

## Christmas 2024 Sermon by Pastor Jon

Merry Christmas!

Every year for my Christmas Sermon I like to choose a theme, a song, and a movie for an illustration.

This year, the theme is grace, the song is O Holy Night, and the movie is the cult classic, Mickey and Minnie's Gift of the Magi.

First, the theme... Grace.

Right out of our Titus lesson in chapter 2:11, the author describes Jesus' birth this way, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all." Grace is God's unconditional love for the world. It is God's undeserved favor. Grace is not something you can earn. It's a gift that puts us in a right relationship with God regardless of our sinful nature or past failings.

This grace is still for us today. In our Gospel from Luke 2, the angels proclaimed to the shepherds in the midst of their daily lives, "Today, I bring you good news of great joy for all the people." Today. No matter what is happening in our world, red state/blue state, wars and rumors of wars, God's and grace and justice will prevail. The kingdom of God will keep breaking in until Jesus returns.

And keep in mind Jesus wasn't born into the perfect world. He was born during the occupation of the Roman Empire. His kingdom will start small, like a baby in a manger, and it will grow like a mustard seed... one person at a time... it started with the shepherds who left with haste to find this child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger... and now is passed on to us to share.

Second, the song. O Holy Night. This has always been a favorite of mine. Especially the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> verse.

O Holy night! The stars are brightly shining

It is the night of our dear Savior's birth

Long lay the world in sin and error pining

'Til He appeared and the soul felt its worth

A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices

For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn

Fall on your knees; O hear the Angel voices!

O night divine, O night when Christ was born  
O night, O Holy night, O night divine!

The new era of grace is here.

Verse 3: Truly He taught us to love one another;  
His law is love and His Gospel is Peace  
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother  
And in His name, all oppression shall cease

Let it be so.

Finally, the Movie. Mickey and Minnie's Gift of the Magi. This is a take-off of the original Gift of the Magi by O Henry published in 1905.

In the story, Mickey and Minnie wanted to buy each other the perfect Christmas present. However, at home the bills were piling up. In fact, Minnie was hiding them from Mickey. Mickey's prized possession was his harmonica, and Minnie's prized possession was her gold heirloom watch. Mickey wanted to buy Minnie a gold chain to go with her watch, and Minnie wanted to buy Mickey a case for his harmonica. Through Mickey's hard work at Crazy Pete's tree lot, and Minnie's hard work at the department store, they hoped to earn enough to buy each other the gifts. Long story short, Mickey got fired for integrity in helping a family in need, and Minnie, hoping to get a bonus, only got a fruit cake from her boss, who didn't even know her name. So, she sold the watch and Mickey sold his harmonica. For Mickey, just as the store was closing, he asked the owner if he could trade his harmonica for the gold chain, but the owner said that harmonica isn't worth much and walked away. Mickey then started playing a slow version of Away in the Manger. The store owner heard it and turned around to make the trade. When it came time to open gifts, Minnie asked Mickey to play a song and Mickey asked Minnie for the time. Neither could follow through. When they opened the gifts, they both laughed and pledged their love for each other anew. They showed grace for each other and knew, that just being together, was the best gift.

May you feel the grace of God this night and may your soul feel its infinite worth. Merry Christmas.