

THE BIG IDEA: This Christmas, don't miss the Gift on the tree.

The Take-Off

"Let it Snow" has been such a fun, rich series!

Week 1 - mercy transforms us - SNOW much transformation!

Week 2 - mercy attracts people who need mercy - SNOW many people!

Last week - mercy allows us to show generosity - SNOW much generosity!

This morning, as all of us are feeling the crunch of last minute shopping and overnight shipping, of final preparations before loved ones arrive and table decorations, can we just talk about the simplicity of God's mercy?

Isaiah 1:18 is a wonderfully simple promise: the ugliness of our sin can become white as snow.

This is the gospel message, and it's simple.

The gospel is SNOW simple and it's found in [John 3:16 \(NIV\)](#).

Let's read it.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

1. Don't miss the tag

- a. I know all of us have picked up presents before and wondered who it could be for and from
- b. Sometimes the tags are easy to spot and sometimes there isn't a tag and we have to look for something written on the package
- c. The tag does 2 very simple but important things: tells us who the present is from and who it's for
- d. John 3:16 is God's gift tag and **we can't afford to miss the tag**
- e. It tells us who the gift is from: God
- f. It tells us who the gift is for: the world ... whoever
- g. If you're here this morning and you're still breathing, Jesus was given to you
- h. It's actually as simple as that even though people try to make it a lot harder than that
- i. As I thought about the simplicity of the gospel this week, I kept asking God why people wouldn't open such a good gift?
- j. To answer that question, we need to go back to an odd account in Numbers 21.

2. Don't miss the tree

- a. The people of God were on their journey to the Promised Land and it was taking too long
- b. [Number 21:4](#) says they grew impatient with the long journey
- c. Parents who have ever road-tripped with their kids understand this story!
- d. They complained against God and Moses and verse 6 records God's response:
- e. [\[VIDEO / Indiana Jones snakes\]](#)
- f. The only way for the people to be healed was to have been bitten and then to have looked at the pole with the bronze serpent
- g. They weren't told to focus on how they could manage the snakes, tame the snakes, exterminate the snakes
- h. Verse 8 / there was a pole with a snake and they were told to "simply look at it"
- i. Do you know that people could have been bitten and died with the answer right in front of them?
- j. Why? Because they didn't look at the pole.
- k. The gospel is SNOW simple - God is giving us a gift and yet we have to receive it - look at it
- l. If we go back to John 3, we'll find out that this story in Numbers is about way more than snakes and a pole
- m. [John 3:14-15](#) / this was a foreshadowing of the cross
- n. In a holiday that focuses mostly on a baby in a manger, can I encourage you to **not miss the tree?**
- o. Christmas points to the cross

3. Don't miss the Gift

- a. That brings us to the final thing we can't miss - **don't miss the gift**
- b. It's not just about the cross - it's about the Son of Man ON the cross
- c. **This Christmas, don't miss the Gift on the cross**

- d. We can get so caught up in all the festivities about the gift that we actually miss the gift
 - On January 6, 1850, a snowstorm almost crippled the city of Colchester, England; and a teenage boy was unable to get to the church he usually attended. So he made his way to a nearby Primitive Methodist chapel, where an ill-prepared layman was substituting for the absent preacher. His text was Isaiah 45:22—“Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” For many months this young teenager had been miserable and under deep conviction; but though he had been reared in church (both his father and grandfather were preachers), he did not have the assurance of salvation.
 - The unprepared substitute minister did not have much to say, so he kept repeating the text. “A man need not go to college to learn to look,” he shouted. “Anyone can look—a child can look!” About that time, he saw the visitor sitting to one side, and he pointed at him and said, “Young man, you look very miserable. Young man, look to Jesus Christ!”
 - The young man did look by faith, and that was how the great preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon was converted.
 - The difference between perishing and living, and between condemnation and salvation, is faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus could well have come to this world as a Judge and destroyed every rebellious sinner; but in love, He came to this world as our Savior, *and He died for us on the cross!* He became the “uplifted serpent.” The serpent in Moses’ day brought physical life to dying Jews; but Jesus Christ gives eternal life to anyone who trusts Him. He has salvation for a whole world!
- e. Look to the cross and see the Gift given for our forgiveness
- f. [The cup illustration]

The Landing

Our goal even in the Let it Snow series has been to see the beautiful and powerful simplicity of God’s mercy His mercy transforms, it attracts, it is generous, and in Jesus, it is the best gift we could ever be given The simple gospel is that God loved us and gave to us the only Gift that could forgive us. This morning, I call you to look to Jesus - to see the Gift ON the tree more than all the gifts under the tree. Look to the cross and find the forgiveness you need to receive and the forgiveness you need to give. Let’s pray.