

*“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”*  
2 Corinthians 9:15

I had the enormous privilege of meeting Charlie Duke, one of the astronauts who walked on the moon in the late sixties. I purchased his book and had him sign it. He wrote, “Aim High!” To this day I feel it was a great honor to have met him. It was kind of like meeting Christopher Columbus or one of the other European explorers who first discovered the American continent. It was a very big deal when humans walked on the moon.

But it was a much bigger deal when God walked on the earth. You say, “God? I thought we were talking about Jesus. Isn’t Christmas all about Jesus’ birthday?” Yes, indeed, but Jesus was God in human flesh, “God with us,” God near to us, God walking in our shoes.

There are a lot of people in the world who say, “I believe Jesus was a good man.” The Muslim world regards Jesus as a great prophet.” They are right. Jesus was a good man and a great prophet, but he was more—much more. An angel had told Joseph in a dream that, “the child conceived in Mary is from the Holy Spirit.” Jesus himself put it quite simply, “I and the Father are one.” The holy day we are about to celebrate is not any old holiday. What we’re celebrating is the day God invaded the earth—to be “God with us.”

It’s the single most significant event in history. In fact, our calendar is split in half. All of history is split into B.C. and A.D. by this one event. Jesus Christ is the reference point for every date in history.

Now, some people get confused by this, because at the same time we say Jesus was God, we also say Jesus was truly human. The Christmas Gospel is that Jesus was both God and human. Jesus was not like an oreo cookie, human on the outside and God on the inside. He was not like a carton of half-and-half, half human

and half divine. No, he was *fully* human and *fully* divine.

Think about this miracle: Of all the ways God could have chosen to communicate his reality to human beings, God chose to become one of us. God could have written it in the sky. God could have used thunder and lightning. God could have put on a giant light show from the safe boundaries of his heaven. God could have done anything else! Of all the ways that God could have come into this world, God chose to come the same way you and I came into this world -- as a baby born of a woman.

Why did God do that? Why did God come to earth as a baby? Because God in compassion said, “I’m sending Jesus Christ to save you, not to scare you. Nobody’s afraid of a baby.” Many people are honestly afraid of God. They don’t even like to talk about God. They get nervous when you talk about God. If God had come in thunder and lightning and clouds, it would have scared a lot of people to death. But nobody’s afraid of a baby.

You see, God had a communication problem to solve. God had to come in a way that you and I could understand. If God had wanted to communicate to birds, God could have become a bird. If God had wanted to communicate to frogs, God could have become a frog. But God wanted to communicate to you and to me, so God became one of us.

I can’t relate to some big, ethereal force in the sky – the great all powerful, all knowing, immortal, invisible God—“May the force be with you” kind of thing. But when I look at Jesus, I see a person who was born like us, the way we were all born. The Bible says He grew like we did – physically, spiritually, socially. The Bible says that Jesus Christ was tempted like we are. He had the same needs, the same drives, the same

desires, the same problems, the same pressures in life.

The reason He went through all that was so He could relate to us. So, no matter what you're going through this day, God understands because God has been there. The Bible says that Jesus was not only tempted but He suffered like we did. He experienced real pain. There were times when Jesus was lonely. There were times when Jesus was weary and tired. There were times when He was under pressure, times when He was disappointed, misunderstood, when people didn't treat Him right and He was criticized. He understands all that. He's been there, too.

Here's the point: God came as a human being so He can understand us and so we can understand Him. That's the Good News. I look at Jesus and say, "Oh, that's what God's like!" I can relate to God in human flesh.

And that's exactly what God wants. God wants to have a relationship with you. You were made for a relationship with God. You were made to know God.

Amazing, isn't it, that when God came to earth, He came to ordinary people. Mary and Joseph were ordinary people. They didn't live in a palace or a manor house. They lived in poverty. When Jesus Christ was born, He didn't come to a select few. He didn't come to the privileged class. He didn't even come for religious people. He came to lowly shepherds. He came for all of us.

That's the point. God wants to have a relationship with all people. So He comes to our level. God meets us where we are. You may think, "All the things I've done in my life, I could never have a relationship with God." You're wrong. You may think, "God doesn't care about me, I'm a little nobody. Nobody cares about me and God certainly doesn't have time for me." You're wrong. Dead wrong. God says, "I love you, I know you, and I want you to know Me."

You see, God came to us because you and I couldn't reach up to God let alone comprehend the immensity of God. God's perfect and I could never reach high enough to get to know God. I

could never know God on my own, so God comes down to our level.

But the greatest miracle of Christmas is *why* God came to earth. You discover the reason why God came in the name given to the child born of Mary. The angel said to Joseph, give this baby the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. The name Jesus means, "God saves."

What do I need a Savior for? I'll tell you why. The Bible says that heaven is a perfect place. There is no sadness in heaven, no sorrow, no sin, no sickness, no problems, no pressures at all in heaven. Heaven is a place of absolute perfection. Heaven is a perfect place, so that means that only perfect people get to go to heaven, because if God let imperfect people into heaven, then it wouldn't be perfect any more. It would be like earth. Our earth is obviously filled with imperfect people.

You say, "If only perfect people get into heaven, then I don't stand a chance." You're right. Exactly. Neither do I. None of us stand a chance. God had to come up with Plan B and that's what Christmas is all about.

God said, "None of you are perfect so I can't let you into heaven. So here's what I'll do. I will come to earth in the form of a human being and My name will be called Jesus. I will live the only perfect life that was ever lived. I will live a life of perfect obedience, even though my own people reject me, assail me, arrest me and put me to death on the cross. I will satisfy all the demands of God's law, and I'll do it for you, in your place. Then, I will make you perfect by forgiving all your sins. I will wash you and make you clean, within and without. Then, I will bring you to heaven and you can get into heaven on my ticket.

I call that a deal! I call that the greatest Christmas gift you'll ever receive. When I stand before God on judgement day and God says, "Why should I let you into my heaven, Harlen Menk?" I'm going to say, "Not because I've been perfect, but because Jesus was." God's going to say, "Come on in."

"If our greatest need had been information,

God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need on earth had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an accountant. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer. But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior.” That’s God’s Christmas gift to you.

There are people up and down the streets and country lanes of Ellsworth who celebrate Christmas every single year of their life and they’ve never unwrapped God’s gift. I don’t understand why people will put up a tree, sing the Christmas carols, do all the things of Christmas and not unwrap God’s gift and receive it with faith. Can you imagine getting a gift and not unwrapping it? That seems stupid to me.

God says, I’m offering you life. That means your past can be forgiven, your future can be secured and you can have a purpose right here and now. What an awesome gift! People spend their entire lives regretting the past, worrying about the future, and wasting today. Jesus Christ says, “I’ll forgive your past. I will secure your future and I will give meaning and purpose to your life today.” That’s God’s Christmas gift to you.

Can you imagine giving me a Christmas gift and I put it under my tree and a year from today you come over to my house and ask, “How did you like the gift?” and I’d say, “I’m sure it’s a great gift. I just haven’t had any time to unwrap it.” You’d think I had a screw loose, and I would! You might even feel hurt and offended.

I say to you, if you haven’t unwrapped God’s Christmas gift to you, don’t wait any longer. Let us pray: