

RECAPTURING THE WONDER OF CHRISTMAS - Part 2

Scripture used: [Philippians 4:6-9 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

In this second sermon leading to Christmas, Pastor Hurmon reminded us that thinking about recapturing the wonder of Christmas can actually help us recapture the wonder of all of life. Building on last week's message, he exhorted us to shed worry and anxiety, and connect with our God of peace. God makes supernatural promises of His peace and His presence, and we must engage in supernatural practices in order to access God's provision, such as being prayerful every day and being present in the moment. The "surprise ingredient" of living a life full of wonder is gratitude; it is when we cultivate the practice of revisiting old memories and re-experiencing the familiar with fresh eyes and with a posture of thankfulness that we can develop a deep and persistent gratitude, even in the face of life's challenges. This gratitude will infuse our lives with a sense of day to day wonder of God's goodness that will make all the difference in how we experience life.

KEY POINTS

- 1) Wonder is always present in our lives. The key is to proactively seek it so we can have "wonder-filled lives". Paul encourages the early Christians in Philippi to remember what they heard from him, what they saw him do, because he was actively following Jesus and his life was worthy of emulation. At the core of his relationship with God was a sense of wonder about God's grace and goodness (for example, [1 Timothy 1:15](#)). Paul's attitude recalls Job lamenting the fact that he overlooked "things that were too wonderful for me to know" ([Job 42:3](#)). Christmas is a great time to re-experience wonder in our relationship with God; [Luke 2:8-14](#) reminds us of the awe experienced by the lowly shepherds when they witnessed magnificent signs that Jesus was born, and revisiting the Christmas story reconnects us with God's incredible love and grace through Jesus.
- 2) The key to a wonder-filled life is to cultivate gratitude. This is a recurrent theme at Christmas - from George Bailey (Jimmy Stewart) in "It's a Wonderful Life" to Scrooge in "A Christmas Carol." The primary reason we are unhappy, frustrated, or discouraged is not the actual circumstances in our lives, but rather our perspective on our circumstances and the absence of gratitude for things we could and should be thankful for. We don't need to be wealthy to live richly and gratefully. We can make a world of difference from humble beginnings as the recent biopic film "Harriet" (about Harriet Tubman) vividly portrays.
- 3) Gratitude is the secret ingredient to a high-quality life; it complements faithfulness and commitment, which alone are not enough for joy. Often we are committed but resentful, as when we serve only out of obligation. But when we are both committed and thankful, joy overflows. Old memories can help us reexperience the familiar in new light, especially when we bring a "thank you God" attitude to our memories and our present life circumstances. Facebook discovered that with the success of their "x years ago today" photo feed, and whether we use Facebook or not, we can leverage this dynamic to cultivate deeper gratitude in our lives.
- 4) The challenge this week is to cultivate the true and honorable, to tend it and expose it, to make it into a God story. Replicate what you see in Jesus. Be what's missing on your list.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Discern your heart. How often do you feel anxious? How often do you feel grateful? What would it look like to create space to dwell more on gratitude to counterbalance the areas of fear and anxiety?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Reflect on [Philippians 4:6-9](#), and then add on a reflection of [Philippians 4:10-13](#). How do you see gratitude expressed in Paul's life? How are gratitude and contentment related, especially in light of Paul seeking to help the Philippians face anxiety and fear? Think of the virtues from Philippians 4:8 (true, noble, right, pure, etc.) and consider how it reflects a story of God's goodness to you. Then, share that story in your life group. The practice of sharing a story of our gratitude to others is one of the ways we amplify the power of gratitude in our own lives.
- 3) **DO** - Share something you are grateful for with another person in your life! Also, invite friends to serve with you on December 8 and to come to church on December 15 so that, together, you foster gratitude and find the wonder of the love of God.