



# SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

## CHRISTMAS: A TIME FOR GIVING

**KEY PASSAGE:** Luke 2:1-20 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES:** Psalm 103:19 | Matthew 2:1-11; 9:20; 16:23; 20:28  
Mark 1:35; 10:46-49 | Luke 1:38; 24:49 | John 3:16; 13:21; 14:18; 15:1-17:25; 20:27 | Acts 20:35 | Romans 1:20  
1 Peter 2:24

### ► SUMMARY

**Due to loss or other painful circumstances, Christmas is sometimes accompanied by sadness, but for the most part, it's characterized by happiness.**

Our joy in Christ—the main reason for our happiness—is accentuated by giving, which plays such a large role in our celebrations. Commercialism has corrupted this tradition to some degree, but that alone is no reason to abandon the practice of giving gifts. From the very beginning, Christmas has been a time of giving. In fact, Christ's birth, life, and ministry all exemplified giving.

### ► SERMON POINTS

**Jesus' birth was characterized by giving.**

Everyone involved in the Christmas story gave something.

- **Mary gave her body and reputation.** She willingly surrendered her body to bear the Son of God (Luke 1:38). Furthermore, because she was not married, she gave her reputation. Her engagement to Joseph was as binding as marriage, but to be found pregnant before the actual ceremony was proof of adultery in the eyes of people in her community and provided just cause for stoning.
- **Caesar Augustus gave a decree.** He called for a census to register people for taxation (vv. 2:1-5). Although the Roman emperor thought it was his idea,

God was at work to sovereignly orchestrate His divine purpose. According to prophecy, the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, but Mary and Joseph were in Nazareth. Caesar's proclamation simply brought them to Bethlehem at just the right time for Christ's birth.

- **The innkeeper gave a stable.** When Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, the city was so crowded that there was no place for them to stay (vv. 2:8-14). Although the inn was full, the innkeeper gave what he had—a stable, which became Jesus' birthplace.
- **The angel of the Lord gave the proclamation of Jesus' birth.** The first report of the Messiah's birth was delivered by a glorious angel to a group of lowly shepherds (Luke 2:8-14).
- **The shepherds gave a testimony.** Upon hearing the announcement and location of the birth, they quickly hurried off to find the baby, who was lying in a manger. They couldn't keep the news to themselves and told everyone what they had heard and seen (vv. 2:15-18).
- **The wise men gave gifts and worship.** These men may have been astronomers or scholars influenced by the prophet Daniel's godly teachings. Upon seeing a brilliant star, they set off on a journey to find the newborn King of the Jews. When they found Him in Bethlehem, they worshipped Him and offered gifts fit for a king—gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matt. 2:1-11).
- **God gave His only begotten Son.** The greatest gift of all came from God the Father, who gave His Son to die as a sacrifice for our sins (John 3:16). Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are given forgiveness of sins, the right to become children of God, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, and the gift of eternal life.

## Christ's life and ministry were characterized by giving. He gave Himself to:

- **Learning.** Jesus began growing in knowledge and wisdom at the young age of 12. He sat in the temple with the Pharisees and elders, asking and answering questions.
- **Baptism.** When John was baptizing people for repentance of sin, Jesus came to him for baptism. He Himself had no sin but was baptized to identify with those He came to save.
- **Fasting and prayer.** For 40 days He prepared Himself before beginning ministry.
- **The call of the Father.** Jesus began His ministry by going from town to town, teaching in the synagogues.
- **Criticism and persecution.** At first, the people flocked to hear Jesus. But when the message was not what they wanted to hear, they persecuted Him.
- **Prayer.** Jesus got up early to spend time alone with His heavenly Father.
- **Public and private teaching.** He instructed large crowds but also had time for individuals like the woman at the well, the rich young ruler, and Nicodemus.
- **Healing the sick.** Everywhere He went, Jesus healed people. He took time to stop and meet their needs.
- **Training His 12 disciples.** Although Jesus taught and ministered to the crowds, He gave personal instruction and correction to the 12 men called to be His disciples.
- **Others in friendship.** Jesus was always pouring Himself into the lives of others. When He came to the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus for rest, He continued to give of Himself as Mary sat at His feet listening to His words.
- **Being a ransom for many** (Matt. 20:28). He was arrested, tried, and crucified even though He'd committed no sin. But on the cross, He bore in His body our sins and received the punishment we deserved (1 Pet. 2:24).

Christ's entire life was spent giving to those He came to save. Even after the resurrection, He kept ministering to His disciples, strengthening their faith and giving them encouragement, instruction, and direction.

## Our lives should be characterized by giving.

A true follower of Jesus walks as He walked. Generosity should be our natural response to God's blessings and provisions. Jesus said it's more blessed to give than to receive, and mature believers know this is true (Acts 20:35). They delight in being generous. Their happiness is not dependent on others giving to them.

The One who has given us the most is our God and Savior. We can never repay Him, but we can show our appreciation and love by giving back to Him. There's nothing He needs, but we can yield our entire lives and give Him the praise and worship He deserves.

### ► RESPONSE

- What is your attitude toward gift giving at Christmas? Have you let the world's materialism and commercialism steal your joy and generosity?
- Why do you give gifts at Christmas? Is it because you want to express genuine love or gratitude, or is it out of obligation? Or do you give because you want to be like your Savior?
- What can you give to the Lord this Christmas? Is there anything you are withholding from Him—an attitude, obedience, genuine worship, prayer, or confession and repentance from a persistent sin?

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