

An Open Door to Joy

by Carter Conlon

God is a real, living being who exists beyond human understanding, and He offers a personal relationship and gift of salvation to humanity through Jesus Christ.

Duration: 38:19

Topics: "Joy"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the power and goodness of God's gifts. He shares his personal testimony of how God transformed him despite his limitations. The speaker encourages the audience to pray to God with sincerity and trust in His ability to bring healing and deliverance. He also highlights the significance of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and urges the listeners to open their hearts to Him. The sermon concludes with a reminder that Christmas is not about material things, but about the true meaning of Jesus' birth.

Transcript

My little grandson is four years old and he will never take anybody's answer for anything. He's got to reason it himself. He's a very unusual child, very intelligent actually.

So yesterday he dictated a letter to his mother and they went to the post office together and they mailed it to Santa Claus in the North Pole. And it said, Dear Santa, I'm confused. Some people say you don't exist and other people say you do.

I need to know the truth. And the last sentence says, In the event that you do exist, please send me a motorcycle. You have no idea how tempted I am to go to BJ's and buy one of those \$349 little bikes.

You know, a lot of people feel that way about God. You've come here tonight and it's the same thing. God, I'm confused.

Some people say you exist and some people say you don't. I want to know the truth. And in the event you do exist, this is what I would like you to do for me.

We're not really that far from a four-year-old child in many instances in our understanding of God. But you see, unlike Santa Claus, God does exist. Christ is very, very real.

And he gives us an invitation to life eternal. He gives us an invitation to sovereign life and to supernatural life. A life that you and I could only dream about.

A life that only God could give to us. It is an amazing thing to know Jesus Christ in the fullness that he intended for us to know him. God himself came to the earth in what would be considered the first Christmas season.

It was a day not much unlike ours. Society was seemingly falling apart. People were being herded like cattle, counted, taxed.

There was an imposing worldview dominating most of the known world of that time, having a sense that their way of doing things was superior to everybody else's. The religion of Israel was marginally tolerated, but openly becoming persecuted and subject to ridicule. And in the midst of all of this, angels appeared in heaven and said, Behold, we bring you good news and glad tidings to all men.

Angels burst through the canopy of eternity and into time and shouted glory to God in the highest. And on earth, peace and goodwill towards men. And something had been initiated by God.

And this initiation of God was going to bring men and women to peace who could understand it and find it. It was something that came from the benevolent, the good heart of God towards men. He was going to bridge a gap that had existed since mankind first fell in the Garden of Eden.

And sin became a part of the human race. Thus, according to the scriptures, separating us eternally from God. You only have to commit one sin to be separated from God, to be considered a sinner in the sight of a holy God.

And the Bible says that sin can't dwell in the presence of God. And so by the virtue of the fact that we sinned against God, which means we willfully did that which God says was wrong, we were separated not just for time but forever. We were doomed and condemned to a life of weakness.

A life of an ever downward spiral. An ever deepening hopelessness. An ever encroaching despair which we actually see working itself out in the world today.

This world is spiraling down actually rather quickly. Immorality is becoming good and good is becoming immoral in the sight of this society. Those who want to walk with God are now bigots and those who live in immorality are now good.

It's amazing what's happening and how quickly we're spiraling down. But God in His mercy came to this earth in a place of weakness. He came to this earth in a cave.

He came to this earth as a child. He came to this earth with His whole divine nature. You have to understand He had the power to create the universe with the words of His mouth.

All He had to do was speak and things came into existence. All He had to do was say, let there be light and light came. And darkness had to give way to it.

He had incredible power beyond anything that our minds can even begin to comprehend. And yet He chose to take all of that power and wrap it up in the form of a vulnerable infant. Showing you and I that He was willing to come to us in our frailty.

He was willing to come to us in all of His divine power in our struggles, our trials, our nothingness, our inability to do anything in ourselves, our inability to change. Paul the Apostle talks about it in the book of Romans in the New Testament. He says, I know what to do, but I don't know how to do it.

I know what is right and I want to do what is right, but I don't know where to find the strength to do what is right. I always end up doing what I don't want to do. You ever found that's part of your life? I had times in my life before I was a Christian, I was saying I'm not going to be selfish.

I'm not going to speak harmful words to my wife. I'm going to be kinder to people. I'm going to be more of a father to my son.

And I was really sincere in my heart. I really wanted to do this. Only to find that shortly after making the resolution, I had no power to change.

Hopeless to change without God. I remember feeling so weak. I remember feeling so helpless.

I remember feeling so hopeless. I remember beginning to hate who I was and what I was becoming. But powerless to stop the downward spiral.

Because it started to get worse. I wanted it to get better and it was getting worse. I was drinking more.

I was getting more angry. I was doing more things that I shouldn't be doing. Then one day I met a Christian police officer.

Who told me that God loved me. How could God love me? Why would God love me? Why would God want somebody like me? Why would God want a cop who went back to the lunchroom every lunch hour to play cards and cursed the name of Jesus? Continuously. Why would God want anything to do with me? But he told me that God loved me.

He told me I was incapable of saving myself. And because of it, God became a man. He became a partaker actually of my vulnerability.

And he went to a cross and allowed himself to be beaten to death. To pay the price for the wrong things that I've done. For the sole purpose of getting me back to himself again.

No other reason. Just because he loved me. And he wanted me home.

To be with him. And he told me, he said, the proof of this is that the Bible says if anyone be in Christ. Or if you open your heart, even in your frailty.

As we see in this manger in Bethlehem. If you open your heart to the Son of God. He will come into your life.

In the third person of God. Which is God's Holy Spirit. And you will be changed.

God will give you a new nature. He told me. God will give you a new mind.

God will give you a new heart. He will actually make you into a new person. I remember thinking this is just too good to be true.

How could this be? It took me into a study of the Scriptures. I began to read the Gospel of John. I saw in the Gospel of John.

The Scripture that said, God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. And whoever believes in him won't suffer this eternal death. But will be translated as it is from death into life.

Jesus said, the Son of Man did not come to condemn the world. But that the world through him might be saved. I read the whole Gospel of John.

I saw that Jesus Christ did go to a cross. He did claim to be the Son of God. He did definitely say he was the only way to everlasting life with God.

There is no other way. He himself said, I am the way, the truth and the life. And nobody comes to the Father except through me.

He said it clearly. He also said, if you seek me you shall find me. And so that means that every day.

One day every man will stand before God. There will be no excuse. Because if you would have sought me, he would have said, I would have showed you who I am.

After 9-11, we hired pastors of various languages, Middle Eastern languages. And we recorded them in studio. And we sent their voices out throughout the Middle East.

With the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And one of our pastors was Iranian. And he was called his family one day.

And he was talking to his father on the telephone. And his father started telling him, son, I've been listening to this voice on the radio. Now we modified everybody's voice so they couldn't be identified.

He said, I've been listening to this voice on the radio. And he said, it's speaking such wonderful things into my heart and into my life. And he was in my office and he was crying.

He said, my father didn't know. It was me he was listening to. On the radio.

He had no idea. It was me that he was listening to. And members of his family, one of his, either his sister or cousin, I don't remember the exact story.

But it was one of the members of his family. Hearing these words on the radio, she said, I went into the bathroom. And I said, God, if this is true, what I'm hearing.

If you do have a name. And your name is Jesus. If you did die to give us life.

If you are real, show me. And at that very moment, he told me, she bent down to wash her face in the basin. And the face of Jesus was on the water in the basin.

If you seek me, you shall find me. That's why every man one day and every woman and child will be without excuse. No matter where people have come from.

If they really wanted to know the true God. He would show them. And that's where I was.

I wanted to know the true God. I've been raised in religion and religion nauseated me. I wanted nothing to do with it was marginally raised in it.

And it was all hypocrisy as far as I was concerned. I wanted nothing to do with it. But what if, what if, what if God really was real.

And one day, 1978, I was driving to work. And I pulled over on the side of the road. And I said these words, Jesus, if what my friend is telling me is the truth.

Then I open my heart to you. And I ask you to be my Lord and my Savior. And I give you my life.

I finished. I went to work. I worked my shift.

I didn't feel anything. Went home, went to bed. I forgot about the prayer I had prayed.

But it was sincere. Just like my grandson. If by chance you are real, I would like to know you.

I would like this life that you offer. And as I've shared here many times, and I will share a thousand times before I leave this church. I woke up the next morning, and as God lives, my feet touched the floor, and I knew I was a different man.

Day by day, little by little, Bible calls it being born again. Now when a child is born, even God had to learn to walk in that human body. He had to learn to feed himself.

He had to learn to clothe himself. He just didn't stand up when he was two minutes old and step out and start preaching in Bethlehem. There was a process to this, just as there is with you and I. A lot of people, they open their heart, and because the miracle doesn't happen like day one, they come to a wrong conclusion.

No, born again means, born again, that's what it means. Born, you've had a physical birth, now you're having a spiritual birth. A rebirth, a re-entrance into the kingdom of God.

A re-introduction to God. A rebirth by the Spirit of God. And line by line, day by day, we learn to feed ourselves.

We learn that God's provided clothing. We learn how to walk. We start being conformed by the promises of God, by the teachings of God, by the Spirit of God, to the image of God.

And all things, the scripture says, pass away, and all things have become new. I found that the power of death that was at work in my life had lost its hold on me. It couldn't hold me anymore.

Selfishness was giving away to compassion. Anger was giving away to love and to faith. And these old things began to pass away.

I lost the desire to drink. I lost all of these things began to fall away like dead branches off a tree that no longer had a right to exist. I remember being a young Christian, and I was in the church service one day, and it was a church full of people.

I guess they had known God for so long that they died. I don't know what happened to them, but they didn't seem they could worship anymore. Isn't that sad when that happens? Goodness sakes, I hope it never happens to me.

I want to stay alive all my life and walking with God. Never want to lose the wonderment of Christ. The awesomeness of walking with God.

The incredible life that God gives to those that turn to Him. I waited till the church emptied. I was only a new Christian.

I waited till the church emptied so I could praise God. Everybody left. I was the only one left with my two friends.

Everybody was gone, and I started walking up and down the aisles. I wasn't raised in church. I didn't know the hymns, but I had learned this one.

He lives. He lives. Christ Jesus lives in me.

He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way. He lives. He lives.

Salvation to impart. You ask me how? I know He lives. He lives within my heart.

I was shouting and walking up and down the aisle and crying because I found Him. I found the living God. I found the life that God had for me.

I found the strength that God is willing to give to those who trust Him. I found the miracle power of God which Santiago is beginning to know now. Then he takes those things that the world says could never be something, and he says, Let me show you what I can do.

Hallelujah. It is an incredible life to live for God and to let God live in you. I'm 60 now.

I was saved at 24, and every day I'm still growing. I'm still a hunger, in a sense, for the full life that God has for me. I know what Paul meant when he said, I'm not attained, but I leave now behind me the things that need to be left behind, and I'm pressing forward to the mark of the high calling of God in Christ.

This man has revelation that nobody in his generation has. He's walked with God in a way that very few have ever known. Miracles are happening.

He's sending handkerchiefs, and people are getting healed, but he still says, I've not achieved what God has for my life yet. There's a hunger. There's a wonderment.

There's a glory that comes into the soul of those who have a genuine walk with God. There's no arguments are necessary. I have a relationship with God.

Hallelujah to the Lamb of God. Thank you, Jesus. I was supposed to speak about Christmas tonight, but I don't know where it went.

Merry Christmas. That's what Christmas is about, folks. You know, the world took it and made it about a tree, and family, and presents.

And that's why it's such a heartache for so many people, because you focused on the wrong tree, the wrong family, and the wrong presents. And because a lot of that wasn't there, people hate Christmas. They hate it.

They hate this time of year. They want it to pass. They don't like the songs.

They don't like the silver bells on the street corner. All the rest of it just go away, because it just brings so much heartache. And all it is is a mirror image of the real.

It's the world's creation of the real. There was a real tree, and on that tree, the Son of God died to pay the price for your sin and for mine. And he invited us into a family.

The family of God. It's the only eternal family. You and I have a family on the earth, but that family, if my brothers and sisters and cousins don't come to Christ, that is not an eternal family.

The only eternal family I have is the family of God. That's a family that's never going to fade away. And so many are full of sorrow because the gifts weren't under the tree.

But the Bible says when Christ rose from the dead, he took captivity captive. He took what captivated us captive and gave gifts unto men. He gave Santiago the ability to be an evangelist.

You saw that tonight. You witnessed it tonight. You saw the miracle of what God is able to do.

He gave gifts. It's amazing. There are numerous, there are many gifts in the scripture.

You can read about it. I had no ability to speak. I had no ability to stand before people, but I had a desire to glorify God.

And he's the one who chooses to give the gifts. As he sees fit. I tell you, his gifts are good.

Even the little ones. They're good. My grandson said, if by chance you're real, bring me a motorcycle.

I want to challenge you tonight. If by chance you're a real God, bring healing to my heart. By chance you're a real Lord, deliver me from torment in my mind.

Set me free from the pain of abuse. And instead of being dragged around with sorrow, let me be part of the process of healing for many people. In my circle, in my generation.

Oh God, if by chance you're real. And the Lord doesn't despise that prayer, because that's the prayer I prayed and I'm here. That's the prayer I prayed.

He didn't stand back and say, no, there's not enough faith in that. It was sincere. We serve a God of miracles.

I can promise you one thing. If you open your heart to Jesus Christ, in a short time from now, you will not be the person you are right now. You will be so changed.

And it will produce a hunger in you for what only God can do. And that will become your testimony. Your testimony is not a program of scripture.

It's a relationship with God. It would be sad. One day, when I get to heaven, and I stand at the throne of God, if you're not there.

It would be sad to remember your face here tonight. And to have spoken these words, but you just decided, you decided that God wasn't real. Or if you marginally thought he was real, you decided he wasn't worth following.

Or maybe his claim of being the exclusive way to heaven wasn't really right for you. For whatever reason, you're just not there. I think it would be so sad.

Especially knowing how much God loves you. You know what will make hell, hell for people? For just a moment, people are going to stand, every person, every born is going to stand at the throne of God. The Bible says, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

However, for most, it will be too late. There is no salvation at that moment. The moment to be saved has passed them by.

But for just a brief moment in time, people will be standing in the presence of an immeasurable ocean of love. They will finally understand how precious they are in the sight of God. And why God became a man.

Why he identified with our vulnerability. Why he was willing to come and actually take up his residence inside us with all of our struggles. So that we could be reunited with him.

We'll finally see it. Finally understand it. Finally, it's an ocean.

Our minds will be absolutely boggled by the depth of the love of God for us. Only to be put out of his presence forever. And that to me is what will make hell, hell.

To be in a place where he is not. Where there is no love. There is no compassion.

There is no hope. There is no future. There are no miracles.

And it's not his choice. It's ours. We made that choice.

You made it. You made it tonight. When you heard this great truth.

And you said, no, I don't want this. I choose to believe in something else. Please.

Please don't make that mistake. What I'm telling you is the truth tonight. And if you are not sure, then pray what I prayed.

God, if. If what this man is telling me the truth. I open my life.

And I invite you to come in and be my Lord and my Savior. That's what I prayed. God took me.

And it's been an incredible journey. It's been a supernatural journey. It's been a journey.

If I could. Everybody here who doesn't know Christ. I would.

I would run into the audience. And I'd grab you by your jacket. And I would shake you.

I said, what I'm telling you is true. It's not just a theology. It's not just an argument.

It's not just another opinion on life. It's a supernatural relationship with the real God. And you can have it yourself.

And God himself will prove to you the truth. He will prove to you he's alive. He'll transform you from the inside out.

It's not something you do. It's something he does. He promises you believe it.

He does it. It's absolutely an amazing life to live for God. And you won't hate Christmas anymore, by the way.

My wife says my wife hated Christmas. She hated it because it was a sorrowful time. And now, goodness sake, you should see my house.

We've got boxes and boxes of everything you can imagine Christmas-y. That takes forever to unpack and takes forever to put it back every year. She said, I used to hate Christmas until I married Mr. Christmas.

And I found Jesus Christ and the healing in my heart. And it is absolutely amazing. Amen.

When you know Jesus, you won't hate Christmas anymore. And it will no longer bring sorrow into your heart. You'll be in here with us singing joy to the world.

The Lord has come. Let earth receive her King. I want to ask you tonight, just person to person, if there's even a chance that you want to believe that what I'm telling you tonight and what you've heard from these gentlemen, from Jeremy and from San Diego, is true.

You want to open your heart to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Would you just join with me and just raise your hand. God bless you.

God bless you. Hold it up. Praise God.

Thank you. You all came together here, right? You're all family together? Oh, that's awesome. I love that.

Merry Christmas to you. You're about to receive Christ. Now we're going to stand.

We're going to sing for a moment. We call this an altar. You may not understand that.

It's just the front of this auditorium. That's all it is. But it's a place of dedication to God.

It's a place of meeting with God. It's a physical expression of something going on in the heart. Nothing mystical about it.

But we ask people to come forward. If you want to open your heart to Jesus Christ. And what it is, it's just the first step in the rest of your life.

It's the first step of an incredible journey that God has for you. And you're just getting up and just saying, I'm going with God. I was in a church like this back in 78 after I had prayed that prayer privately.

I was sitting up in the balcony up on this side. And the pastor gave an altar call like this. And I got up.

And I came down. There was only two of us came that day. And the pastor said to me, are you saved? I said, I sure hope so.

I remember telling him that. Because otherwise I'd be feeling like a fool being down the front of this church. But I came.

And all I could say is like, I just want God. I just want what God has for me. I want heaven when I die.

I want to be the person that God created me to be on the earth. I want to be a father to my son. I want to be a husband to my wife.

I want to be a friend to my friends. I want to be honest. I want to be rid of my temper.

It was just a lot of stuff going on in my life. And it was getting worse all the time. And I just said, God, I read it and I believe it in my heart.

And I'm asking you, just take me. And he did. And it's been a great journey.

I've been all over most of the world. I've preached in so many different places. And tonight I'm here just to tell you it's real.

We're not trying to pack a church. We're already packed. It's about you.

I want you to know it's about you tonight. It's not about looking successful and having a great meeting. It's about you.

It's about God loving you. It's about Jesus dying for you. It's about the plan God has for you.

It's about the miracles God will do for you. It's about the new heart and home he'll give you. The future he has for you.

The healing he'll bring into your life that will be undeniable. A year from now you'll be here. You'll be jumping up and down.

Security guys will be trying to keep you quiet. Now, say the Lord. That's just the way it is.

And so many did raise their hands. And if you didn't, and you know you should be here, you can come. If you came with a friend, ask your friend to come with you.

If you're afraid to get up and come. This is New York. It's scary to come into a crowd like this in any place.

But I'm telling you, you'll have a supernatural transaction will happen here. And you're not necessarily going to feel anything. But you will change.

You will know. You'll know. You'll be suddenly on the subway and you'll be happy.

And there'll be no reason why you should be. You'll have hope. And there's nothing that you've heard or seen apart from tonight that has produced it in you.

You'll know. God will prove to you that he lives. If you give him a chance.

And so we're going to stand. We're going to sing. And as we do, would you stand please? Just come.

Those who need to be here tonight. Just come and join those that are coming. Everybody raise your hand.

Please come. Thank you, Jesus. Balcony, you can slip out and just go down either of the stairwells.

This will be the best Christmas of your whole life. There'll never be another one like it. Ever.

Ever. Ever in your life. Hallelujah.

Thank God. Thank God. Close your eyes just for a moment please.

Visit the altar. The front here. I want you to picture Jesus now.

He's no longer a baby. He's now a man. He has gone to what we call a cross.

It's two pieces of wood attached together and he's been nailed to it. He's been mocked. He's been spit on.

He's been beaten. He's been slapped. He's been punched.

And he's dying. And he's doing it for you. To pay the price for every wrong thing that you've done.

To give you a fresh start. And to give you hope. And to defeat what has defeated you.

To take the power of sin and death and every evil thing and destroy it. Because he loves you. He didn't do it for any other reason.

He did it because he loves you. And he says, now let me, let me take the reins of your life. Open your heart to me.

Let me come in. And he really does. And let me guide you now.

And let me make you into what I destined you to be from the time you were born. Only God can do that. And when it's all over, let me take you home.

To be with me. Until that day, I'll cover you. And when you fall, I'll pick you up.

When you fail, I'll help you. When you feel hopeless, I'll change you. It will be a wonderful journey.

It starts with a prayer. It starts with the prayer I prayed. A prayer that says, Lord Jesus, I open my heart to you.

And I'm going to ask you to pray that with me now. Just repeat after me. Lord Jesus.

The Son of God. Thank you for loving me. And coming to get me.

And setting me free. From the power. Of evil.

And wrong. And sin. And making heaven my home.

And God my life. While I live on this earth. Jesus.

I open my heart to you. And I invite you. To come into my life.

To be my Lord. My Savior. And my God.

I want to live for you. You know I'm weak. But I believe.

That you will help me. And give me strength. And you will cleanse me.

From the wrong. That I have done. From this day forward.

I'll not be ashamed. To tell others. That you are my God.

And my friend. And you will change my life. I believe this.
With all my heart. You died to save me. And I believe that.
And I receive that. I believe. This will be the best Christmas.
Of my whole life. I will never forget this day. Because God you will never forget me.
In Jesus name. Amen. Hallelujah.
Now let me pray for you please. Let me pray for you. Father.
Seal this work. Don't let anything steal it. From these people tonight.
Just put it in your hands. In the center of every person's heart. And don't let it be stolen.
And give these men and women. The courage to walk with you. To begin to learn.
Even as you did Jesus. As a child you had to learn. Help them Lord God.
To begin to walk and begin to learn. Show them the covering and the food. And everything you have for them.
Especially the love. And as we saw tonight Lord. With these testimonies.
Make these at this altar. Everything that you've intended them to be. Let them know miracles in their lives oh God.
Miracles. Give them a testimony where they can tell other people. Only God could have done this.
Only God. I tried for years and nothing changed. And he changed me.
And let it be a testimony. Of the reality of God. Jesus glorify your name.
And don't let these be lost. Don't let one of these men or women be lost. Or these children God.
Seal them in the palm of your hand. Close them in the fist of God. And don't let anything take them out.
Father I thank you for this God with all my heart. I praise you Lord Jesus. And I bless you.
In your precious name. Now in this church. Downstairs we have people that will help you.
To understand what you need to do. There are good churches in the city. That we can recommend.
And if you're from out of the country. We can tell you what kind of a church. Maybe you should go to.
Give you some advice. You can come to this church. You'll be always welcome here.
Always. And you can grow here. You can make mistakes.
You can learn. You'll find a kindness here. God bless you.
I encourage you to go downstairs if you can. And anybody else that needs to be down there. You go down too.

We'll give you a part of the New Testament. And pray with you. And help you get started in your walk with God.

This is an awesome night. This is an awesome night. Thank you Lord.

Thank you God. You make sure folks. That you welcome these people into the family of God.

Don't let them escape without a handshake. Okay tonight. You welcome these girls and these guys.

Into the family of God. The house of God. They're brand new.

They don't know a whole lot about it. But they will soon. Thank God.

Now one more time. Give God a shout of glory. Thank God.

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