

Of all times, the Christmas season causes us to reflect upon the nature of giving, but in God's gift of the Christ-Child it is more fitting that we reflect upon the sacrifice of the Giver. For Jesus did not simply come to be a model of love for us, but to be a substitute for us. God the Father delighted to give His Son in our stead. God the Son delighted to give His life in our stead. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." "By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us..." (John 3:16, 1 John 3:16)

Our perfect and final healing is purchased in full (Is 53:4, Rev. 7:17), the ultimate gift of the cross of Jesus: eternal fellowship with God (1 Peter 3:18, Romans 5 and 8). "Long lay the world in sin and error pining 'til He appeared and the soul felt its worth..."

Growth Questions for 12/12 – 12/19

1. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend's message did you find most helpful, eye-opening, troubling?
2. Read Isaiah 53. What reasons are cited for the affliction and crucifixion of Jesus?
3. What do we know about God's presence in the midst of Jesus' suffering? What is your response to verse 10 and what does it mean that "the will of the LORD shall prosper" in Jesus' hand?
4. According to this scripture, what does Jesus' presence on the cross mean for you and me?

Proclaim...Reach...Connect...Go

1. Spend some time comparing Isaiah 53 with Matthew 27:32-50. In what ways is Isaiah 53 fulfilled in the events of Matthew 27? In what ways have these events been fulfilled in us?
2. Isaiah 53 starkly contrasts Jesus' blamelessness (sinlessness) with our sinfulness, His divinity vs. our depravity. How is the message of Christmas (Christ's incarnation) a herald of this same message? How will you "herald" this message during this season?
3. Read the following scriptures and replace "our", "we", "us [all]", and "you" with your name: Isaiah 53:4-6, 1 Peter 2:24-25, 2 Corinthians 5:20-21, Galatians 4:4-6

4. Last week we clearly saw Jesus' divinity. This week we can clearly see Jesus' humanity. In His suffering, Jesus left us an example to follow; in His death for our sins, He purchased for us the power to follow His example. How will you follow during this Christmas season?

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE – On Friday, December 24 at 6:30pm The Church at Martinsburg will be gathering at the Regal Cinemas to worship Jesus on the eve of his birth! Be a part and bring your friends, your family, and those far from God.

COMMUNITY GROUPS – *Community Groups* are groups of people who come together on a weekly basis to promote significant Christian relationships that are centered around the study of God's Word (Hebrews 10:24-25 and Romans 8:29). Groups begin on 1/16/11. Groups are available Sunday through Friday. **Sign up outside of the theater** – more information at www.martinsburgchurch.org.

...to proclaim the Gospel and reach those far from God.