

CHRISTMAS
SHOPPING



LOOKING
for
LIFE

DECEMBER 8-10, 2018



Where is the Freedom?

A Message from Matt Heard, Lead Pastor

Read about Pastor Matt at northlandchurch.net/pastormatt.

Isaiah 61:1-3 (NIV)

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of joy
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the Lord
for the display of his splendor.

UPCOMING SERVICES

WEEK 50 Communion » December 15-17: Advent week 3

Christmas Shopping: Looking for Life | Where is the Love? | Isaiah 6:1-3 | Pastor Matt Heard

WEEK 51 Christmas Eve Services » December 22-24: Advent week 4

Christmas Shopping: Looking for Life | Where is the Hope? | Isaiah 6:1-3 | Pastor Matt Heard

'Tis the season for ... shopping. That sentiment reached full speed the day after Thanksgiving, and during the next few weeks leading up to the big day, the pace will accelerate into a frenzy. But an enormous question looms: Will we actually find what we're looking for? Will we find what we truly need and long for? Can what we're looking for be found in a shopping mall?

Around 28 AD, a young Jewish rabbi was refined by God during forty days in the desert. After that pivotal time, He returned to Galilee to begin His public ministry, a ministry that quickly proved to be that of no ordinary rabbi. In Nazareth, the town where He grew up, He attended a service in the synagogue and was given the scroll of Isaiah 61 to read. It was known as a Messianic prophecy – a prophecy about the coming of God's Messiah. After reading it, He sat down to give the sermon and made the stunning statement, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21, NIV).

With that simple sentence, Jesus revealed His true identity: the Savior of the world – the ultimate Gift as well as Gift-giver! In the hustle and bustle of our holiday shopping sprees, the irony is staggering: we've forgotten why we even shop for gifts in the first place. One of the primary origins of the idea of gift-giving this time of year is to reflect and remember the Gift of all gifts, which God gave to us in Jesus Christ, and yet we miss Him while shopping for lesser things.

During this series, we're taking a closer look at what Jesus both proclaimed and promised when He read from that prophecy in Isaiah. Embedded in those words are gifts that we all, whether or not we acknowledge it, are looking for – gifts such as healing for our broken hearts, freedom for our journey, love and favor from God and hope for the future.

These Life-giving presents are paid for by the grace of God and are freely offered to each of us. As a result, this Advent season provides a significant opportunity: to let the path we take ...

while looking for what we most deeply long for ...

lead us to Christ and His ultimate gifts of Christmas.

"A prison cell, in which one waits, hopes, does various unessential things, and is completely dependent on the fact that the door of freedom has to be opened from the outside, is not a bad picture of Advent."

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Freedom

This week we're learning how God brings freedom from sin and shame through Jesus.

WATCH THE VIDEO

NorthlandChurch.net/Studies

Afterward have someone read the discussion questions in the "Hear God's Story" section and start the conversation.



Share Your Story

Begin by praying together. This should be a brief, simple prayer in which you invite God to give you insight as you study. You can pray for specific requests at the end of your time together or stop momentarily to pray if a particular situation comes up during your discussion.

Then begin your time together by discussing the following questions.

- When have you felt as if you were a slave to something in your life?
- What makes someone in your life seem especially free?

Hear God's Story, and Create a New Story

READ ISAIAH 61:1 (NIV) & ROMANS 6:5-11 (NLT)

- What keeps us in bondage?
- How can we experience freedom from that bondage?
- What are some ways sin binds us in our everyday lives?
- What's the "power of sin" (vv. 7, 10-11) and the long-term effect of that bondage? (See Romans 6:20-21.)
- What's the power of the gospel? What does it mean to be "alive to God through Christ Jesus"? (Romans 6:11; see Romans 6:20-21.)
- What are some of the characteristics of a life in bondage to sin? (See Galatians 5:19-21 for examples.)
- What are some of the characteristics of a Spirit-led life of freedom? (See Galatians 5:22-23 for examples.)
- What are some ways you can further embrace the abundant life this week?
Who are some specific people in your life whom you can call to that same freedom?

Give each person an opportunity to share prayer requests.

Find Your Story in God's Story

If you feel God is nudging you to go deeper, take some time between now and our next discussion to dig into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own, jotting your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. Want to go deeper? Select a few verses, and try paraphrasing them, writing them in your own words. If you'd like, share them with the group the next time you meet.

Freedom isn't just about the bondage you're released from; it's also about the life you're released to. The promise and hope of Jesus is that we're freed from sin and that we're freed to the abundant life we were created by God to experience. But for so many, the struggle is experiencing that abundant life. The devil will mislead us and try to trick us into accepting a lesser life ruled by fear. The world will try to convince us that we're bound by sin. But the gospel is a call to life free from shame and selfishness; we are free to live a life of love fueled by the grace of God!

READ COLOSSIANS 2:13-19 (NLT)

- What were some of the practices Paul warned the Colossians against?
- What kinds of freedom does that bondage prevent people from experiencing?
- What are some areas where it's hard for you to embrace the freedom of the gospel?

READ 2 TIMOTHY 1:5-7 (NLT)

- What are some ways a life governed by "power, love, and self-discipline" is different from a life governed by "fear and timidity" (v. 7)?
- As you've grown in your faith, where have you seen God's freedom more fully at work in your life?
- How could you continue to "fan into flames" (v. 6) and experience a growth in your faith so that you could more fully experience what it means to be fully alive?

This week's study is also available on Northland's apps or at NorthlandChurch.net/Studies.

What's Current

Get info and sign up at NorthlandChurch.net, or ask a connection team member for assistance.

Christmas Eve Worship Times

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 22 | 5 P.M. |

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23 | 9 A.M. | 11 A.M. |

MONDAY, DECEMBER 24 | 1 P.M. | 3 P.M. | 5 P.M. |

northlandchurch.net/christmas

Volunteer at one of the Christmas services!

Sign up at

northlandchurch.net/christmas

Let There Be Joy! A Christmas Celebration

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13 & FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14 | 7:30-9 P.M. | SANCTUARY | Tickets: cfcarts.com/joy

Sponsor a Student for Christmas Camp

THIS WEEKEND | BEFORE & AFTER SERVICES | FOYER | northlandchurch.net/christmascamp

Marriage Prep

SUNDAYS, JANUARY 13-APRIL 7 | 8:30-10:30 A.M. | THE RINK | northlandchurch.net/marriageprep

Christmas at the Northland Bookstore!

MUGS AND ORNAMENTS HAVE ARRIVED! PLUS MUCH MORE | Store hours: northlandchurch.net/bookstore

New Giving System

We are migrating to a new giving system which will make giving easier, more convenient and more secure. Before we do that, we need your help. First, we need you to create an account in our new giving system. Once you create a new account, we will transfer your information over to the new system. So once you set up your new profile, you won't ever need to log back into your old one. Get set up on the new giving system at northlandchurch.net/give. Questions? Contact our Finance Team at financeteam@northlandchurch.net

Stewardship Report

Week ending November 26, 2018

\$173,546

AMOUNT
EXPECTED

\$147,142

AMOUNT
RECEIVED

\$461,834*

BUDGET DEFICIT
YEAR-TO-DATE

\$729,251

DEBT PAID
YEAR-TO-DATE

**We have reduced this deficit by spending \$382,188 less than budget during the first ten months of 2018. The current shortage is being covered by our beginning cash balances.*

Ways to Give

Give by cash or check and drop it in the tithe box.



Give online at NorthlandChurch.net/Give or use the Northland App.



Give via mobile text. Text "northland" followed by the amount to 77977 (e.g. northland 10).

