

THE BIG IDEA: When the gift is good, and the giver is good, the only good choice is to receive.

The Take-Off

Merry Christmas, Gatherers!!

It's so good to have the WHOLE family together, isn't it?

Nothing feels more like Christmas than a church full of families - moms, dads, kids, grandparents.

This is - bar none - my favorite Sunday of the year, and thanks for being with us!

Children are wonderful glasses to look through, because they have such a unique way of seeing the world!

Jesus knew this when He made one of the more shocking statements during His earthly ministry.

It's found in Matthew 18:3 where Jesus said unless we change and become like a child, we won't enter the kingdom of heaven.

So this Christmas season, we're asking, "What does it look like to become like a child?"

We've talked about loving like a child - unconditionally.

We've talked about living like a child - fearlessly.

Last week we talked about giving like a child - generously - and then we did! You gave \$2,503 to non-profits in The Big Give!

And this morning, on the Sunday before so many of us will open gifts we've been given, we need to ask: "How do we receive like a child?"

I think we can understand this if we take a look at 3 different scenes from the Christmas story.

Let's start on a dark hill just outside of Bethlehem...

1. The shepherds received with passion

- a. Not many of us can relate to the shepherds, because not many of us are at the bottom of the social structure
- b. These men were the lowest of the low
- c. This was the night shift at Walmart on a slow night!
- d. But on this night, something changed. These outcasts received a clue to the world's first ever Christmas scavenger hunt!
- e. In my family, whenever someone opened a clue to a scavenger hunt, it always meant the gift was good.
- f. The mystery would heighten our expectation, and it was no different with the shepherds.
- g. So how did they receive this news? They received it with PASSION!
- h. I'd never noticed this before, but the angel never told the shepherds to go find the baby Jesus. They just went!
- i. And that's what passion looks like, isn't it?
- j. Passion MOVES.
- k. The shepherds moved passionately to find Jesus (v. 16 - they hurried off) and then they moved passionately to tell others where to find Jesus (v. 17).
- l. Maybe you feel like an outcast, an afterthought. Like the shepherds, you would have qualified to be the first to receive the good news, and like the shepherds and like a child, receive it with passion.
- m. Then, allow that passion to move you closer to Jesus and closer to others who need him.

2. The wise men received with joy

- a. Another great example of receiving is found in our second scene, in Matthew 2:10.
- b. At the end of a long journey, the wise men finally came to their destination, and their reaction was a lot like a kid at Christmas.
- c. Do you remember how long it took for Christmas to come when you were younger and how fast you tore into the presents under the tree when it finally came?
- d. That's exactly what the wise men did. Matthew 2:10 says that when they saw the star (which meant that they'd finally found the king), they were overjoyed.
- e. In the Greek, it says that they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. Mega joy!!
- f. Want to know what joy looks like? Check out this video.
- g. [Boy opening Star Wars present]
- h. What does joy do? Joy REJOICES!
- i. And the longer the search and the wait, the greater the rejoicing!
- j. Maybe you've been on a long journey, looking for hope and a king, and today is the day you meet Jesus.

k. Receive him like a child who has waited forever for Christmas morning, with exceeding great mega joy!

3. Mary received with humility

- a. Our last picture is Mary, the mother of Jesus, who played a pretty significant role in the Christmas story!
- b. We see Mary before the birth of Jesus and again after, and both times we find the same quality: humility
- c. In Luke 1:38, she simply says, “may it be to me according to your word” and then in Luke 2:19, we find her pondering - treasuring - all the events of Jesus’ birth in her heart
- d. Do you know what humility does? It ALLOWS.
- e. Mary said yes to what the angel explained. She could have refused, but humility allows the gift to be given.
- f. So many times we pridefully refuse to let another give us anything, and yet when we receive like a child, we’ll receive with humility and allow the other person to receive the blessing of giving.
- g. Finally, we need to make one last observation...

4. None of them received with understanding

- a. The shepherds were afraid and confused
- b. The wise men had to be led by a star and a dream
- c. Mary knew that there was absolutely no explanation for what was happening to her
- d. But that didn’t stop them from receiving, and it shouldn’t stop you or me, either.
- e. In fact, John 1:5 tells us that the world - and we’re in it - didn’t understand the gift, but verse 12 says if we’ll receive Him, we’ll become God’s children.
- f. Understanding is NOT a prerequisite for receiving.
- g. It certainly isn’t for children, who don’t try to figure out the gift as much as they simply try to enjoy it.
- h. All a child has to know is that his or her name is on the gift.
- i. Period.

The Landing

This morning, there is a God who loves to give and he has a gift with your name on it.

Listen to the weight of Scripture and see the love of a God who loves to give.

[Read or have children read from the PDF with verses about giving]

You may not fully understand it, but all you really need to know is that His gift has your name on it, and he wants you to receive it like a child.

With passion, with joy, with awe-filled humility, because when the gift is good, and the giver is good, the only good choice is to receive.

[VIDEO - Cop pulls people over, gives them Christmas gifts]

As we wrap this morning up, this is your chance to receive like a child the good gift of salvation straight from the Father’s heart.

Let’s pray.