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Sermon 441 - John 1:1-5, 12-18

As Just the Right Savior

Merry Christmas! This Christmas Eve we celebrate the Son of God who became a man to enable men to become sons of God. I hope your celebration is very blessed and I thank you for celebrating with us here at Amazing Love.

And I wanted to start out tonight with a question. *What do you need God to save you from this Christmas?* I bet there are some children anxious to see what is in those presents under the tree, any children excited for Christmas gifts. You're hoping for the things you put on the Christmas list or at least that one thing would be there. You're hoping God might save you from disappointment - with the presents under the tree. That may go for some adults with big expectations over what happens in this season. Whether it be for how the meal tastes, how break feels, how the family interacts. God save me from disappointment.

I consider what one child wished for in the Christmas classic Home Alone 2. Anyone see this movie? Kevin McCallister is standing before the big tree in Rockefeller center and what is his only request? He just wants to see his family, especially his mom again. He says, "I don't care. I love all of them, including buzz. If it isn't possible to see all of them, could I just see my mother? I'll never want another thing as long as I live. I just want my mother. I know I won't see her tonight. But Promise me I can see her again, sometime anytime. Just once and only for a couple minutes - I just need to tell her I'm sorry." God bring the family back. God save me from being alone, and homesick at Christmas.

I remember one Christmas in our household we needed God to save us from something. My brother and I had a paper route, and we had collected all the Christmas cash that people had given into one wallet. But the wallet was lost. Over \$200 I believe. A lot of money and we were praying and there were tears. God save us from this financial disaster - we've banked on this money we have plans for this money. Save us and help us to find the wallet - we did by the way.

Let me ask you again. *What do you need God to save you from this Christmas?* For some here it's your first Christmas without that loved one. And you're asking God save me from this empty feeling, strengthen my heart and sustain me. For some you're in a relationship that has reached a low spot with a spouse, or a child, possibly a boss. You're saying Lord save me from the misery of this. Bless this relationship. Others are asking God to save you from financial disaster - maybe in debt and don't know you're way out. In a pattern that hasn't worked. Some might save God save us in this country from the things happening politically.

It's interesting when Jesus came into the world there was a something the people hoped Jesus could save them from. They also had political aspirations - hoping Jesus would be an earthly political Savior. The people at that time were under the oppression of the Roman Empire, and the Caesars. The Jews wanted saving from this oppression. We see this in the disciples question when they said, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6) Lord save us and set us free from Rome.

This Christmas Eve I get to remind you what the angels announced, and shepherds celebrated. This declaration, “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” (Luke 2:11) We’ve been looking at this account in Luke 2 here at Amazing Love in this series called “One Christmas”. And tonight we hear what this Jesus, God in human flesh, can save us from. We learn that he is just the right Savior. He may not primarily be a Savior from earthly oppression, homesickness, disappointment, and bad relationships. But he is just the right Savior. Maybe not our first pick, but perfect for what we truly need. Let’s get into it by reading more about this Savior from the book of John chapter 1. Turn to your neighbor and say, “This gift is perfect!”

I don’t know how many of you get in the habit of enjoying the lights at Christmas? There are so many great displays. Perhaps none better than this house - the house from National Lampoons. And that house is perhaps the inspiration behind the show the Great Christmas Light Fight. It’s been going for a while they displayed a house from Tinley Park, and so many incredible displays. It seems like people quit their day jobs just to do this. And I’m not sure your favorite display, you have that one house in the neighborhood or the New Lenox Commons is pretty cool. Downtown Chicago and the Magnificent Mile. But here’s the thing with all of them. *It has get dark for the light to shine brightly.* Those Christmas displays aren’t as dazzling in the daylight are they? And the darker it is - the brighter the lights shine.

You know our world has a lot of darkness doesn’t it. Think of all the things we dealt with in 2017 this year. Consider all the natural disasters - the hurricanes, Harvey and Irma. Think of the wildfires in California. Then there were the terrorist attacks - in Las Vegas and New York. The darkness was displayed in stories of abuse as the MEtoo campaign came out, and all the stories of women who face the Harry Weinsteins of the world. Yes our world is dark. But all of that is generic, more personally I know we all carry a part of our story that is dark. We face things people have done to us. We have a histories that may include addictions, incredible mistakes, and sorrow.

But can I show you something in our lesson. v.4 What did it say in our lesson, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” See this night we celebrate a Savior that is born. And here’s the first takeaway about this Savior - *This Savior is the one who breaks the darkness.* The glory of God that lit up the sky that first Christmas, is the same powerful God lighting up hearts and homes this Christmas. As Jesus the Savior breaks through the darkness of life. He brings peace in sorrow, joy in pain, and a new day to all the days that got us down.

And what I find interesting is how many people in darkness - go out searching for the light. It reminds me of the Magi who came to see Jesus. They saw the star in the darkness, and the darkness of night showed them where to go as they followed the light. And they followed that light to the greater light of Jesus. There was a story of a prodigal who had to have things get dark, before he wanted the light, before he craved the light of what his father offered. And for you what I mean is this. I don’t joy in your sorrow or darkness, any more than God does. But if he used that darkness so you would crave the light, if he used that darkness so you could find him who is the light than God be praised. Because the light is real, and the light is here. The light of the world is the Savior of all mankind. And this light is for you too!

And you know why I know this Savior breaks the darkness. Because he broke my darkness. See I have a darkness deep inside me. My darkness is my sinful nature, and I have to tell you it's pitch black. It is the reason I say things, do things, have done things that are dark. But a Savior came. A Savior who is the light. And his light broke my darkness. He bore the curse of my sin on the cross he would bear. And now I live in the light of forgiveness, and the light of his love and the light of peace. I live with the full right of a son of God.

Maybe you don't consider yourself a Christian, maybe it's your first time back in church in a while. Do you know about the darkness inside that I speak of. Have you seen it? Loveless thoughts and words and deeds that have come out of you. If you can relate to this I have hope. Hope in the form of a passage. See God says this, "8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." If we deny the darkness within we stay in darkness. But if we repent. If we bring that sinfulness out in to the light and ask for the Savior to take care of it he can. And you don't have to confess it to me or anyone else, but maybe in this moment be real with God. When you do this he can purify us and save us. Because the reason he is just the right Savior, and more than anything else - financial, political, relational - *This Savior is primarily a Savior from sin.* The name they gave to the baby was Jesus - and does anyone know what that name means? He saves. Because that's what the baby did. He lived each day perfect in our place. He died our death upon the cross. And he rose up from the grave to assure us that as the son of God became a man, we the men and women could become sons and daughters of God. Don't live in darkness. Join with me as a child of the light.

And I was thinking if there was a way to remember this one who breaks the darkness of our sins it is through this. Now this is the Ryobi, high powered flash light. Rated at 2500 lumens. Pretty good right. When this baby shines darkness has no chance. And I was hoping I could show you something could you lift up your worship folders like this (open high in the air). I wanted to shine the spotlight on them. And what do you see? Do you see the one who saves? Do you see the one who shines brighter in the darkness? Do you see the name of Jesus? Let this be a reminder that no darkness can overcome him, and no sin can't be forgiven through him.

One of the interesting trends going on is the ugly sweater phenomenon. Anyone where an ugly sweater tonight? I found a few that caused me to laugh on the internet. That last one was my gift to my wife, the sweater for myself. "You're welcome." And I love that they are called "ugly" sweaters. Because the truth is they are not beautiful. I was laughing this past week thinking about someone who didn't understand this is a satirical statement on sweaters. I don't know where it would be, some foreign country where politeness reigns. Oh you look nice. Or maybe that's Grandma's house I don't know. But they are not called beautiful sweaters, and you don't wear them when going to nice restaurants. No truth be told they are ugly. And as long as you know that we'll give the grace to wear it accept you for the joke you are making. So once again, the truth is that's ugly. But grace is you can wear it.

As we look at just the right Savior I need you to see both sides to him. v.14 "We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." And this is why he is just the right Savior, because *This Savior is full of truth and grace.* And I think both are so necessary in the world we live in right now - it's the reason he is the perfect Savior.

Because maybe you've noticed we live in a world that doesn't want to hear truth - especially if it means I'm wrong. We live in a world where morality is up to me. A world that wants to call ugly things beautiful. But see Jesus doesn't do that. He calls ugly, ugly - and not just sweaters with garland. He says you got revenge instead of forgiving - ugly. You met their crabby with your crabby - ugly. He points out all the sinful areas of our lives and doesn't sugar coat them. But says these sins pain me, urk me, and cost me. Ugly. And we need him to do that. We need him to call it ugly - otherwise we might condone things that hurt ourselves and others. We need truth to expose our ugly.

But we also need grace. We need a Savior who says I see all your ugly and yet I accept you, and yet I welcome you - all because I forgave you. And it's not that the ugly sins were ok, it's just that they were covered.

To think about it another way I had a chance to see a Christmas program put on by preschoolers - you've seen one of these? And preschool is a funny age - hard to have them do a ton at age 4 and 5. But it is a fun thing because more than likely you're going to find one child who cannot handle what's going on. Maybe can't handle seeing mom and dad, or the person next to them, or just paying attention for that long. So there is that preschooler who steals the show by not being a part of it. Now if that is your child. Do you only give grace? I'm proud of you good job. You'll say that. But for the sake of the child you may also give truth. Honey I'm proud but you have to listen to teacher. Not tackle the person next to you. Truth and grace.

And I wonder - which do you need to hear more this Christmas? If you are unconcerned about the sin in your life, and think you're always right on every decision and action. That you've never done wrong. If you're using the love of God to be a license for sin - you need to hear the truth. Sin is ugly, and a love for sin can separate you from God forever. However, if you've come in racked with guilt over what you have done, knowing just how much you have failed. You need a message of grace. You need to hear again God has sent Jesus full of grace for you. And that there is no sin that can't be covered by this grace. I praise God for this balance of truth and grace - which all speak of love for us!

But there is more. Do we have any people sleeping over at relatives houses this Christmas? We are going to my wife's parents house in WI, and there is always a gained intimacy of understanding when staying with a relative. You start to understand the temperature they prefer the house to stay at. You start to understand their eating patterns, and what you might find in the fridge - and therefore what you need to bring along. You know if they are morning or night people, and how clean they are or like things. You learn so much wonderful things when staying with relatives. Like how many people can fit an 8x8 room. :)

The Son our Savior understands what we learn when we stay somewhere. Consider this passage, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." Literally it means that he tented or camped with us here on earth. And this means he knows a whole host of things. He knows how exciting it is to open a present, and how heartbreaking to miss someone we love. He knows how dark the world is as he was betrayed, beaten, and crucified, but he also knows the glory of victory - as he rose. As he shared his message of victory with others and now us. He knows when we're having a good day and a bad day and everywhere in between because he sees our patterns. See this Savior is just the right Savior because *this Savior stayed with us*. And so he knows what we need and how to love us through it all because he came here on Christmas.

But I can't leave you this Christmas Eve without considering my favorite thought. Have you ever had a Christmas when you thought all the presents were opened. You were doing inventory on your new stash, and then out of no where a new present comes into the mix. My family was famous for this. Opening many little gifts - play dinosaur, clothes, underwear from Grandma - and you already have this great Christmas. But then. Some of the things that came when everything else was opened was a Nintendo, a Ping Pong table, and a bicycle. And you have just got to love the gift on top of a gifts.

My favorite thought of this whole lesson is v.16 "Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given." And more literally it is translated not grace in place of grace, but rather grace on top of grace. And I like that a bit more. I don't want a gift in place of another gift - I want gifts on top of gifts.

So I asked you, *What do you need God to save you from this Christmas?* And as I've shared already - he's maybe not our first pick, but exactly what we need. Because this Savior, saved us from the curse of sin - from punishment of it forever! Hallelujah - he will always primarily be the Savior from sin. But he's just the right Savior because *This Savior specializes in grace upon grace*. And if you've ever experienced his work in this category - it's the fun, it's the joy. It's the I got cake and get to eat it too. It's the when I see him as Savior from sin I can see him save me from so much else as well.

For he can save me from financial woes. Because the one who called us into his family and made us righteous says, "The righteous will never be forsaken or their children begging bread." I've seen his ways turn the financial futures of people around. He can save me from the relational woes. See grace makes a way where there was no way. Love covers over all. And sometimes relationships can get better than we ever expected because of the love he taught us to give. He can save us from political fears. Did you hear the righteous are never shaken - it's true. Because regardless of who is president and what is voted through or who is voted in - he's still reigning from his throne. And yes he can help Kevin Mcallister and every person dealing with heart sickness. As he tender says, "I will be the strength of your heart and your portion forever."

This Christmas I want you to know the grace of salvation from sins. To know this baby born for you will die for you to set you and me free. But I guess I'd like you also to walk with him more than just tonight. To go through a dark world and have these grace upon grace moments. For you to see - he might not be the Savior you imagined or hoped for - but to experience he is so much more. May God bless you this Christmas. For today a Savior is born!