

"God Has a Gift for You"12/12/10
9 & 10:45 am

John 1:14-17

*Series: "Returning to the Heart of Christmas"***INTRODUCTION**

Have you started your gift list for Christmas ... the list of what you'd like to receive?

If you could receive anything for Christmas, what would it be?

Christmas is about the gift God has for you. It's a gift that will exceed your greatest desires and will not wear out or become boring over time. In fact, it will likely become your most treasured gift year after year.

OPEN to John 1 (**PAGE** 1645)

I. God's Gift to You is Jesus (John 1:1, 14a)

John 1:1, 14a **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

14a **"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us."**

the Word: "**In the beginning:**" eternal,

"with God:" relationship,

"was God:" fully divine

became flesh: Jesus had no body until He was conceived in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. And then He was born just like we were.

He became like us. Fully human, needing rest, food, shelter, involved with people, some who loved Him and others who hated Him.

At times even His family misunderstood Him, including His mother. The Bible even says He was tempted in every way, just as we are, but didn't give in, didn't sin.

Jesus **"became flesh and ... made His dwelling among us:** He moved in next door. "to live or camp in a tent" (or other dwelling)

God's gift to you is a person. His Son. Jesus.

There are unique moments in our lives when we're especially sensitive to the fact that people are gifts to us; that we would choose them over our favorite possessions, over our job, over income.

Sharon: I remember many years ago when she was having a health issue, it was the first time of anything like that, and how the fear of her possibly having something very, very serious struck fear deep in my heart. At that time, it brought into sharp focus that there wasn't any friendship or possession that was more valuable or precious than her.

Thankfully, it was nothing. But it was a moment when the gift she was to me was heightened in intensity.

There have been various experiences with each of our children, at different times in different ways, that helped me connect with how deeply I connected with the fact that they were gifts ...

... from the extreme of near-death experiences, to the sweetness of tender, transparent moment, or times of great joy.

... times of entering into their experiences and struggles, at times praying intensely for their protection, physically, spiritually, emotionally.

They are gifts ...

I have friends who have stood by me and prayed for me in times of very deep challenges.

There's a song about God that has the words, "*He looked beyond my faults and saw my needs.*" There are people like that in my life. They are gifts. Precious gifts. Valuable gifts. They are more valuable than possessions.

Jesus is God's gift to us ... all of us and each of us as individuals.

What kind of gift is Jesus? What is Jesus like?

II. Unwrapping God's Gift (John 1:14b, 16-17)

John 1:14b, 16-17 **"We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, Who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."**

16 **From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another.**
 17 **For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**"

What is Jesus like?

A. Jesus is an actual person, not a myth (v. 14b)

we have seen: this is an actual event. It is not a pretend story.

to **see** with our physical eyes, but also perceive in such a way that a supernatural impression is seen

Many years later John wrote this reminder:

1 John 1:1-3 **"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.**

2 **The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.**

3 **We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ."**

Jesus is an actual person, not a myth.

What is Jesus like?

B. Jesus is unique (v. 14b)

One and Only: unique; He has no like or equal

Jesus: "We have seen His glory ... full of grace and truth."

Glory describes all that He is and how it is reflected in everything He says and does.

What is Jesus like?

C. Jesus is lavishly generous (v. 16)

v. 14b: **full of grace and truth**

v. 16: **“From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another.**

fullness of His grace: not *stinginess* not *leftovers* not *measured*.

He gives to us from His fullness that never runs dry, never comes close to expiring, is always flowing abundantly.

He pours out His gracious need-meeting generosity upon us, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually.

He graciously communicates truth: about Himself, about us, about how to live and relate to others.

We get a personal picture of this in the book of Psalms, when King David describes what a gift the Lord is to him:

Psalm 63:1-3 **“O God, You are my God; I earnestly search for You. My soul thirsts for You; my whole body longs for You in this parched and weary land where there is no water.**

2 I have seen You in Your sanctuary and gazed upon Your power and glory.

3 Your unfailing love is better to me than life itself.” (NLT)

God’s unfailing love is better than any love I experience in life (*never-ending sacrificial love, always-giving unconditional love; He gives of Himself to us*)

God’s mercy is superior to anyone else’s mercy I experience in life (*He forgives all my failings, all my selfishness, every sin*)

God’s loyalty is better than anyone else’s loyalty I can experience (*He always keeps His word, is always with me*)

God’s kindness is better than any other kindness I experience in life (*He always meets my needs, always helps*)

ILLUSTRATION

About four weeks ago a friend and I were driving back to Modesto, and were this side of Fresno when he received a call from a mutual friend. Our friend, who’s in the dairy business, had just learned that some of his cattle were diagnosed with a disease that can’t be treated. It doesn’t infect humans in any way, through milk or beef, but does eventually kill the cow.

It was disturbing news, because he didn't know how many in the herd had been infected. He was calling to ask us to pray for him and the situation.

His dairy was between us and Modesto, so we stopped by to pray for him and the herd.

This man's herd was a closed herd; it had been bred and grown for decades in his family. To maintain a closed herd, he couldn't just go out and buy more dairy cows; also, that might bring more disease.

Each milking cow is worth about \$2,000. To sell them for beef, they bring \$500-700, depending on their size.

So, you can see the financial threat ... selling \$2,000 cows for \$500 ... a loss of \$1,500 per cow, plus the loss of the milk they produce, plus only being able to be replaced through cattle in the herd reproducing.

Well, we got to his place, talked a while and then we prayed, asking God to stop the spread of the disease and limit the damage.

It's been almost four weeks now. Several cattle had to be sold for beef, but very few, and even with a smaller herd, they are producing more milk than they had with the entire herd.

Is God's unfailing love better than what life dishes out?

This friend is excited about what he's had reinforced in his life about God. "God is good even when things don't go our way. He uses difficult circumstances to make us more like Jesus. What an incredible gift!"

ILLUSTRATION

"When I was in high school my father passed away rather suddenly. It was just two days before my high school graduation. At that time in my life I was a baby Christian. I was just happy that I wasn't going to Hell.

"But then my dad died. I found myself in a place I'd never been before. I wanted to hear God speak. I wanted to know what He had to say about this situation; how He was going to get me and my family through this difficult time. So I prayed. And I waited for God to speak.

Then came the day of the funeral. The church was packed. I sat on the front pew with my mother and two younger sisters. The pastor spoke, but I don't remember what he

said. I continued to wait for God to say something. Then the service was over. It was the tradition of this church to have the family line up in the lobby. Everyone would file past us and offer words of condolence and encouragement. Tears were shed, hugs offered, and words were given. I don't remember what anybody said to me in that time. But I continued to wait for God to speak. Then I saw Kim O'Quinn. She was my age. We were in the youth group together. When she got to me, she didn't say a word. She had tears in her eyes. And she simply hugged me and walked off. But, I heard God speak. It dawned on me. Just months before, I had attended another funeral; the funeral for Kim O'Quinn's father. In that moment she knew exactly what it meant to be me.

If you want to hear God's voice in your life, look no further than the One Who knows exactly what it's like to be you. He knows what it is to be human. He knows what it is to suffer. He knows what it is to be rejected. He knows all about being human. If you want to hear God's voice speak, allow your soul to be quieted long enough so that you can hear the One Who was in the beginning say to you, **'Draw near to Me and I'll draw near to you.'**"

Damien Spikereit in "The Story Before the Story," preached at Lincoln Christian College, 11-25-03

CONCLUSION

John 1:12 **"Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."**

Jesus is your gift from God. The person, Jesus.

Will you receive God's free gift of Jesus?

- **grace:** forgiveness that is undeserved
- **truth:** the only path in life that completes you;

"Father in Heaven, thank You for giving Jesus as a gift for me. I receive Him as the One Who will forgive my sins and lead my life. I ask You to forgive me for living a self-centered life; for the sins I have committed. Thank You for Your incredible gift! In Jesus' Name, Amen."
