

Sunday, December 24, 2017 – Christmas Eve
“Whoever Takes the Son Gets It All”

Matthew 1: 18-20

Rev. Derek S. Klemm, Mountain View Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV

Adapted from CSL Series “Family Life”

Central Image – Single Focus

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

A story is told about a wealthy man who, years ago, shared a passion for collecting art with his son. They had priceless works by Picasso, Van Gogh, and others adorning 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. 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 he was greeted by a soldier 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 of 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. 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 father's will, **whoever takes the son gets it all.**"

Whoever takes the Son gets it all. That's Joseph's story as well. You remember. Mary conceives Jesus through the Holy Spirit. At first Joseph is hesitant to believe it. And we can't blame him. So God sends an angel who speaks to Joseph in a dream. Joseph is convinced. His anxiety is gone. He believes the unbelievable. And so Joseph takes the Son.

Joseph chooses to trust God and love Mary. The two will now live together and share a home. This will most certainly raise some eyebrows in their hometown of Nazareth. Busybodies standing on the street corner will assume that Joseph and Mary conceived the child during their engagement instead of waiting to be married. "What nerve, those two!"

Nazareth was a very small town—only 2,000 people lived there—so gossip of this sort would travel quickly. The impeccable character of Joseph would be undermined. Still, in spite of it all, Joseph takes the Son.

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). "Jesus" is the English form of the Hebrew name "Joshua." It means "Yahweh (the Lord) saves." The child's name is Joshua—or Jesus—because this Son will save his people from their sins. **Whoever takes the Son gets it all.** All sin forgiven—lock, stock, and barrel!

And we need it. Oh God, do we need it! Far too often, instead of taking the Son—like our first parents in paradise—we stubbornly take the forbidden fruit. Then 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 take part in sin, oblivious to how it breaks God's heart. And we repeatedly take life into our own hands, singing like Sinatra, "I did it my way!"

One day an elderly couple was at home and the husband said to his wife, "I'd like a dish of vanilla ice cream." The wife said, "I'd be happy to get that for you." Her husband asked, "Wait, shouldn't you write that down?" She said, "Don't be silly. I can remember a dish of vanilla ice cream." "Yes, but I want chocolate fudge on it." "Got it." "And I want a cherry on top." "Don't worry." And with that, she went into the kitchen. After a while the husband thought he should

check on her. He walked into the kitchen and there on the table was bacon and eggs. He sat down and asked, “Where’s the toast?”

God forgets, too! God forgets and God forgives all of your sin—lock, stock, and barrel! And why is that? **Whoever takes the Son gets it all**—in Jesus’s name we get all of our sin forgiven and forgotten. A totally clean slate! But there’s more!

“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’—which means, ‘God with us’” (Mt 1:22–23). “God with us” is what Matthew’s Gospel is all about. It appears here, in the beginning. Then in the middle, Matthew 18:20, “Where two or three gather in my name, there I am in their midst.” And then in Matthew’s last verse. Jesus says in Matthew 28:20, “I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

In her song titled, *From a Distance*, Bette Midler sings, “God is watching us. God is watching us. God is watching us from a distance.” That’s wrong. God is not watching us from a distance. Our God, the God, the only God is Immanuel and Immanuel is God with us—up close and personal. What’s more, Immanuel is God in us and God behind us and Immanuel is God going before us. Jesus is God—up close and personal—entering our muck and mire, our chaos and our deep confusion.

We see it most profoundly on the day of deepest darkness. On that day we all grabbed hold of Immanuel, nailed him to a cross and said, “Leave us alone! Leave us alone!” To this day, our every sin demands just that—for us to be left alone by God, forever.

On the other side of Good Friday, though, Immanuel lives! There was the cradle and there was the cross. But, conquering death, Immanuel now wears the crown. That’s why we have this sure and certain promise: **Whoever takes the Son gets it all**. In Immanuel’s name we get all of his powerful and loving presence. “I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Joseph takes the Son. And so, of course, does Mary. Peter does and so does Matthew. James and John take the Son. Paul does, too—and millions have ever since.

I invite you tonight, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to take the Son—either for the first, fiftieth, or five-hundredth time. And why do that? Remember? **Whoever takes the Son really**

does get it all—we get every last bit of God’s mercy, grace and love that are packaged and delivered in two marvelous Hebrew names—Jesus and Immanuel. They are God’s Christmas gifts for you this night and forevermore! Amen.