not glorify God in your marriage relationship, because that's not a gift, that's a loan. There's now a debt tied to it. That's where Aiden looks at Elaine and says, We gotta work really hard so we don't have to get that money back. That's not a back. That's not a gift. If you have to work for it, it is not a gift. If merit is tied to it, then it is no longer grace. That's why it's hard to understand grace. A second reason is we talked about merit, what we can do on the first one the second one's going to talk about our demerit, our lack of doing good things. Here's the second one. Our demerit can't be measured as needing more grace or merit matters. You understand what I'm saying here. We can't say that the that this person over here, that we say is way worse than us, that it took more grace to save them than it did us, because then that means that merit had something to do with it. So even our demerit, even our sin as great as Grace is, does not require more grace like there. We can't go around the room and say, Oh, you needed less grace than this person. No, absolutely not, because then merit is involved in some way, and that is not what grace is. Romans 5:20 says, Moreover, the law entered that the offense might abound, but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. See, Grace changes everything for everybody in this room. It changes our entire perspective. Because, see, we spent our life looking down, but now we are looking up. Even Titus 2:13 will tell us that we're looking

for that glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus. We're told in Ephesians that we're we're seated with Christ in heavenly places. We've been given all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Right? We are told in Colossians three, to set our affection on things above. Right. We are told that this momentary affliction in both Second Corinthians four and Romans eight, that it is temporary and it's working for us an eternal weight of glory. We are told that we are citizens in heaven, and we have all of this that we did not deserve and we could not earn. We accepted God's grace. By faith, we received a gift, and when we're sitting around the tree and we're looking at the gifts that are all temporary, tomorrow, maybe we'll be reminded of the gift of grace that we received when we were saved. Grace has absolutely 100% turned our lives around. And what should our response be to this grace that was given to us. It is to be light. We look around and we see the darkness and we and we see the lights that are shining and how they contrast against the darkness. We're going to go out here in a little while, and because it's Indiana, and because the winter solstice, it's already going to be getting dark at six o'clock, but it's the headlights, it's the stars, it's the little bit of light that just contrast against the darkness. This word says light, and our response to the grace that we've been given is to be light. Ephesians, 2:10 says we are His workmanship created in Christ. Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Philippians, 2:15 and I'm going to rattle these off, says that you may be blameless and harmless the sons of God without rebuke and. Midst of a crooked and perverse nation among whom You the Body of Christ, shine as lights in the world, or Ephesians, five, eight, sorry, let's go back to Romans. 13:12, says, The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us, therefore cast off the works of darkness. Let us put on the armor of light. Ephesians, five, eight, we were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord so walk as children of the light. Or later in verses 11 through 14, it says, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness rather reprove them, for it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by what light? For whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore, he saith, Awake thou, that sleepest arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee light. We're in First Thessalonians, five, four through eight, talking about the Rapture versus the second coming, and how we're not going to be here for the tribulation. But says Ye brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief, But ye are all children of light, and the children of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness, therefore, let us not sleep as do others. But let us watch and be sober, For they that are asleep sleep in the night. They which be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet the hope of salvation. Did you see the connection awake day light? That is how the body of Christ is described. In fact, we're told that Jesus is the light of the world. In John 8:12, we see light used over and over again. In John one, one, we see the first thing that God made was light in response to darkness. In Genesis, chapter one, verse three, and it was at night, when the Israelites were in the wilderness that he provided a light to shine before men. Or he a light a pillar of fire at night. Or it was when Israel was told, during the Beatitudes to let so let their light shine before men that they may see their good works and glorify their father, which is in heaven. We see light, light, light, and then we see the Star of Bethlehem. We see this light showing where the Son of man laid in a manger. So our response to the grace that we've been given this gift of grace is to be light. And it is to give light, because in Second Corinthians four, four through six, this is the, this is the blueprint of the god of this world, Satan. And it says this. It says In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ, Jesus, the Lord and ourselves, your servants, for Jesus, sake for God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness. Genesis, one three hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We are our response is for us to be light and to give the light of the glorious gospel, because we are in a dark world, and if we don't do that, then where does the light shine? Where does it come from? Now, remember, at the very beginning of this, we said there are three things that are hard to understand about grace. I said that we bring zero merit, or it is no longer grace. I said that our demerit can't be measured as needing more grace or then merit matters. But then the third one is

that grace teaches us to live godly, and that's how we become lights Titus 2:11, and 12 says the part about God out loud that we don't say often, because usually we think Grace is merely just our pardon of sin. In fact, it's the thing we say, Thank God for grace, because I just blew it. But that's not really what the Bible's teaching in totality. In Titus 2:11, and 12, it says the grace of God, which is what we're talking about today, that bring it salvation. It absolutely does that hath appeared to all men. But listen to this next verse, teaching us what's teaching us it is the grace of God, and what's it teaching us deny ungodliness and worldly lust. We should live soberly, righteously and godly in. In this present world. And if you do that, you're going to be a light, and then you're going to have the opportunity to share the light of the gospel of Christ. But you cannot be a light without living godly. You just can't. You might have the light inside you, but it's not going anywhere because you're choking it out with your flesh. Romans six says, Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound, God forbid, and I've said this before, but your behavior may have nothing to do with your salvation, but it may have everything to do with somebody else's the way you live matters. Are you light? Are you showing the light? Are you giving the light of the glorious gospel to others? It should be your response to the gift of salvation that was given to you by grace because you could not earn or deserve it. Wrapping this up, if you're here and you've not accepted God's grace by faith, what are you waiting for? What answers are you waiting for? What is the delay? God has paid the price for you. He has made a way you can't look in the mirror and say, I'm not good enough, because once you get to that point, you already understand part of the gospel, you're not good enough. You're never going to be good enough, you're not going to be clean enough, you're not going to be put together enough. That's why God had to do the work, and you didn't deserve it, and I didn't deserve it. So why not today? It's not about you coming out out of your seats, not about you coming and saying a prayer. If that prayer is in your seat, it's thanking God for what he did for you on the cross and placing your faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins and eternal life, and if you're here and you're saved, are you living as light and and are you articulating the light of the glorious gospel to others? How selfish of us to hoard the unsearchable riches of Christ while others live in spiritual poverty. You were left here to be an ambassador, and the question is, what are you doing to give that gift to other people? And so I wanted to challenge us with that today, to understand that we were given the ultimate gift, and it was by grace. And now how are you going to respond to it? If you've received it, what is your response to be light and to walk in light with the glorious gospel of Christ being ready to give that to anyone? And if you're here today and you're not saved, won't you get saved today? Please, let's pray, Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for something we could never earn. Thank you for your glorious grace. Thank You Lord that it is available to all. All we have to do is believe and Lord Our response to that gift, that grace is to be light and to give light the glorious gospel, Lord, I pray that that would be on our hearts and minds. It's not about how much we spend on each gift, Lord, but have we even shared with others this grace, this light? Lord, it is free to give it doesn't cost us anything. It costs you everything. Lord, may we not be apathetic, and may this be the year in the holiday season, where we take advantage of the conversations and the opportunities that we have and we articulate this gospel message. It is light to those who are in blindness and who are in darkness right now, in the same way that we received it. So Lord, be with our people now. Help them remember that. Help them have a great Christmas season and put you at the forefront. We love you and praise you in Jesus name.