

JESUS: GOD'S GIFT OF LOVE

2001 By Mark Beard

Text: John 3:16

Vance Havner said, “Christmas is based on an exchange of gifts, the gift of God to man—His unspeakable gift of His Son, and the gift of man to God—when we present our bodies a living sacrifice.” -- Vance Havner in The Vance Havner Quote Book. Christianity Today, Vol. 31, no. 18.

Ultimately this is the exchange of gifts that God's desires to take place more than any other. In all our exchanging of presents this holiday season how many will pause for a moment to appreciate the gift given us humanity by God—the gift of “His one and only son?” Furthermore, how many will make the gift exchange with Him or praise Him for what we have received?

His is the greatest of all gifts. There is no waiting for something better or the need to exchange it for something else. His is simply the greatest gift of all—His one and only Son.

It was Corrie ten Boom that wrote, “Who can add to Christmas? The perfect motive is that God so loved the world. The perfect gift is that He gave His only Son. The only requirement is to believe in Him. The reward of faith is that you shall have everlasting life.” -- Corrie ten Boom in Each New Day. Christianity Today, Vol. 38, no. 14.

Look with me at two important *aspects* of God's gift of love found in Jesus Christ.

I. LOVE MOTIVATED THE GIFT OF THE FATHER.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son...”

A. Loving humanity was the only risk that God ever took.

Because God has given humanity a free will it is only natural that there be the possibility that God’s love might not be returned.

B. However, it was God’s love for humanity that motivated Him to reach out to us.

Someone wrote the following about the difference love makes, “A house is a house is a house—until love comes through the door, that is. And love intuitively goes around sprinkling that special brand of angel dust that transforms a house into a very special home for very special people: your family.

Money, of course, can build a charming house, but only love can furnish it with a feeling of home.

Duty can pack an adequate sack lunch, but love may decide to tuck a little love note inside.

Money can provide a television set, but love controls it and cares enough to say no and take the guff that comes with it.

Obligation sends the children to bed on time, but love tucks the covers in around their necks and passes out kisses and hugs (even to teenagers!).

Obligation can cook a meal, but love embellishes the table with a potted ivy trailing around slender candles.

Duty writes many letters, but love tucks a joke or a picture or a fresh stick of gum inside.

Compulsion keeps a sparkling house. But love and prayer stand a better chance of producing a happy family.

Duty gets offended quickly if it isn't appreciated. But love learns to laugh a lot and to work for the sheer joy of doing it.

Obligation can pour a glass of milk, but quite often love will add a little chocolate.

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) p. 192.

God did not provide for our redemption out of obligation to His creation, He provided through the person of Jesus Christ, His son, that our Savior would also be our friend.

II. HOWEVER, IT IS THE GIFT, NOT THE LOVE, THAT SAVES US.

“He gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

A. In this case, the PRICE of the gift meant everything.

Oswald Chambers wrote, “In the Cross we may see the dimensions of Divine love. The Cross is not the cross of a man, but the exhibition of the heart of God. At the back of the wall of the world stands God with His arms outstretched, and every man driven there is driven into the arms of God. The Cross of Jesus is the supreme evidence of the love of God.”

--Christianity Today, Vol. 37, no. 11.

B. Only the sacrifice of the Son of God could set us free.

Many want to believe in a generic, benign love of a divine being that will eventually bring us all to the point of eternal life in paradise no matter what, or in whom, we have believed.

However, God's love was not enough. God's love had to be manifested through His gift of provision in order for humanity to be saved.

1 Peter 1:18-20 tells us, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake." NIV

It was not merely God's feelings for us, but rather His loving act toward us that made it possible for us to be reconciled to Him.

Colossians 1:19-20 says, "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

CONCLUSION

Jim Moore is senior minister of St. Luke's in Houston, Texas. At a breakfast with a friend, who is now a sales representative for a large national company, the friend told Dr. Moore about a recent exchange with his new sales manager.

It seems Moore's friend was driving his new boss around town when they happened to pass near the friend's home. This friend asked the new sales manager if he would like to stop by his house and meet his family. His wife was baking an apple pie, and his children would be coming in from school. Would he like to meet them?

"Let's get one thing straight right now," the manager replied. "I'm not interested in your family. I'm not interested in your wife or your children. I'm not interested in you personally at all or any of the circumstances of your life. All I'm interested in are results. All I'm interested in about you is your sales record!"

The friend told Moore: "That really hurt. I felt as though someone had slapped me across the face, but you know, I realized something. I realized that God is the opposite of that! God is interested in my home and family. God is interested in my wife and children. God does care about me personally. He is interested in all of the circumstances of my life."

Dr. Moore adds: "That is the good news of Christmas."

--James W. Moore, *Christmas Gifts That Always Fit*, (Nashville: Dimensions for the Living, 1996), 64-65.

Thankfully, God was interested enough in humanity to become involved.