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Precept Ministries International
P.O. Box 182218, Chattanooga, TN 37422-7218
1-888-734-7707/ www.preceptsforlife.com

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SERIES: Christmas: Receiving And Giving Love

TITLE: Program 2 – Receiving The Gift Of God’s Love

TUESDAY

OPEN

In the Broadway musical “Fiddler on the Roof” the main character turns to his wife and he asks her, “Do you love me?” And she says, “I clean your clothes. I clean your house. I cook your food. Do I love you? Of course I love you.” We need to hear, don’t we, that we are loved, not just the actions but the words. And this is what Christmas is all about. It is all about God saying to the world, “I love you. Listen to My Christmas story.”

PART ONE

You look out at the night and you look up at the stars and you go beyond that in your thoughts and you think about God. That’s what Christmas is supposed to do. Christmas is supposed to make you think about God. It’s supposed to make you remember that “...**God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son...**” (John 3:16) Jesus Christ. The Christmas story is all about God saying “I love you.” When man turns around and says,

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“Do You really love me? Do You love me?” How does one prove their love to another? Well I want to take us to John chapter 15. In John chapter 15, Jesus is with His disciples and He knows that the cross is coming. He’s about to make His way to the Garden of Gethsemane. And in John chapter 15, verse 13 this is what He says, **“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)** There is no greater love, no greater expression of love than laying down your life for another. And that, Beloved, is what Christmas is all about. Christmas is all about God telling you that He loves you so much that He has provided a solution for all the disappointment, and all the bitterness, and all the sin, and all the unforgiveness. He has provided a solution. He has sent His Son. I want us to go back to Matthew and to the beginning of that gospel; because as we go to Matthew, we find the account of the coming of Jesus Christ. We find out what happened when the angel came to Mary and told Mary that she was going to have a child. In Matthew chapter 1 it says in verse 18, **“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 1:18)** When it says, “by the Holy Spirit,” it’s telling us that this was not a normal conception. Rather, this child did not come from the sperm of man. This child was put there in the womb of Mary by the Spirit of God. This child was the very Son of God. And it says, **“And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man [did not want] to disgrace her, [and he] planned to send her away....” (Matthew 1:19)** Now what does it mean “he did not want to disgrace her”? Joseph loved Mary and that genuine love says, “Okay, I think that you have sinned. I know that you are pregnant. I know that somehow you have violated our love relationship, but I don’t want to disgrace you.” You see in biblical times they were betrothed; they were engaged. A covenant ceremony was made, and in that covenant ceremony, they set up the fact that when the time was right they would come together as husband and wife and it was as good as a

marriage because it was a covenant. It was a solemn binding agreement. And so the one thing that could break that covenant was immorality; it was adultery, it was fornication, whatever you want to call it. And so he looked at her and he said, “I don’t want to disgrace her.” He could take her out and have her stoned. He could have her put to death. He could make a public spectacle of her. And many people do that out of bitterness. And they do it out of anger. And they do it because they love themselves more than they love the other person and they’re very, very hurt. Maybe, Precious One, you’ve experienced that. Maybe you’ve been rejected. Maybe you blew it. Maybe you sinned. Mary did not sin. But maybe you sinned and the one that professed their love for you was not willing in essence to lay down their life for you. They were not willing to forgive you. They were not willing to take you back. Although you came in tears, although you came in sorrow, although you said, “You know I made a mistake and I’m telling you honestly that it’s you that I love.” Whatever it was, if they are not willing to love you so much that they lay down their life for you then it’s not the kind of love that you’re really searching for. Well it says, “...[he] **planned to send her away.**” (Matthew 1:19) Verse 20, “**But when he...considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child [that] has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; [and this is what I want you to see,] and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.’**” (Matthew 1:20-21) “**Greater love has no one than this, [to] lay down [their] life for [another.]**” (John 15:13) Jesus’ death was planned before the foundation of the world. God had a plan and that is that He would redeem sinful man by having His Son become flesh and blood, by having His Son become a human being. And as a human being then He would die on the cross. He would be the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world and God would take all of mankind’s sins and He would put them on Jesus Christ and

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Jesus Christ would willingly bear them. Why? Because God so loved the world. The plan was already there. When Jesus was born He was born to die. And this is what Mary knows and this is what Joseph knows. They know that they are about to give birth to the Promised One, to the Christ, to the Son of God and He is the One who will be the Lamb of God because God is not pleased with the sacrifices of animals. So a body He has prepared for His Son. And Jesus says, [“...in the volume of the Book it is come, it is written, “I have come to do Your will.”] (PARAPHRASE, Hebrews 10:7) God loved the world and because God loved the world, God wanted the world to be saved. And the only way that the world could be saved was for Jesus Christ to come and to die on their behalf. I want to take you to 1 John chapter 4 because in 1 John chapter 4 what we have is we have the love chapter. Love is used 28 times in this passage. And God wants you and me to understand the importance of love. He says in verse 7, **“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God...,”** (1 John 4:7) the very source of love, the wellspring of love, the genesis of love is found in God. And he goes on to say, **“...let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”** (1 John 4:7-8) God is love. It’s the very essence of His being. It says **“By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world...that we might live through Him.”** (1 John 4:9) Now take that verse and read again what it says in Matthew chapter 1 verse 21, **“She [shall] bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus...,”** (Matthew 1:21) or Joshua. It’s the same word. It’s Yeshua and it means Savior. **“[For] you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”** (Matthew 1:22) “Do You love me? Do You love me?” That’s what we say to God and God says, “Ye,s I love you.” And you say, “Well prove it.” And we think He proves by circumstances in our lives by whether we pray and we get an answer, whether we want someone and God gives us that someone or whether He

lets our someone, our loved one, live or whether he dies. If the one dies then God doesn't love us. No, no, no, no, no, no. You have to go back to the beginning. You have to go back to the meaning of Christmas. That God so loved you that He gave His only begotten Son. Galatians 4:4, "In the fullness of time God sent forth His Son, to be born of a virgin that He might redeem us," (PARAPHRASE, Galatians 4:4-5) that He might buy us. He did it out of love. He did it because you and I have no hope apart from Him. And so you go back to 1 John chapter 4 and it says **"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."** (1 John 4:10) Do you know what propitiation means?

Propitiation means satisfaction. In other words Jesus is going to pay for your sins and my sins when He hangs on that cross. [He who knows no sin is going to be made sin for you and me.] (PARAPHRASE, 2 Corinthians 5:21) Everything that you have ever done, every ugly word that you have ever uttered, every lie that you have told, everything that you have stolen, every act of immorality, every act of perversion, every meanness that you have had, every stealing, every gossip, every word, every rebellion, all of your sin, Precious One, was placed on Jesus Christ because God loved you. And God sent His Son to be the propitiation, the satisfaction, the payment that would satisfy His holiness and righteousness. He sent Him to be the propitiation of our sins. And then in verse 10 it says this and this is so important that you understand. **"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."**

Beloved, if God so loved us, we [ought also] to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us." (1 John 4:10-12) How do you know if you've received the love of God? Because when you receive the love of God that love is shed abroad in your heart and that in turn enables you to love others. "Oh," you ask the question, "do you love me?" as they said on "Fiddler on the Roof." And he says it in this deep voice, "Do you love me?" And God

says, “Oh yes, I love you.” That’s what Christmas is all about. I sent My Son. I put Him in a manger, because a manger is a feeding trough. I put Him in there; He is the Bread of Life. And I’m telling you that I gave My Son, the Bread of Life, to satisfy that hunger for love that is within you. We’ll talk about it more right after this announcement.

PART TWO

If your Christmas is going to be all that you want it to be, Beloved, it needs to be bathed in love. It needs to be bathed in the understanding of God’s great love for you so that as you go through the motions of Christmas; as you decorate the house, as you wrap presents, as you go to the Christmas parties, whatever you do as you’re in the season, you need to remember and you need to have it constantly in your mind. “I am loved. I am loved. I am loved. [God so loved me that He gave His Son to die for my sins.]” (PARAPHRASE, John 3:16) Let’s return to Matthew chapter 1 because this is a good passage for you to read at Christmas. Before you open your gifts focus on the gift of God’s love. It says in Matthew chapter 1 verse 21, “**She [shall] bear a Son; and you [shall] call His name Jesus, for He [shall] save His people from their sins.**” (Matthew 1:21) Now this was a message to Jews and eventually a message to Gentiles. Jesus came. Jesus is the power of God. It is the good news of the gospel of the death of Jesus Christ for our sins according to the Scriptures, of the resurrection of Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures. But He came to the Jew first and then He came to the Gentile. This is the message for the world. That Jesus can save you from your sins. And it says, “**Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet.**” (Matthew 1:22) And the prophet’s name is Isaiah. And this is what Isaiah wrote, “**...Behold, [the] virgin [shall] be with child and [shall] bear a Son, and [they shall] call His name Immanuel.**” (Isaiah 7:14) What is Immanuel? It says “**...which translated means, [this] ‘God with us’.**” (Matthew 1:23) God loved you so much that

He came to earth in the person of His Son. What other religion is there like that? What other religion says that you are so loved that the ultimate gift of gifts would be given to you? And the ultimate gift of gifts is that One would so love you that He would give His Son. One would so love you that the [Son Himself would lay down His life for you, who would come not to be served, but to serve, to give His life as a ransom as a payment for many.] (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 20:28) This is what Christmas is all about. And it says that [He is to be named Immanuel, God with us.] (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 1:23) I want to take you from the birth of Jesus Christ to the death of Jesus Christ because Christmas is not just about the birth of a baby. Christmas is about the death of a Son. We celebrate that at Easter as we celebrate His resurrection. But you can't think of Christmas apart from thinking about God's Christmas tree and God's Christmas tree is the cross. The Bible says **"...Cursed is everyone [that] hangs on a tree."**(Galatians 3:13) And he tells us in Galatians that Jesus was made a curse for us. He was taken by God. He was hung on a tree and there He was made to be sin for us. Let's go to Matthew chapter 27. Jesus is on trial and they're saying, ["Who do you want us to release to you?"] (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 27:17) At the feast they would always release a prisoner. And they cried and they asked for Barabbas. And it says, **"Then he released Barabbas for [all of] them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified."** (Matthew 27:26) I want you to understand how God decorated so to speak that Christmas tree. He took His Son who was made flesh and blood for you that He might taste death for every man, paid the penalty for our sins. And God took a cat-of-nine-tails and in the hands of those Roman soldiers Jesus was scourged. And the book of Colossians tells us that He bore in His body our sins. It was written on the parchment of the flesh of the Lamb of God. Jesus was scourged. By the time they got through with Him He looked like a piece of raw meat. Isaiah tells us that His form was marred more than any man, more than any son of man. In other words when you looked at Jesus

when they finished scourging Him, He was unrecognizable as a man. Jesus stood there and Jesus took that cat-of-nine-tails with nine leather straps and two hooks on each strap coming down and wrapping itself around His body and then being pulled back until He was a bloody mess, until He was disemboweled, until His flesh hung in ribbons on His back and blood was spouting forth. “There was a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel’s veins and sinners plunged beneath that blood lose all their guilty stains.” (*From the hymn: “Fountain Filled With Blood” by William Cowper*) O Beloved, this is what Christmas is about. There are Christmas carols, old Christmas carols, that you can listen to and as you listen to them you see that God is saying that Jesus Christ came with the sole purpose of dying for you because **“Greater love has no [man] than...that he lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13, NIV)** He was born to die. Well as we come to the scourging and it tells what they did, it says **“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and [they] gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. They stripped Him and [they] put a scarlet robe on Him. And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His...hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him...‘Hail, King of the Jews! [Hail King of the Jews!]’” (Matthew 27:27-29)** And there He stands a mass of bloody flesh, serum seeping from His body, with a crown of thorns on His head and those thorns piercing His brow. His beard has been plucked out according to Isaiah chapter 50. He is bruised in the face because He has been beaten. He now stands there in a purple robe. They put a reed in His hand and then they begin to spit on Him. They begin to mock Him. What kind of a man would endure that? A man who loves you. A man who knew that He came not to live but to die, to give His life a ransom for many. A man full of mercy. A man full of grace. A man full of pity for mankind. A man full of love who looks at this one who is a sinner and is standing there and thinking I am dying for you. I am being beaten for you. I am having your sins engraved on

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My flesh. I am being mocked as a king when in truth I am the King of kings and someday I'm going to come in all My power and all My glory and I'm going to reign. And as He stands there He looks at them and this is what He knows, that unless they believe that God loves them, that unless they believe that they are sinners, that unless they believe that He is the Christ, the Promised One, the Savior, Immanuel, God with us, unless they believe that and bow the knee and confess Him as Lord instead of mocking Him they will never be born again. The love of God in a sense will be wasted because they could have had life because ["Jesus came that you and I might have life and that we have it abundantly."] (PARAPHRASE, John 10:10) O Beloved, today if you want Christmas to be what it is to be then you need to bow your knee and you need not to mock Him, not to use His name in vain but to realize that here is the One that loves you so much that He laid down His life for you. He wants you to be His friend. He wants you to be His brother. He wants God to be your Father. That's why He came. And the question is will you believe and will you receive? All you have to do is say, "Yes, God, I believe," and He'll give you the gift of eternal life.