

2017-12-31 Christmas All Year Long

Christmas All Year Long

December 31, 2017

Pastor Scott Austin

artisanchurch.com

[Music Intro]

[Male voice] The following is a presentation of Artisan Church in Rochester, New York.

[Voice of Pastor Scott]

I would like to invite all the children who would like to come right up here you can come and sit on the floor right around around me here and if you, hello everybody. [Laughter]. Yeah.

[Voice of Child] I'm a little sticky.

[Voice of Pastor Scott] You're a little sticky? [Laughter]. But that's OK yeah. If you want to have a grown up or a parent come with you for this you can if you're sitting out there and want to come up but you're not quite sure you can bring a friend with you or you can just listen in your seats. So, I'm going to ask you all some questions and you can tell me what you think, OK? And then after this Pastor Jessie is going to tell you about a fun activity that you can do and I'm going to talk with the grown ups for a little while. So, I'm glad that you were all here and I'm so glad that you're all part of Artisan Church. So, did you did you all have a good Christmas?

[Voice of Children] Yes!

[Voice of Pastor Scott] Yes! Let's see if you had a good Christmas give me a thumbs up. Alright! I see a lot of thumbs up and one thumb sideways. That's OK. That's all right. How many people have a special food that they love to eat at Christmas? Yeah? Jackson, what's your favorite special food?

[Voice of Jackson] Eating Christmas food.

[Voice of Pastor Scott] Eating Christmas food? That's my favorite too. Do you have a special specific Christmas food? How about you Ruby?.

[Voice of Ruby] Turkey.

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[Voice of Pastor Scott] How many turkey people in the house? Yeah, we got some turkey lovers what else?

[Voice of children] Mac N cheese! Cookies! Christmas cookies!

[Voice of Pastor Scott] Who had a couple Christmas cookies? Yeah? I think I had too many I stepped on the scale and it broke.

[Voice of child] I had a whole giant can full!

And a whole giant what? When you start to measure the cookies by the can full.

[Voice of children] Gingerbread houses! I made one!

[Voice of Pastor Scott] He made one.

[Voice of children] Ten thousand! Sixty thousand!

[Voice of Pastor Scott] I don't know what's going on in your oven but you must have a big one. So what about favorite songs to say we have a favorite song to get to sing a Christmas. Jingle bells jingle bells jingle.

[Voice of a child] I like Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer.

[Voice of Pastor Scott] Rudolph the Red nosed Reindeer, Ruby? Your favorite Christmas song? Forgot?. You're a Jingle Bells person too? How many Jingle Bells people we have out there? Yeah Jingle Bells is pretty good. You also like Jingle Bells?—oh I see your in your hand, yes?

[Voice of a child] Deck the Halls! Feliz Navidad!

[Voice of Pastor Scott] So I have a story about Feliz Navidad [laughter]. My family went on a really long car trip this this past week and you know how you get kind of bored in the car and you start to go, like, I want to get a car! The way we pass the time we all sang Feliz Navidad really loud, all of us. Well it might not sound funny but I promise it was. What about favorite decorations? You have some favorite Christmas decorations? You?

[Voice of a child] Holly

[Voice of Pastor Scott] Wow! What do you think?

[Voice of Jackson] I have a Captain America.

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[Voice of Pastor Scott] You have a Captain America Christmas tree ornament maybe.

[Voice of a child] The first Noel.

[Voice of Pastor Scott] The first Noel? Love that one too. You?

[Voice of a child] The Christmas tree!

[Voice of Pastor Scott] The Christmas tree is your favorite decoration? That's pretty quick to bring a tree in your house. Okay, quick call, how many people have a real live tree in their house?. How many people have a boring all fake tree in their house? Yeah we got boring last year for the first time ever maybe. Rainbow lights, yeah that's right. You had your first Christmas when you were a baby. Kind of like Jesus, right? Alright last last question for this part now I can't take an answer from everybody but maybe one or two people could tell me your favorite Christmas present that you got this year? Oh everybody wants to answer that one it's not even fair! How about we start with some people who haven't answered yet answer a question going.

[Voice of a child] A bike.

[Voice of Pastor Scott] A bike! I remember when I got a bike for Christmas.

[Voice of a child] A hatchem.

[Voice of Pastor Scott] A Hatchem? I can't believe I pulled that but I did.

[Voice of a child] I got an American Girl doll and American Girl doll horse.

[Voice of Pastor Scott] American Girl doll and American Girl doll horse, alright. Yes Peter?

[Voice of Peter] I got a Leia dress.

[Voice of Pastor Scott] You got a Leia dress for Christmas? Whoa, how many people are jealous of Peter's Leia dress and alright last one Jackson.

[Voice of Jackson] I got a Captain America.

[Voice of Pastor Scott] You got to Captain America? I'm sensing a theme in your house. How about you Ruby?

[Voice of Ruby] I got a night gown with princesses and Ariel on it.

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[Voice of Pastor Scott] A night gown with princesses and Ariel on it. Yes you can tell me one thing. What was that? Oh wow. Ollie, I'm sorry I should I should turn this way so I can see all about. You got a cat? You got a cat for Christmas can anybody top a cat?

[Voice of Pastor Scott] So tell me this who's a little bit sad that Christmas is over is anybody kind of sad that Christmas is over? Yeah? How many of you have already started packing up your Christmas decorations like any ornaments going back into the box maybe up into the attic?

[Voice of a child] No they're never going back!

[Voice of Pastor Scott] Okay one at a time you have to clean Christmas this is away with what you do you put some Christmas decorations away already. So if Christmas is over we won't get to sing anymore of those fun songs and we don't get to have any of that special food anymore. How many people have to guess.

[Voice of Claire] Actually Jingle Bells isn't a Christmas song you can sing it through the whole Winter.

[Voice of Pastor Scott] That is a very good point Claire! Good news everybody, you can sing Jingle Bells all Winter long, thank you for pointing that out. And wait how many people how many people have to go back to school this week? And you're never gonna? You're go back to your school? So Christmas comes and goes doesn't it and you know birthdays I found are kind of like that too. Alright everybody, everybody look at me without talking show me with your fingers how old you are your last birthday. Okay yeah so birthdays kind of come go. You kind of get all excited and then you have this special day and then it's all over. Do you want to know something interesting, I hey we're almost done and then you have your fun activities so I have a couple more things I want to talk to you about can you give me your good attention while I'm doing that yes. Don't have to mock me man, you hurt my feelings, you heckle me worse than my dad. [laughter] Did you know something interesting in Church Christmas isn't over yet! Isn't that cool. Well see the, the Christmas trees and the presents and all that fun stuff, all the reindeer and the Santa Claus all of that stuff is Christmas that's one thing but in Church we talk about Christmas and it's even more than that because it's Jesus's birthday! You know that right?

[Voice of a child] Jesus gets a lot of parties. Maybe God has a birthday party every day!

[Voice of Pastor Scott] It's interesting you should say that because that's exactly what I want to talk about. Could you imagine if we thought about the idea that Christmas lasted all year long? Don't worry not the songs part, necessarily, not all the sugary foods, maybe not the presents

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every single day but if we thought about the fact that Jesus came and is close to us all year long wouldn't that be wonderful? Do you know that in Church something else is kind of weird every single Sunday of the year is a feast day. Do you know to feast is? A lot of food? We have turkey at our Christmas feast sometimes in our Thanksgiving feast but in the Church we have a feast every single Sunday and it's right here on this table it's communion we think about of that as a feast that God invites us to all year long so what if we celebrated Jesus' birthday all year long. What if we gave special presents to each other all year long? What if we had a feast every single day what if we sang special songs every day all year long? What if we remembered that God was close to us every day all year long?. Did you want to ask me something? I do remember last Palm Sunday. That was your birthday! Wow that was a special day. You have cake for Jesus on Christmas? How many people have cake for Jesus on Christmas. What is it?

[Voice of a child] It's communion!

[Voice of Pastor Scott] You are a theologically minded young person thank you. So I want to ask you one more question, okay what are some ways that you and I and all of us can show God's love to other people every day? What is something that we can do to show God's love to people?

[Voice of a child] To feed him everyday!

[Voice of Pastor Scott] To feed somebody that's a way to show God's love.

[Voice of a child] To give love!

[Voice of Pastor Scott] Give love. What about you Ruby what do you think?.

[Voice of Ruby] Pray for him.

[Voice of Pastor Scott] Praying for people is a way to show people God's love.

[Voice of a child] Giving presents!

[Voice of Pastor Scott] Giving presents even if they're not special Christmas presents that's a way to show God's love isn't it anybody else have an idea? Giving food to people who are in need yes. Did you just said that if babies are crying you have to give them cake? [laughter] Well I think. I think. Right okay. Alright my hand up can you see my hand up. That would be really fun. Thank you kids for your great help can you give the kids a hand for all the help? Helping us think about Christmas all year long.

[Voice of Pastor Scott]

So the activities that they have are relatively quiet activities but I think I still think it might be hard to do like a traditional sermon in this room for the next few minutes, so what I want to do instead is engage with Scripture in a different way that is going to involve some like sharing with your neighbor, right, which some people when I say share with you may be like “Oh goody I haven't done that in like two days, I have to share with my neighbor I love doing that” and other people are like “Where's the coffee stand? Because I'm going to pour myself a very long coffee” [laughter]. I understand, I am mostly in the latter group except when I'm leading an activity like this so just know that I commiserate if you're not like necessarily in love with the idea of sharing with your neighbor. It'll start out kind of light hearted and we'll get a little bit deeper at the end. So we're going to make it a little bit more comfortable by not having just one person next to you want you to share with your whole row basically. And people in the row I want you to be sensitive to those who maybe don't want to share and if you have to say pass that's okay, I promise nobody will criticize you for that. So let's give it a try and see what happens okay? So the first thing that I want you to share it's a little bit of an icebreaker. I want you to tell your row or your group, you can turn the chairs around mess the whole room up it's fine, I want you to tell each other about your favorite piece of clothing ever. Can I tell you mine before you go? My favorite piece of clothing ever was a pair of black Air Jordan Sixes. Not the reissue kids, I'm talking about the 1991 black Air Jordan Six with the little plastic heel pull on the back and the heel tongue had two like square holes in it that you could pull up and I swear to you I put those shoes on and I could jump two inches higher, I thought. Probably wasn't true but that's what I thought. So my favorite thing, my favorite piece of clothing ever was a pair of Air Jordans and now you can share with your group or your row what was your favorite piece of clothing ever and maybe if you have a little extra time before I call you back to the next one, what does that piece of clothing say about you? We don't need to go into what that piece of clothing said about me but maybe you could share that with your group, alright? So go ahead and talk with your row about that for just a minute.

All right I'm going to call you to the next question in just about one minute so if you haven't shared yet go ahead and share.

All right let me have your attention again. Some of you really like talking about clothing. I want to do this. If you are the person who had the member of your group with the most outrageous piece of clothing you know who you are I want you to share it with the whole congregation without telling us which person in your group owns that piece of clothing so who is it I know

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one of you is going with yep it's us. But you just know if you know if you can probably take the prize here for the whole congregation there's nobody who had an outrageous piece of clothing that made you go oh oh.

[Voice from congregation] Someone in our group have a vintage Monty Python t-shirt with John Cleese on it.

[Voice of Pastor Scott] That is that takes the cake in Artisan and it sure does. Awesome. Oh yeah? We got another one?

[Voice from congregation] Pajamas and a robe.

[Voice of Pastor Scott] Yes, that would be very comfy. Maybe if I get my jammies on after service today I'll fall asleep watching whatever football game is on. Alright, so we unfortunately can't share more than that because we have a lot to get through so I want to read you today's text and it's one of the lectionary texts. It's a beautiful passage of Scripture and we're going to talk about that with each other similar to how we just talked about the clothing and maybe you'll see why I chose that question in a second. So this is Isaiah 61 verse 10 and read through to 62 verse 3 if you'd like to follow along in your red Bibles that's page 604 or you can just listen to me read it though if you wish: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exalt in my God for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation he has covered me with the robe of righteousness as a as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations. For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God." So that first verse says I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exalt in my God I want you to get honest with each other now, you don't have to go into any detail, but I want you to share with each other how true is that statement for you today and I want you to know this is a safe space for you to say "It's a one out of ten right now rejoicing and exalting is just not where I am". And it's okay if you are sitting next to someone who says one out of ten and you're a ten out of ten, we are in community with each other and our realities are different at different times. So the statement "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord my whole being shall exalt my God" How true is that for you scale of one to ten? And don't forget you can pass on the question if you wish. This would only take like thirty to forty seconds so go ahead and share with each other in your row or your group.

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Alright so if we put all those numbers together, add them all up and divided by the number of people who answered we'd have like an average, an Artisan average on December 31, 2017 of how much rejoicing and exalting are we doing right now. And the truth is that that fluctuates sometimes doesn't it? So the speaker in this passage, the narrator if you will, has a reason for rejoicing in the Lord and goes on to say what it is. For, which is just a way of saying because, right I will rejoice in the Lord my whole being shall exalted my God because he has clothed to me with the garments of salvation he has covered me with the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom deck's himself with a garland and as a bride adorns herself with jewels. There are a lot of people getting married in the next year at Artisan so if you are invited to these weddings you will probably see bridegrooms adorned and brides decked out, maybe not jewels, maybe not garlands but you know our equivalent. What would it mean to be clothed in that special way? But not literally with clothing but with this spiritual adornment that God clothes us with: Salvation and Righteousness. What would that mean to you? And then, you can talk about that for a minute, I want you to think about how true is that for you today. And maybe connect your number with rejoicing and exalting to the idea of how much you feel like you are actually clothed with righteousness and salvation. Maybe you're not a religious person at all and someone dragged you in this room today and you're like "I don't even really know what that means", that's okay too. So share with your group. What would it mean to be clothed with righteousness and salvation? Maybe you can help each other understand that and then, do you feel like that is true for you today?. Alright, go ahead and answer those questions.

Alright this one's a little deeper, might take you a little longer to answer so I want to make sure everybody is getting a chance to share. If there's someone being long winded please stop and give somebody else a chance. I didn't mean everybody has to stop, I just want to make sure that someone in your group that hasn't shared yet gets a chance to if they want to.

Alright maybe about thirty more seconds here. Alright, let's try to move on to our next question here. So I asked you to think about whether it feels true for you today that you're clothed with righteousness and salvation. I want to give you a chance now for a moment of silent reflection where you don't share with your neighbor, some of you are like "phew, finally". [laughter] Right. I want you to think about what might keep you true or what might keep you from knowing that that is true about you, that you are clothed with righteousness and salvation. What might be the impediment to- the barrier for you right now? If you don't feel that, if you do feel it, think about a time when you didn't feel it, what was the barrier for you then? I'm going to give you just about a minute of, you know, silence-ish to think about that. What is your barrier to knowing the truth that you are clothed with righteousness and salvation?

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You know at the end of this passage we hear this promise: You shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give us. A pretty rare thing for us to change our names nowadays. Sometimes we get a nickname, sometimes people change their name when they get married but pretty much we go through life, for the most part, with the same name and I wonder what it might feel like for you to imagine being called by a totally new name. That whatever baggage comes with being who you are and who you have been and the experiences that you have had, whatever might be weighing you down, whatever shame there might be, whatever pain there might be, whatever struggles there might be. How does it feel to imagine having a totally new name given to you by the God of the universe the truth is somebody might be thinking "I like me, I don't really want to change who I am" and that might be because you are in a harmonious place with the God of the universe already and it might be honestly because you are resisting the change that God wants to bring about in your life. And some of you, others of you are thinking "Sign me up I want that new name like yesterday because this one has been nothing but trouble". I want to give you one last image to think about in this text is the very last sentence in the passage that says you shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. So this God who clothes you with righteousness and salvation, this God who gives you a new name, thinks of you as the adornment. God clothes you in new clothes but you are the sign of God's beauty to the whole world you are the crown on God's head that is the truth that I believe is for each one of you and for me as well. That can be hard to imagine. For some of us given all that we've been through, all that we've done, all that we've left undone, all that we've said, all that we've left unsaid, it can be very hard for us to imagine that we are a sign of God's beauty to the world. But when you are given a new name when you are clothed with the garments of God's righteousness and salvation it's exactly the gift that you are given. You become a crown of beauty.

So in a moment we'll pray and we'll take communion together and we'll sing a couple more songs and I want to try to put together these ideas: the idea that talked about with the children of observing Christmas all year round and of giving God's gifts to those in your world every day with the idea that we've just talked about of being clothed in a new way, of being covered in the garments of salvation and righteousness and of becoming a crown of beauty on God's own head. Those two ideas can connect for us here at this feast we do observe, the feast of Holy Communion. Every Sunday when we are together whether you are hungry or full this food is for your soul. I invite you to come and take the bread remembering Christ's body, which is broken for you, dipping it in either the wine or the juice remembering Christ's blood, which is shed for the forgiveness of sins. And you can take that all at once right here at the table into your own body and it's that act that unites you with Christ and with each other it's that act that truly solidifies us as the Body of Christ and it's a little bit like celebrating feast of Christmas all year

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round. So as the band comes I will pray and then we will celebrate communion together. Gracious God we are thankful to see you today for your many blessings. We are grateful for the miracle of being adorned with garments of righteousness and salvation when we were people who desperately needed to be saved. We were astonished at the idea that we might actually be clothing of beauty for you, a crown, an adornment that shows your love to the world. We pray that this feast that we celebrate now would be a first step for some of us in faith, a next step for some of us in living our faith and a chance for all of us to bring the love and peace of Christmas into the world around us by bringing it first into our own bodies and souls. We pray these things in Christ's name Amen.

A member of the prayer team will be at the back of the room if you'd like to receive personalized prayer. Artisan has an open table which means you are all welcome to come. Let's continue to sing and worship God in this way.

[end of sermon]

[Male voice] For more information visit us at ArtisanChurch.com