



water from rock

## Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – December 21, 2021

The Lord be with you.

We are hearing a lot these days about vaccines, about variants and about building up immunity against Covid, and it's all got me to wondering if it's possible, if it's possible that you and I might be building up an immunity to Christmas... An immunity to the sheer wonder, the joy, the amazement that is Christmas. What I mean is, do you think it's possible that as we celebrate Christmas each year, then we get used to Christmas, that we build up a resistance to all that Christmas means for us. I've often said that the Christmas sermon is the hardest sermon of the year to preach, I mean, we know the story, we know it well, it's almost a familiarity breeds immunity to the real wonder and joy that is Christmas. Today, I wanna look at a scripture text that takes us to the very heart of Christmas, what Christmas is all about.

I'm in 2 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 15, as the Apostle Paul, he can't hold himself in, he can't contain himself, he just bursts forth with joy as he writes, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift."

Now it's popular, this time over to say that Christmas is a time for giving. But you know, I'm not sure that all 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 that rather, they would have said that Christmas was a time for receiving. I mean, listen to the message of the angels, listen to what the shepherds told, the people... You listen to Mary Joseph, the wise man, everyone who was there, I would have said that Christmas was... That it was about receiving. It was about receiving God's love all wrapped up, in swaddling clothes. They would have said that the gift was for receiving. For receiving a gift that the Apostle Paul calls God's indescribable gift.

Now, 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 the world's religion, you just line them up one after another, and they're all about us doing for God rather than what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. They're about you and me trying to reach up to God rather than God graciously coming down to us, becoming one of us, taking on our humanity, taking on our sin as his very own in order that He might gift us with his very life. And he here in 2 Corinthians 9, Paul is wrestling with what most preachers wrestle with at Christmas, that is, Paul is trying to find just the right words... The right words to describe what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. And so what Paul does here, Paul actually invents a Greek word. You get to do that if you are an apostle. Paul invents a Greek word, and we can say that he invents it because this particular word that is translated as indescribable, as an indescribable gift, it is the first time this Greek word shows up anywhere in the Greek language, and if you break down this word that Paul invents, if you look at its different parts, Paul invents a



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word that has the idea of something that is just too wonderful for words, you can't find the words for it, it is inexpressible it is unspeakable. There are no words for it in Greek, in Hebrew and English are in any language, there are no words for what God has done for you and me in Christ Jesus. That is the Christmas story can never fully be told. So if I ever think I know all that Christmas is about. It is beyond our words to know or to express...

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 Gospel, chapter 1 verse 12, John writes that, "all who received Jesus, who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God." Did you notice that word all? That all who receive Jesus, He gave the power to become children of God. They received that gift. Now, there was another man named Araneus, he was the first Christian systematic theologian. And church history tells us that Araneus had actually a direct tie to the Apostle John. And here's what Araneus wrote, as he said, "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 is that the son of God became the son of man to make us sons and daughters of God. That is God's indescribable gift that came down at Christmas. That came down not for His sake, but he came for our sake, He gave Himself, He poured out His very life so that we might receive... That we might receive His life. And that's the truth of Christmas. And I pray for you that you and I never become vaccinated against the joy, the wonder that is Christmas. One Christmas morning, as I was watching children open their Christmas present, I had new insight, I think, into what Jesus meant when he said that we have to change. We have to become like little children. So that as I watched a little children opening those gifts and not one of them ever said, Oh, you shouldn't have gotten me so many presents, you shouldn't have spent so much money that they didn't break up in their piggy banks and try to pay back. They received, they received. And so it is a heart of children to take to receive, and so the Heavenly Father wants you to receive as our Heavenly Father delights and giving... Make this Christmas your time for receiving God's indescribable gift of life wrapped up in Jesus Christ.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening. Until next time.