

## Whoever Takes the Son Gets it All” (Luke 2:1–20)

A story is told about a wealthy man who, years ago, shared a passion for collecting art with his son. Priceless works of art by Picasso, Van Gogh and others adorned the walls of their family estate. One year, war engulfed the nation, and the son left to serve his country. Soon his father received a telegram. His son had been killed in the line of battle. Distraught and lonely, the old man faced the upcoming Christmas with anguish and sadness.

On Christmas morning, a knock on the door awakened the depressed old man. As he opened the door a soldier greeted him who was holding a package. The soldier said, “I was friends with your son. I have something to give you.” The soldier mentioned that he was an artist and then gave the package to the man. It was a portrait of the man’s son. Overcome with emotion, the man hung the portrait over his fireplace, pushing aside millions of dollars’ worth of art.

The following spring, the old man died. The art world waited with anticipation for the day when his paintings would be auctioned off. According to the will drawn up by the old man, the art would be auctioned off on Christmas Day. Christmas Day finally arrived and art collectors from around the world gathered to bid on some of the world’s most spectacular paintings.

The auction began with the painting of the man’s son. The auctioneer asked for an opening bid, but the room was silent. “Who will open the bidding with \$10?” No one spoke. Finally, someone said, “Who cares about that painting? It’s just a picture of his son. Let’s move on to the good stuff!” The auctioneer responded, “No, we have to sell this one first. It’s right here in the will. Now, who will take the son?” Finally, a neighbor of the old man offered \$10. The neighbor said, “I knew the boy, so I’d like to have it.” The auctioneer said, “Going once, going twice sold.” The gavel fell.

The auctioneer looked at the room filled with people and announced that the auction was over. Everyone was stunned. Someone spoke up and said, “What do you mean, it’s over? We didn’t come here for a painting of someone’s son. There’s millions of dollars’ worth of art here!” The auctioneer replied, “According to the man’s will, whoever takes the son gets it all.”

Whoever takes the son gets it all. That’s the message of Luke 2. Whoever takes the son gets it all.

“In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.” (Luke 2:1) Caesar Augustus—Octavian was his given name at birth—allowed himself to be called “son of God,” while at his death the Roman Senate decreed that he was a god. During his lifetime, Caesar Augustus was also called “savior.” Rome revered him as the one who brought peace to “the entire world.” The empire called his military exploits “the gospel.”

Luke says, “Not so!” In his nativity narrative in chapter two, Luke announces that Jesus is *the* Son of God. Jesus is also God the Son. Jesus is *the* Savior who brings eternal peace to the entire universe. This is the only gospel that can save, deliver, rescue and restore us—forevermore!

Caesar Augustus was full of himself and so high and mighty that he wasn't concerned about taking *the* Son—the Son placed in, of all places, an animal's feeding trough in a backwater town called Bethlehem! Truth be told, there is a Caesar in all of us.

we take advantage of others. We take God's blessings for granted. We take vengeance upon those who hurt us. We take hold of our possessions. "Mine," we shout to the world. We consider ourselves as God, doing whatever we want to do. We take part in sin, oblivious to how it breaks God's heart. And we repeatedly take life into our own hands, singing Sinatra, "I did it my way!"

There is a better way! Take the Son! Whoever takes the Son gets it all! That's what Mary does. "She gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." (Luke 2:7) "Inn," more specifically means "guest room." Mary and Joseph were guests in a home that was so overcrowded they were placed in a guest room—a room adjacent to the house that kept the family's livestock. That's why Jesus was placed in a feeding trough—or what we call a manger.

Christ is born in a guest room—that was more like a barn—and Mary wraps him in bands of cloth and lays him in a manger. Where is the only other time in Luke's gospel where someone wraps Jesus in bands of cloth and lays him down? That's right! When Joseph of Arimathea takes Jesus down from the cross, wraps him in strips of linen and lays him in his tomb. Can you see what Luke is doing? Christ's cradle points to his cross. Christ's cradle points to his death on the cross!

On the other side of Good Friday, though, Jesus lives! There was the cradle and there was the cross. But, conquering death, Jesus now wears the crown. That's why we have this sure and certain promise. Whoever takes the Son gets it all.

"For unto you is born today in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11) Caesar Augustus may be Rome's savior, but Jesus is the Savior of the world. Caesar Augustus may be Rome's king and lord, but Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Mary takes the Son, today, so do the shepherds. "When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they made haste and found Mary and Joseph and the babe, lying in a manger." (Luke 2:15-16) The shepherds follow Mary, who also went with "haste" to see Elizabeth (Luke 1:39). That's because God's glory, normally associated with the temple, appeared in a field full of sheep with their shepherds! The high and mighty are brought down. The weak and lowly are lifted up (Luke 1:52).

Remember? Whoever takes the Son gets it all—every last bit of God's mercy, grace and love that are packaged and delivered in this Christmas gift to us, "For unto you is born today in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Amen.