

# Pastoral REFLECTIONS

December 17, 2023

## The Unexpected Gift

"Sometimes Christmas gifts are real surprises. Maybe you've had that experience. As a kid, I wanted a basketball so bad I could scream. I dropped all kinds of hints. I made false phone calls to my mother in another voice, telling her that her son really ought to have a basketball. I found the cheapest prices. I dropped those on the breakfast table. You know all those things. And finally, a box appeared under the Christmas tree, which looked just the size of a basketball. Whew! I could just feel myself making shots with it. Christmas Day came. I tore into that thing! And it was a world globe. Have you ever tried to dribble a world globe? I mean, you can't even inflate the dumb thing. Unbelievable surprise! Didn't look at all like what I expected!" (Chuck Swindoll)

Jesus was a surprise to the Jews. He did not come wrapped in the gift paper they expected. At one point, they even asked these questions; "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?" (Matt 13:54-55) "They were saying, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven?'" (John 6:42) As a result, He was rejected for a Messiah that has yet to come. The world wants a god that loves everybody. A god that puts all nice people in heaven, and only the really bad people go to hell. A god who would never allow any bad thing to happen to good people, and he blesses everyone who is nice. When God does anything different, He is a surprise and He is rejected.

"And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child, Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, 'Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.'" (Luke 2:25-35)

The natural eye saw a carpenter's son, a man born to poor parents. A life controlled by the Holy Spirit, in the midst of a busy temple, saw Christ, the promised Messiah (1 Cor. 2:10-15). One person was surprised by the wondrous things Christ did or said; the other person, Simeon, was excited about a baby yet to do anything. It is impossible for the world to see Jesus no matter how great His works are (2 Cor. 4:4). This is why we should not wait for the world to understand or appreciate Christ. Believers should be excited like Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:36-38) because this season gives us hope of His future coming.



## UPCOMING Events



**URBAN MISSIONS TEAM PACKS OF LOVE**  
The Urban Missions Team is now accepting Packs of Love donations to be distributed to the unhoused population in downtown Houston on Christmas Day. Donations will be collected at the end of Life Application on Sundays and Tuesday Nights. Donation bins will be available for collections. Join us to volunteers on Christmas Day! For more information contact **Natividad Smith at nds\_smith@yahoo.com**

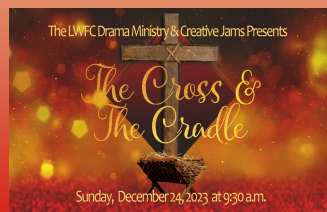


**HOLIDAY SHOP AT THE LWFC BOOKSTORE!**  
Get ahead of your Holiday Shopping. Visit the Living Word Bookstore for the perfect gift for family and friends! From books, to jewelry, to Living Word apparel and other items, the Bookstore has so many gift ideas for this season. **VISIT THE BOOKSTORE TODAY!**



## Christmas Extravaganza

Join us for our Christmas Extravaganza next **Sunday, December 24, 2023 at 9:30 a.m. for a Christmas Eve Service** like no other! Music, dancing, and a drama play, entitled, **"The Cross & The Cradle"** will give you a new perspective on the meaning of Christmas. Wear your Ugliest Christmas sweater or outfit and connect with your church family after the service in the foyer. Don't miss this exciting chance to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior with your Living Word family.



**30TH ANNIVERSARY ADS/SPONSORSHIPS**  
Have you been blessed by Living Word? You can purchase a congratulatory ad in our 30th Anniversary program booklet. Share your congratulations, greetings, thanks, and well wishes for this momentous occasion. Purchase an Ad at <https://tinyurl.com/30thAnniversaryAds> Also consider becoming a sponsor for the 30th Anniversary Gala. Sign up to become a sponsor at <https://tinyurl.com/30thAnniversarySponsor> For more information visit the Anniversary Team in the Connection Center on Sundays.



## ORDER OF WORSHIP

Announcements

Communion

Visitor's Welcome

Worship In Giving

*Offering boxes are located at all perimeters under crosses*

Special Music

**"Suffering Glorifies God"**

*1 Peter 4:12-14*

*Associate Pastor Allen Boutte*

Click "Sermon Notes" on the Website

Call to Discipleship

Please remain seated at this time

Benediction



Children are now required to check-in upon arrival. Please report to the registration desk located in the children's wing.

**Infants—6th grade**



## Suffering Glorifies God 1 Peter 4:12-14

### I. Expect Trials (v. 12)

1. Trials are not strangers to Christian life; they are to be expected
  - a. The world does not persecute religious people, but it persecutes righteous people (Gen 4:8)
  - b. Trials are a part of the will of God
  - c. Trials are God's tools to perfect His Children

### II. Rejoice in Trials (vs. 13-14)

1. Peter wrote, constantly rejoicing.
  - a. We are suffering for his sake (Phil 1:29)
  - b. Trial now, Glory later
  - c. The Spirit of God in the suffering believer (vs. 14)  
His rest is in us and continues to give us power to endure our suffering. God not only delivered the Three Hebrew boys, but He walked with them in the fiery fire (Daniel 3:19 -30)

### III. The Spirit of Glory Allows us to be Blessed (v. 14)

1. The Holy Spirit has a variety of titles that emphasize the variety of ministries.
  - a. Seven Spirits (Rev. 1:4, 3:1)
  - b. The Eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14)
  - c. The Spirit of Glory (1 Peter 4:14)
  - d. The Spirit of Life (Romans 8:2)
  - e. The Spirit of Holiness (Romans 1:4)
  - f. The Spirit of Wisdom (1 Cor. 2:10-13)



## PRAYER REQUESTS

**Grieving:** The family of Wanda Turk, and Joella Howard & family.

**Health and Healing:** Lurlean Lane, Florence Wiggins, Retha Amos, Cici Sharpe, Margaret Baptiste, Eunice Johnson, Jeffrey McQueen, Eric White, Pat Crawford, Lisa Roberts, Birdie Williams, Jon Heard, Rutha Patrick, Betty Goode, Latifah Brown, Tanisha Collins, Eric Prichett, Rufus Hadnot, Pat James, Kevin Carey, Lori Lee, Jessie Austin, Sherri Love, Elizabeth Clark, Betty Cunningham, Kathryn Ford-Cheatham, Clara Williams, Dorothy Price, Anthony Thomas, Beverly Austin, Joshua Williams, Elizabeth Bean, Ruby Hunter, Patsy Gatterson, Joyce Newsome, Arleatha Housley, and Patrina Johnson.

SUFFERING  
GLORIFIES  
GOD

*Live Like You've  
Been Born Again*

1 PETER 4:12-14