

# THE GREATEST THING ABOUT CHRISTMAS

**Luke 2:1-20, Christmas Eve 2017**

Max Lucado wrote book about Christmas entitled: GOD IS NEAR.

And in it he shares with us the true story of a 51-year old man  
named Bob Edens—who had been blind from birth.

For 51 years, he couldn't see a thing!

For 51 years, his world had been a dark cave of sounds and smells.

For 5 decades, he literally "felt" his way through life!

**BUT THEN—ONE DAY HE COULD SEE.**

**HE COULD SEE BECAUSE A VERY SKILLED SURGEON  
PERFORMED A DELICATE OPERATION ON HIS EYES TO GIVE HIM  
THE UNBELIEVABLE GIFT OF SIGHT!**

**UNDERSTANDABLY, BOB EDENS WAS OVERWHELMED!**

He'd say such things as, "I can't believe HOW YELLOW, yellow is!

And red! Red is my favorite color. I just can't believe red!

I can see the shape of the moon and one of my favorite things to see

is a jet plane traveling across a crystal-clear blue sky;

leaving a big, white vapor trail in its path.

I can see sunrises and sunsets.

For the first time ever, I can see lightning flash across the sky

before the thunder roars!

You just can't know—how wonderful this is to me!

My friends, Mr. Edens is right, you know!

People, like so many of us seated in this beautiful sanctuary tonight,

**CAN'T POSSIBLY UNDERSTAND** how wonderful it would be

for a person like Mr. Edens to be given the gift of sight,

after his being blind for so many years!

**AND YET, THE BIBLE TEACHES US, THAT**

**BECAUSE WE ARE SINNERS, AND ARE EVERY ONE OF US,**

**BORN INTO THIS WORLD,**

**BY NATURE, SEPARATED FROM THE GOD WHO CREATED US**

**WE ALL COME INTO THIS WORLD, SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING, BLIND!**

**THE PROPET ISAIAH TEACHES US THAT THERE ARE STILL TIMES**

**WHEN SEEING, WE CAN'T REALLY SEE AT ALL!**

**AND WHEN HEARING, WE CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT IS**

**BEING SAID TO US, NOR COMPREHEND IT IN ANY WAY (Isaiah 6:9)!**

Just because you have seen a thousand rainbows, doesn't necessarily mean that you ever have

seen the grandeur of a rainbow!

You can walk past a beautiful flower garden day after day, but not necessarily see the splendor of  
a flower.

1. My friends, we all know that there are many, many things that are great

about Christmas, but I am hoping we might consider the

**THE GREATEST THING ABOUT CHRISTMAS**

For those people whose livelihood is intimately connected

to retail sales; be it in the clothing section of BELK or DILLARDS;

or for **THOSE PEOPLE** selling LUXURY CARS

as advertised on TV: like a LEXUS or an ACURA,

this time of year, for them, sales are at an all-time high

**AND THIS** is one GREAT THING about Christmas for all of them!

2. **AND HOW ABOUT ALL THE BOYS AND GIRLS IN SCHOOL**

**AND THE TEACHERS WHO EDUCATE THEM?**

Christmas brings to them a 2-week vacation and some much-needed time away from each

other; and this makes

Christmas a great thing for all of them!

3. Another great thing that about Christmas every year is the way that so many people so beautifully decorate their homes: with all of the thousands of tiny bright lights and multi-colored lights that are hung from the rafters wrapped around railings leading up to the front door and placed strategically on bushes and hanging from trees!

BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS, IN AND OF THEMSELVES,  
ARE THE GREATEST THING ABOUT CHRISTMAS!

THE GREATEST THING ABOUT CHRISTMAS IS THAT GOD BECAME A BABY!  
THE GREATEST THING ABOUT CHRISTMAS IS  
THE INCARNATION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST!

TOMORROW MORNING, WE WILL HEAR ST JOHN PUT HIS INTERPRETATION ON ALL OF THIS WHEN HE SAYS: *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have beheld his glory; glory as that of the only Son of the Father” (John 1:14)!*

Friends, the shepherds who were out there on outskirts of Bethlehem, keeping watch over their flocks by night, must have been TERRIFIED WHEN SUDDENLY THAT CHRISTMAS ANGEL APPEARED TO THEM, LIKE THE EXPLOSION OF A BRIGHT LIGHT!

While the NRSV says they were “terrified” and the NIV says they were terribly frightened. I still prefer the descriptive language that is given to us in the KING JAMES VERSION:

“AND THEY WERE SORE AFRAID!”

“Fear not,” the angel said, to these shepherds: “For behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy that shall be for you and for all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior WHO is Christ the Lord!”

And then there was a whole multitude of the heavenly hosts singing that great hymn of praise:

“Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth!”  
And certainly, the GREATEST THING ABOUT CHRISTMAS was never given to us by our God as a spur of the moment or last minute decision on his part!

ON HIS PART! The New Testament makes plain to us that this had been God’s plan to redeem the whole human race from sin, death and the grave, even before the foundation of this world was every laid!

The God who knows everything that is going to happen so that nothing ever comes as a surprise to him; knew from eternity that the human beings whom he created as the CROWN OF HIS CREATION WITH A FREE WILL of their own would foolishly turn away from him and have no proper fear of him, but instead would totally disrespect his Word.

This is the God who knows everyone of us far better than we could ever even come to know ourselves. This is the God whom King David praises, when he professes in Psalm 139:

*“O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up! You discern my thoughts from afar!  
You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways!*

*Even before a word is on my tongue; behold, O LORD you know it completely!  
You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me!  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me! It is high, and I can’t fully understand it!*

Listen to what St. Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:

That in the gift of his only-begotten Son that we would have the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace,  
which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight  
making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose,  
which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time,  
to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth!" (Eph. 1:3-7).

On that first Christmas night, the merchants in Bethlehem  
were totally unaware that God was now visiting their planet!  
The innkeeper would never have believed that he had just sent God out into the cold.

The greatest thing about Christmas on that first Christmas night is that—the Holy Son of God was laying right there in the arms of a teenage girl in that little, mostly-unknown place,  
named "Bethlehem!"

He who had always been spirit, for whom there was never a time when he did not exist,  
became pierce-able.  
He who was larger than the universe became an embryo.  
And he, who sustains the world with a word, chose to be dependent upon the nourishment  
of a young girl; the Blessed Virgin Mother  
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

The greatest thing about Christmas for every one of us again tonight is that our God was  
given two eyes with two eyebrows, two elbows, two kidneys  
and a spleen.

THE GREATEST THING ABOUT CHRISTMAS IS THAT  
OUR GOD AHD COME NEAR!

Angels watched as Mary changed God's diaper.  
For 33 years he would feel everything that you and I have ever felt.  
Yes, there were times when Jesus grew weary!  
Yes, there were times when he was tempted in every SUCH WAY AS  
WE ARE TEMPTED, THOUGH TO SAVE US FROM  
OUR SINS, HE NEVER SINNED!

Jesus never wrote any books or held any public offices.  
Yet, when he was asked point blank by the great high priest in Jerusalem  
on the eve of his Crucifixion: "Are you the Son of God?"  
he did not deny IT, but answered that indeed he was!

While among us here on earth in his state of humiliation  
he never traveled outside of his own country!  
He never studied at a university! He never lived in a palace, and yet we now acclaim him to  
be the Creator of the universe!

Who is this Jesus Christ?  
I, FOR ONE, PREFER TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION  
in the words of Dr. Martin Luther  
taken directly from his SMALL CATECHISM!

"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true  
Man, born of the Virgin Mary,  
Is my Lord who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature;  
purchased and won me from all sin, from death  
and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with  
His holy precious blood and with his innocent sufferings and death,  
so that I may his own and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting  
righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the death and lives and reigns  
to all eternity.  
This is most certainly true!

People travel great distances to see events which they believe to be great, important events,  
earth-shattering events like  
the launching of the Space Shuttle.  
Or to see one of the Seven Wonders of the World:  
The Grand Canyon, the Taj Mahal or the Great Wall of China.

They travel great distance to witness firsthand Baseball's World Series.  
They pay extremely large amounts of money to attend: The Super Bowl.  
Parents travel to their children's graduations from college.  
Aunts and uncles travel a thousand miles to attend the wedding service  
of a niece or a nephew.

But tonight, God invites you and me to travel no greater distance from this place, to  
anywhere other than this place, where we already are,  
to see for ourselves what took place there on that Holy Night in Bethlehem, took place for  
you and me too!

In the power of God's Word and gift of Christ Holy Supper,  
God himself, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will take us there again tonight,  
To see all of this with eyes of faith ourselves!

This is why St. Paul tells us in Romans 10:6:

*"Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven to bring Christ down?  
Or who will descend into the abyss, to bring Christ up from the dead!  
But what does it say? 'The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the  
Word of faith that we proclaim);*

*because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord  
and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the  
heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved! For the Scripture  
says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame" (Romans 10:8-11)!*

In closing, I want to share with you a little story about a father who had two sons; twin sons  
that were absolutely identical in their appearance! Although they certainly looked to be the very  
same child on the outside,

they were as different from one another as day and night!

If one felt it was too hot, the other thought it was too cold.

If one said the TV was too loud, the other claimed the volume needed to be turned up.  
Opposite in every way, one of those twins was an eternal optimist, while the other was a doom  
and gloom pessimist.

The one twin could see the silver lining behind every cloud,  
but the other twin could only see the dark cloud.

Just to see what might happen, one Christmas Eve when the boys were sound asleep; their  
father loaded the pessimist twin's bedroom with games, and toys, and some of the latest and  
greatest, handheld technological Internet devices on the market anywhere!

The optimist twin's bedroom, however, he loaded with horse manure!

Later on Christmas Day their father passed by the pessimist's room  
and found him sitting in the middle of all his new toys and games and he was crying  
bitterly! "Why are you crying?" the father asked. The pessimist replied: "Because my friends  
will be jealous of what I got. Then I will have to sit down and read out loud to all of them the  
blasted instructions before we can play

any of these games! Besides this, I'll have to constantly be purchasing new batteries when  
all the batteries in all these new toys go dead!

One day, these toys will break, and I'll have to throw them away!

But passing by the optimist twin brother's room, the father found him dancing for joy in the  
pile of manure. "What, are you so happy about?" his Dad asked him. To which his optimist twin  
replied, "With all this manure, there has to be a pony in here somewhere!"

How about you and me? Are we here mainly to complain in the ears of the Almighty One  
about the unfairness of life, lamenting somehow, that by him  
we consider ourselves to be shortchanged?

OR ARE WE HERE TO CELEBRATE THE GREATEST THING ABOUT CHRISTMAS;  
SOMETHING THAT ST PAUL EXPOUNDS UPON SO BEAUTIFULLY FOR US IN OUR EPISTLE LESSON  
THIS NIGHT

<sup>11</sup> For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

<sup>12</sup> Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously,  
and godly, in this present world;

<sup>13</sup> Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus  
Christ;

<sup>14</sup> Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto  
himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works!" AMEN