

Introduction

1. Dating back to the 1500's, the English carol goes like this: "Tis the season to be jolly, Fa la la la la, la la la la."
2. Isn't it wonderful that we are so happy at the time of year? Isn't it wonderful that all our cares have gone away?
3. Now, while there nothing wrong with being joyful and jolly during this time of year, the truth is – not everyone is feeling that!
 - a. We are told depression is more extreme during December, caused by the lack of daylight, the stresses of making Christmas perfect, and loneliness
 - b. Problems with alcohol and domestic abuse is also elevated in Dec
 - c. We are told that funerals tend to increase in December as well

Let me just set the stage a bit for you...

1. Isaiah is a prophet of God about 700 years before Christ
 2. Two very strong nations are threatening Israel from the East: Assyria and Babylon
 3. Israel is entering a time of great distress and anxiety
 4. The people are experiencing terrible problems in life
 5. And in the middle of all this – Isaiah promises the Gift of a Savior
 6. Now one thing that does makes us seem a little jolly during Advent and Christmas is PRESENTS! –
 - a. From the words of Isaiah today – we are reminded of at least 6 presents the Lord comes to bring in His birth
 - b. And these presents from God do not offer some shallow, short-lived happiness; but these are gifts of enduring and everlasting JOY!
- I. Let's Open the First Gift – it's a letter from Visa Charge Card**
- A. It says my \$5,000 debt has been paid in full as a gift from the company
 - i. Now that truly would be some GOOD NEWS!
 - ii. Think of how many people are truly poor
 1. how people in Kenya literally live in shacks
 2. how people must depend on used clothing in order to be clothed
 - iii. Sometimes we think we are poor – but as sinful human beings, isn't it so often our financial management is what's poor?
 - B. Isaiah is not promising some Santa Claus to come and shower us with money... we are a greater poverty
 - i. It is not our bank accounts that are empty, it is our souls; bankrupt and void of all holiness, void of God

- C. The Good News that Isaiah speaks to Israel about being poor is not about a lot of cash; but about a Christ, Jesus Christ
 - i. He comes in poverty, born in an animal stable
 - ii. But in His coming – He makes us rich
 - iii. This Jesus comes to take the debt of our sins
 - iv. 'Tis the season to be jolly because the Infant Christ fills our souls with the riches of salvation; with the gift of heaven

II. Gift #2: A band-aid

- A. A couple years ago, my dad had a severe heart-attack, some of you have experienced the same
 - i. Because of this fallen world in sin, even that organ that pumps blood through our bodies becomes broken, wears out, and even eventually stops
- B. But there is another kind of broken heart in this world, isn't there?
 - i. How has this world, cursed with sin, broken your heart?
 - ii. A boyfriend or girlfriend breaks up with us, a child making wrong and even dangerous decisions in life, a parent who abuses a child breaks more than bones
 - iii. Does Jesus come for such broken hearts as these?
- C. Yes, but there is a heart condition even more severe
 - i. There is the cold and hard heart against God
 - ii. There is the heart that says "there is not God"
 - iii. There is the heart whose life is played out in rebellion, pornography, drugs, violence, arrogance, and more
 - iv. This kind of heart needs more than a Band-aid → it needs a miracle, this brokenness needs a GOD!
- D. Isaiah speaks of the coming of the Savior who heals our damaged, broken, and cold and hardened hearts
 - i. The Infant Christ was born with a heart that pumped blood through His body
 - ii. On the cross, the centurion pierced Jesus just beneath the heart, and out came blood and water
 - iii. This blood is poured into the chalice of Holy Communion
 - iv. This water is poured into the font of Baptism
 - v. Here is medicine for our "greater heart" disease
 - vi. 'Tis the season to be jolly because Jesus comes to bind up our broken hearts

III. Gift #3: a Key

- A. Rebekah was telling me about going to the movie, "A Boy in Striped Pajamas" – about a Jewish boy locked in a concentration camp during WWII

- i. think of people held captive, kid-napped, unjustly imprisoned and how they long to be set free
- B. But we are all doomed to another prison
 - i. Hell is a prison – and once you get in you never get out
 - ii. Hell is a prison-house for those who do not believe in Jesus Christ, who lived impenitent lives, who reject the Savior
 - iii. We all deserve temporal and eternal punishment – for we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God
- C. But Isaiah speaks of a wonderful gift – a gift “grander” than any Christmas gift you might ever receive: more extravagant than an ipod, a diamond ring, or a Ferrari
 - i. This gift is mentioned in the hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” as it says, “O come, Thou KEY OF DAVID come, and open wide our heavenly home”
 - ii. For those who believe in Christ – the Infant Jesus comes to lock shut the gates of hell so we will never enter, and He opens paradise for us to live with Him forever there
 - iii. ‘Tis the season to be jolly – because as this Jesus came from Heaven to earth to save us, He made way for us to enter heaven through His coming, death, and resurrection

IV. Gift #4: A Sympathy Card

- A. Last Friday my family from Green Bay called
 - i. A cousin of mine, his wife, and one of his six children all died in a house fire that night
 - ii. There will be a 3-casket funeral, held in the community school gymnasium for all the mourners
 - iii. You too have experienced death in your families → the pain is tremendous
 - iv. A sympathy card is a nice gesture, but it doesn’t give immediate comfort
 - v. While the death of a loved one is very painful, still – it does not compare to the pain of eternal death
 - vi. Our heart is heavy and grieves for loved ones who do not know Jesus Christ
- B. How can a baby comfort us any more than a sympathy card?
 - i. If the Baby is GOD – then He can indeed comfort us!
 - ii. Jesus did not come to earth simply to show us how to live
 - iii. Jesus came to earth to experience DEATH – our DEATH – the DEATH of our sins
 - iv. When this Jesus is born in Bethlehem, we “know the rest of the story” – His life takes us from a cradle to a cross!

- v. But do not mourn for Him – even though this Jesus was laid in a tomb, He raised Himself back to life
- vi. Now all those who believe in Him follow after Him, also rising from the dead through the power of this same Jesus Christ
- vii. This Baby Jesus speaks to Martha later in his life, “I am the resurrection and the life, and all who believe in Me, even though they die, yet shall have eternal life!”
- viii. We get more than a sympathy card from God → we get compassion in the flesh
- ix. ‘Tis the season to be jolly – because even in the face of death, our spirit has the depth of joy of knowing death is but a doorway into heaven

V. Gift #5: A Hammer

- A. All I have to say is “9-11” – and you know what I am talking about
 - i. That day not only 2 towers came down....
 - ii. but our nation took a direct hit
 - iii. And now, the process of rebuilding has begun

- B. But what about lives? What about souls?
 - i. Sin and death have destroyed and destructed our souls, and has torn apart our relationship with God
 - ii. Look how lives are torn apart by war, flood, hurricanes, hate, envy, and greed
 - iii. But a zillion times greater is the damage sin had done to our souls
 - iv. We have been destroyed, we were ruined after the fall, apart from Jesus Christ, Baptism, and the renewal of the Holy Spirit we are dust and rubble

- C. Jesus grew up a carpenter’s son, and more than likely knew the trade himself
 - i. But it wasn’t through hammers, saws, and nails that Jesus set out to rebuild our lives
 - ii. It was with His own life, His own blood, His own death, and His own resurrection that Jesus took rubble and made it in a priceless treasure!
 - iii. ‘Tis the season to be jolly – because Jesus has taken souls and lives fit for the wood pile to be burned, and He has rebuilt us, recreated us, and renewed us to be His beloved children once again

VI. Gift #6: New Clothes

- A. A popular Christmas gift is clothes: from socks, to a new tie, to a new dress, to a new shirt
 - i. How we fuss over our clothing

- ii. It has to be from the right store, the right brand, the right words, the right amount of strategically placed holes in the jeans...
 - iii. If only we worried about another garment
 - 1. We are cloaked with the garment of sin and death
 - 2. It's like wearing a garment for a lifetime without ever washing it – we are so dirty and disgusting with sin
- B. But Jesus comes, to be laid in a manger
- i. And with what is He clothed? – but strips of cloth, strips of rags
 - ii. Even more so – Jesus is clothed with our sin
 - iii. It's not the dirty diaper of a new born he wears; it is our sin and soiled souls He comes to take on
- C. But look at Isaiah's words: "For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness!"
- i. This is our baptism – all the purity and holiness of Jesus Christ...
 - ii. This Newborn Jesus Christ is our new garment – the garment of forgiveness, the clothes of eternal life!
 - iii. 'Tis the season to be jolly – for we don't wear the stinky clothes of sin anymore, but we are dressed with the Newborn King!

Conclusion

1. When we were children my Grandma Baneck would knit us woolen socks each year for Christmas
2. We were sinful – we dreaded these socks, "not socks again!" we thought
3. Little did we realize that stiff, sore arthritic hands knit each of those socks for us, little did we realize she thought of our names as she knitted those socks, little did we realize how her eyes would hurt and how she would stay up late at night to knit these socks
4. Today, as grown children, we all want Grandma's socks as keepsakes
5. We say Jesus was born in Bethlehem in order to forgive our sins and give us Eternal Life – and we are tempted to say, "Is that all we got – not forgiveness of sins again!"
6. The gifts of God are without measure – and with great cost – the cost of our Savior's life on the cross, followed by His glorious resurrection!
7. The third Sunday of Advent is often called "Gaudete Sunday" – Joy Sunday, or Pink Sunday
 - a. We are joyful – not in the shallow happiness of receiving some gadget or piece of clothing...
 - b. But we are joyful because Jesus Christ gives Himself! He comes to fix our lives, rebuild them, cure them, bind them, and comfort them
8. 'Tis the Season to be jolly – because we receive the GIFT of Jesus! Amen.