



water from rock

## **Selah: Stop, Look, Listen- December 13, 2022**

The Lord be with you.

Christmas is the time for giving. I mean, that's what we're told this time of year. I mean, I saw it in a store today. I saw it the other night on TV that Christmas is a time for giving. But you know, I'm not sure that if the people who were there at that first Christmas, I'm not sure that they would have thought of Christmas as a time for giving. I think they would have thought of Christmas as a time for receiving. I mean, listen to the message of the angels. Listen to what the shepherds excitedly told the people. Listen to Mary, to Joseph, to the wise men. I mean, listen to everyone who was there at that first Christmas. And they would have said that Christmas was, it was about receiving. That Christmas was about receiving God's love that's all wrapped up in swaddling clothes. No, I think those people there at the first Christmas, they would have said that the gift was there for receiving. For receiving a gift that the apostle Paul calls God's indescribable gift.

I'm looking at 2 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 15 as the apostle Paul, I mean, he just can't hold himself in. He can't contain himself as he bursts forth with joy. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift. The Christmas story sets the gospel of Jesus Christ, it sets it apart from all the religions of the world. I mean, if you look at all the religions of the world, you lined them up one after another. And they're all telling us about what we try to do for God, rather than what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Now the religions of the world are about you and me trying hard to reach up to God rather than God graciously coming down to us, becoming one of us, taking on himself our humanity, and taking on himself our very sin as his own in order that he might gift us with his very life.

Now here in 2 Corinthians chapter 9, the apostle Paul is wrestling with what most of us preachers wrestle with at Christmas. I mean, Paul's trying to find just the right words to say what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. And so what Paul does here, he does something really interesting. Paul actually invents a Greek word. We can say that he invents this word because this is the first time that this word, indescribable as in indescribable gift, it's the first time that this word shows up anywhere in the Greek language. And if you break down this word that Paul invents, that he puts together, Paul invents a word that has the idea of something, well, it's something that is just too wonderful for words. I mean, you can't find the words for it. It is inexpressible. It is unspeakable. I mean, there are no words for it in Greek or in Hebrew or in English or in any language. There are no words for what God has done for you and me in Christ Jesus and what he has gifted us with. I mean, that is the Christmas story can never fully be told. This year I wrote our 13th Advent devotional. And you know what? Next year there'll be more to tell about what God has done for you and me in Jesus Christ.

There was a young man, a fisherman named John, son of Zebedee. He was one of the first to receive God's indescribable gift in Jesus Christ. And in John's Gospel, chapter one, verse 12, John writes



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that all who received Jesus, did you get that? All who received Jesus, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God. Did you notice that word? That all who receive Jesus, he gives the power to become children of God. It's a gift to be received.

Now there was another man a little bit after the apostle John. His name was Irenaeus. He was actually Christianity's first systematic theologian. And church history tells us that Irenaeus actually had a direct tie to the apostle John, that he was discipled by the man who had been discipled by John. And here's what Irenaeus wrote. He said, quote, our beloved Jesus Christ became what we are that he might bring us to be what he is in himself, sons and daughters of God. In God's indescribable gift of Christmas, it is the son of God becoming the son of man to make us sons and daughters of God.

That is God's indescribable gift given at Christmas. That God came down to us, not for his sake, but he came for our sake. He gave himself. He poured out his very life that we might receive, that we might receive his very life. I mean, that's the heart of Christmas. You know, one Christmas morning as I was watching little children excitedly open their Christmas presents, I had a new insight. I think into what Jesus meant when he said that we have to become like little children. As I watched little children opening those gifts, not one of them said, oh, you shouldn't have gotten me so many presents. You shouldn't have spent so much on me. Now they received. They received because you see at the heart of a little child is to receive.

And so this Christmas, our Heavenly Father wants you to receive as he delights in giving. Make this Christmas your time for receiving a new God's indescribable gift of life that is wrapped up in Jesus Christ. Yeah, they say Christmas is a time for giving, but why don't you make it a time for receiving yet again, God's love poured out for you and me in Jesus Christ, in God's indescribable gift.

I am Tim Smith, the fellow traveler. Thank you for listening until next time.