**John 1:10-13 (3rd of 3 devotions)** December 25, 2022

Pastor P. Martin **Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY** Christmas Day

*[I suggest this reading be read at the end of the devotion.]*

 Isaiah sang about the messengers and their beautiful feet. They may be dirty smelly feet, but they bring at Christmas. The words from Hebrews expanded on why the message the messengers bring is so wonderful. In Christmas we do not just have another baby, or another pious wish for world peace, we have someone mighty enough to deliver on the greatest hopes of the human heart.

 If the Christ-child bears that gift at Christmas, the question becomes:

**How Does The Best Christmas Present Ever Become Mine?**

 Now, if there ever were a thought that is unworthy of Christmas, it is just this one: “How do I get good Christmas presents?” Not, as in, “How do I get good presents *for* other people?”, but “How do I get good presents *for* myself.” In our childhood, we all had that thought at some time. If you had good parents, they informed you that that is not the point of Christmas gifts. (Which makes me wonder what kind of parents the person had who came up with that “Thanks-getting” ad slogan.) But back to Christmas and your life: Year after year your parents told you that Christmas is not about getting, but about giving. After a good long time that idea finally took root and now, I hope, you are more interested in getting Christmas gifts for other people than you are in getting them for yourself.

 But for two minutes I want you to ask yourself the question your parents told you you were never supposed to ask: “How do I get the best present ever?”

 In verse 12, one of the Twelve who walked with Jesus for three years tells us what the biggest present in the entire world is. It’s not a toy. It’s not jewelry. It’s not even a vehicle. It is ***“the right to become children of God.”*** When you “become a child of God,” you get a passport, a special passport. At the moment of death, there are two destinations. The one you want to be in requires this passport. Without it, you cannot and will not enter. Instead you will be relegated to a very different place.

 Here’s the problem: this verse tells us that *no one* is a child of God by nature. It mentions, ***“become children of God”*** (12). “Become” means you don’t start out that way. John tells us the opposite of what people want to believe about themselves and their loved ones. By nature we are not children of God.

 Then how do we become children of God? Children of God are ***“born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will.”*** Well, there are no good genes that confer childhood of God. No effort or plan or social status or income bracket (high or low) confers childhood of God. Not even children of Christians are children of God by birth.

 Then how do we get the best Christmas present ever? ***“To those who believed in his name, he gave the right to be children of God”*** (12).

 Two things: First, becoming a child of God comes through believing. Believing is not just knowing some facts. It is believing, it is relying on the fact of Jesus our Savior from sin and knowing our standing with God depends on it.

 Second thing: It is the gift of God. You don’t work for a gift. If you do, it isn’t a gift. The gift is simply put in your hands and you realize that the thing you did not work for now belongs to you.

 The Christmas gift has arrived. Simply believe what the angel said, *“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”*

 For most of you, maybe all, I didn’t ask “How do you get the best Christmas present ever?” because you don’t have it. You do! You know Jesus and the forgiveness of sins he won for you. The reason I ask is so that you marvel at God’s goodness. The best thing we could ever hope for, God has simply given. Christ Jesus came into this world of his own free will for each of us. And faith in that saving truth has been freely planted in your heart by the Holy Spirit. Rejoice in how easy it is that you have received the best Christmas present ever!

 *[Read the text, then sing hymn 549, Across the Lands.]*

 *John 1:10 [The Word] was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—13children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.*