

**Sermon Series: The Gift Revealed****Sermon Title: Unlikely Package****Sermon Text: Luke 2:21-40****Sermon Presenter: Pastor Larry**

**Sermon Summary:** This study is the second and final in our two part series "The Gift Revealed." We're going to see how the gift of Jesus was revealed in the prophecies of the Old Testament and pointed out by two very special people in the Christmas story! We will discover that Jesus, God's gift to the world, came to this world in an unlikely package and was revealed to some very unlikely recipients. The application of what we will learn is not only practical, but critical to our lives here on earth and for our eternal lives in heaven.

**Full Sermon Notes:**

"In the darkness we were waiting, without hope, without light. Till from heaven You came running. There was mercy in Your eyes! To fulfill the law and the prophets, to a virgin came the Word. From a throne of endless glory, to a cradle in the dirt!"

The little manger, which was a feeding trough for the animals, is where they laid the prophesied Messiah, the King of Kings, The Lord of Lords, The Prince of Peace, The Lamb of God, God's Only Begotten Son! What a night that must have been!! Shepherds quake, Heavenly hosts sing Hallelujah!! A little Baby Boy is born and the history of the whole world is changed in an instant! This little child would grow to do amazing things and would become the source of hope for a hopeless world! When we think back to that night our minds many times go to the star, the shepherds, the hay that had been put in the manger for a little mattress. And of course there were the animals, it was after all, a stable. Last week Andrew preached an anointed and powerful message about how The Gift of Jesus was revealed to Joseph. Today we're going to talk about how the gift of Jesus was revealed in the prophecies of the Old Testament and pointed out by two very special people in the Christmas story! The application is not only practical, but critical to our very lives! Let's pray and ask God to teach us today about His precious gift revealed in Jesus. Pray.

Okay, did any of you get a fun gift this year? How about a meaningful gift? How about an unusual gift? Did you have fun watching others open the gifts you had gotten for them? Christmas gifts come in all kinds of packages! Different shapes, sizes, weights, and most with pretty wrapping paper! When you open a Christmas present, you are revealing a gift. Something that has been bought for you and given to you because someone loves you and wanted to show you that love. They went to the trouble of picking out a gift they felt you would like or could use, or they spent the time and money to buy you a gift card to a place they thought you would like so you could pick out something you would want, or they just gave you cash for the same reason! Either way it's a gift revealed. But here's an amazing thing: when we talk about the ultimate Christmas gift that God gave the world, the package didn't just contain a gift, the package was the gift. That threw so many off! They didn't expect the prophesied Gift of God to come like it did! Some were confused by the package and others were offended by the package and rejected the package. But for those who received the package and it's contents, their lives were forever changed!

Today we're going to unwrap the Christmas story through some often overlooked aspects of the Christmas story and some of the individuals often left out of the Christmas story. Back in 2018 I talked about how these individuals are not included in nativity displays. One of the reasons is that they were not there on the night of Jesus' birth! But then neither were the wise men! The wise men came much later after Jesus was home from the stable. They visited Him in a house. The folks we're going to talk about today and who are going to help reveal the gift of Jesus as seen in the prophecy of the Old Testament actually saw Jesus not long after He was born. Let's look at our text and see what is revealed about the gift God had sent to the world! We'll begin with Luke 2:21.

Let's look at the amazing things that are revealed about God's gift to us as we look at our story today!

### **1. An Unlikely Package!**

Luke 2:21 On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.

Don't read over this too fast!! There's some very important things here.

- a. First of all Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means Savior!!

That's a big deal! That's earth shattering! That's what the Christmas story is all about...A Savior! Andrew talked about this last week. Don't miss this! No one expected the Savior to come packaged as a new born baby! But there's more. The Broadman Commentary states that...

"According to Leviticus 12, the rite of purification took place 33 days after the child's circumcision and involved the sacrifice of a year-old lamb as a burnt offering and either a pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering."

Luke 2:22 When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord

Luke 2:23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"),

Luke 2:24 and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

- b. No one expected their Savior King to be packaged in poverty!

A poor family who could not afford a lamb were allowed to double up on the pigeons or turtle doves. So from this passage we know Jesus was born into a poor family. This does not cry out royalty! This does not impress the world! And according to Jesus Himself, He lived a life of poverty while here on this earth.

Luke 9:57 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

Luke 9:58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

Jesus never owned a house while here on this earth! So we have a homeless king and for the world, that's just not what they would expect from one considered to be The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords! But just before His death Jesus would give us great insight to understand His priorities in this world...

John 18:33 Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

John 18:34 "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

John 18:35 "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

John 18:36 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

John 18:37 "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

So Jesus' kingdom was not of this world and He had come into the world to testify to the truth! Pilate follows up with a question:

John 18:38 "What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him."

So at least Pilate seemed to realize he was dealing with an innocent man. However, what Pilate could not know or understand was that Jesus was about to fulfill His purpose in life. And speaking of the reason Jesus was born into the world, let's read verses 23 and 24 again and we'll discover something amazing...

Luke 2:23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"),

Luke 2:24 and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

Here's an ironic and absolutely astonishing fact that can be gleaned from our text...

- c. Wealthy people would have brought a lamb to sacrifice, Jesus Himself was the Lamb of God who would one day become the sacrifice for humanity's wicked sin!

The Jewish people understood the concept of sacrifice for sin, but no one expected the Sacrificial Lamb to be packaged in human flesh! That is no one but the few who had read the prophecies with a desire to know the truth and who were anxiously and patiently awaiting the unlikely package from God!

1 Peter 1:17 Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.

1 Peter 1:18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors,

1 Peter 1:19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

1 Peter 1:20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

1 Peter 1:21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

And to whom did God reveal His special package on that first Christmas? Not the politically powerful nor the well connected religious elite!

## **2. Unlikely Recipient: A Righteous Old Man**

A Righteous Old Man! He was left out of the Nativity, but included in the Christmas story in God's Word! Why? As I get older I understand a little better that it is sometimes the old guard who reject new things. Sometimes for good reason and sometimes just because they are stuck in tradition, despise change or refuse to embrace anything new. But not Simeon. Scripture had told Him to expect that God was going to do something new and in a new way and he was anxiously awaiting. He believed God's Word in Isaiah...

Isa 43:18 "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.

Isa 43:19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.

Simeon, an old and righteous man knew and understood the prophecies about Jesus and recognized Him to be the Lamb of God, the Messiah...

Luke 2:25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Luke 2:26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Luke 2:27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required,

Luke 2:28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

Luke 2:29 "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace.

Luke 2:30 For my eyes have seen your salvation,

Luke 2:31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people,

Luke 2:32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

Luke 2:33 The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.

Luke 2:34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,

Luke 2:35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Simeon's statement here is prophetic. He tells Mary that a sword will pierce her soul also! Also? What does he mean by this? Simeon knew the prophecies of old which we have recorded in our Old Testament!

Zechariah 12:10 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

Amazing the detail of the prophecies written hundreds of years before the birth of Christ! And what does this prophecy have to do with Mary's soul being pierced with a sword?

Let's not forget...

This young mother beholding Jesus as His flesh was cut in circumcision, would one day behold Jesus at His death as His side was pierced with a spear!

John 19:31 Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.

John 19:32 The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other.

John 19:33 But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

John 19:34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.

John 19:35 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe.

John 19:36 These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken,"

John 19:37 and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."

Mary was there. Mary saw this with her very own eyes. Can you even begin to imagine the sword that pierced her heart as she saw her son pierced for the sins of the world? For your sins and mine! Let us never forget that "He was pierced for our transgressions!" Let us never forget that we can celebrate Christmas with joy and hope for peace, because of the Christmas gift

Jesus came to give us. His soul pierced so ours could be saved, His body broken so ours could be healed for an eternity!

Isa 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Oh and by the way, Simeon was not the only unlikely recipient of God's unlikely package on that first Christmas! There was a second...

### **3. Unlikely Recipient: A Very Old Prophetess**

Luke 2:36 There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,

Luke 2:37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

Luke 2:38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Luke 2:39 When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

Luke 2:40 And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

This very old prophetess had been through some tragedies of her own. After being married for only 7 years, her husband died. What did she do? Give up in despair? No! She decided to live every moment of the rest of her life for her God. Sometimes we are hit with unspeakable tragedies, and difficulties in life that just take our breath away! Things like this can cause us to wonder if we even have purpose left on this earth, but Anna is just one of the beautiful examples in the Bible of how God still has a purpose for us when the world has struck an awful blow! Anna was so faithful to God through her pain and sorrow that He allowed her to see the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies with her own eyes. She was also given the honor of being one of only five women in the Bible to be considered a prophetess! And she fulfilled her role in such a powerful way on this day. The world may not have noticed or given her the recognition she deserved. She may not be a part of the Christmas Nativity, but she is an absolutely important figure in the Christmas story. Why? She prophesied that this child, Jesus, was in fact the one who had come to redeem Jerusalem! In order to redeem something, you must pay something. Jesus had come to redeem the world and that redemption would cost Him dearly! But this redemption would not be with money.

Listen to the prophecy concerning the redemption of Israel...

Isa 52:3 For this is what the LORD says: "You were sold for nothing, and without money you will be redeemed."

And as we've already seen Isaiah made it clear how our redemption would be purchased...

Isa 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah then explains why our redemption was so costly and gives even greater detail about the payment...

Isa 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isa 53:7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

Isa 53:8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.

Isa 53:9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Here Isaiah is prophesying about the two criminals Jesus was crucified with and the fact that a wealthy Jewish man named Joseph of Arimathea would provide the tomb for Jesus to be buried in. Absolutely amazing! Isaiah continues the prophecy that Anna knew so well...

Isa 53:10 Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

What does "He will see His offspring" mean, and "My righteous servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities?" Here's what this means. The offspring of Jesus are those who are willing to accept, receive, call on the Name of the Lord, repent of their sins and turn to Jesus for forgiveness and help to begin living a new life in His grace, His mercy and His love! God's Word plainly tells us this...

John 1:12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

If you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, there's no reason you could not do this today. In a few moments we will have an invitation and I'll lead in a prayer that you can pray to receive the greatest Christmas gift ever given, Jesus Christ The Savior! If you pray that prayer then what Jesus did on the old rugged cross will be applied to your sin account and it will be cleared, paid in full, and you will be saved! Jesus' body was broken for you, His blood shed to cover your sins and we should never forget the cost He paid. It's like the old hymn says, "Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe, sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow!"

Now watch what Isaiah prophesied next...

Isa 53:11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Isa 53:12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Did you see that? He...

Isa 53:12 ...made intercession for the transgressors

Remember this from the cross?

Luke 23:33 When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left.

Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

And verse 11 is prophesying the resurrection of Jesus!

Isa 53:11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied...

The second part of verse 11 and verse 12 prophesy what Jesus would accomplish through His death, burial and resurrection and how this was accomplished is beyond fascinating. In Biblical days, there was a limited scientific understanding of how the body works. But they knew this. Life was in the blood. If you lost your blood, you lost your life. This is why blood was so important to every aspect of life. Blood represented a person's very life. So in the Hebrew, when you see the word blood, it is understood to be...

"Life Blood"

So when Jesus shed His blood, in their minds, He shed His life. This is why, in the sacrificial system, blood was sprinkled on the altar. It was a symbol that life had been given to pay for someone's sin. This is why Jesus was able to pay for the sins of the world! He lived a sinless, perfect life. The lifeblood that He shed represented a perfect life. That perfect life, through the blood covers our sins, cleanses our sins. Jesus poured out His perfect life in order to redeem us! A righteous old man and a very old prophetess knew about this and wanted the world to know. As we celebrate Christ Birth, let's never forget that His birth was only the beginning. The beginning of a life that would be given in death and then resurrected in order to bring life to all who would accept the gift. Peter sums it up in a powerful way...

1 Pet 1:18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,

1 Pet 1:19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.



1 Pet 1:20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

1 Pet 1:21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

Never forget this:

The story of the Cross would not have been possible without the story of Christmas and the story of Christmas would lose its meaning without the story of the Cross.

Now to that practical and critical application I mentioned in the introduction of today's message. Jesus died to give us the greatest gift ever! Forgiveness of our sins, the restoration of souls, a personal relationship with God, purpose in this life and the promise of eternal life! That gift came in the unlikely package of a little Baby Boy on that first Christmas and has been revealed to us in the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus! But how do we receive that gift? It happens in a gift exchange! "But Pastor Larry, I didn't know there was going to be a gift exchange at church today and I totally didn't bring anything. Besides, what gift could I possibly give God that He doesn't already have?" How about your heart! For those of you who have never placed your faith in Jesus by admitting you've sinned and need a Savior, this gift exchange happens when you offer to Jesus your sinful, bruised and broken life, for a new life with Jesus as your Savior! A new life with meaning, purpose, and yes, even joy in the midst of your struggles, because in this life we all have struggles, right? But you'll experience a new strength to deal with those difficulties as you begin experiencing a personal relationship and fellowship with God!

And for those who have already made that gift exchange and you have received the gift of Jesus as your Savior, you might wonder what gift you could bring to Jesus this Christmas. How about allowing Jesus to not only be the Savior of your soul, but also the Lord of your life! Your priorities, your purpose, your choices, and your lifestyle! He would love that gift!

Let's bow our heads! I'm going to say a prayer slow enough for you to say it after me. You don't have to pray out loud unless you want to. God hears your heart. This is a prayer of salvation for those who pray it for the first time and a prayer of recommitment for those of you who already know Jesus as your Savior.

Dear God, I admit I have done wrong and I need forgiveness! I know the gift Baby Jesus brought to me on that first Christmas was the sacrifice He would later give on the cross! I don't deserve that, but You must love me so much to pay such an awesome price for me! I want you to be my Savior, but I also want to submit to your Lordship! I've spent enough time living for the wrong things and the wrong reasons! Jesus, today I exchange my old life for the new life You died to give me! I invite You to come into my life and begin Your transforming work through Your Precious Holy Spirit! Thank You for the best Christmas gift ever! I pray this prayer in the sweet name of Jesus, believing! Amen!

Let's stand. The praise band is going to lead us in a song. Some of you just received the gift of forgiveness, God's love, God's peace, Eternal life, and so much more. If you prayed that prayer with me for the first time, come let me or one of our staff know so we can celebrate with you this Christmas season. Some of you recommitted your lives to Jesus as your Lord! Whatever God has laid on your heart, this altar is open to you.