

The Christmas Wish

Tim Dubberly, December 12, 2004

Text: John 3:16

Have you ever wondered exactly what does Christmas mean, or what should it mean to the world and especially a child of God. We know that Jesus was sent from heaven to take the robe of flesh and dwell with mankind. Did God just want us to realize that loving our families and get-togethers were important, or giving gifts to each other was the reason. No! The real reason behind Christmas is God's wish for mankind to recognize the love God has for the world, the sacrifice that Christ made to save the world, and the hope that He has given to the world.

This text is probably one of the most quoted in the bible. John was recording the words of Jesus and he was trying to help His disciples understand that He had come down from heaven, and that one day, He would be lifted up before the world that He might establish salvation by the sacrifice of His life.

God's love is amazing and He has shown it to the world that all might receive Christmas in their hearts.

■ A wealthy man died, apparently without leaving a will. Consequently, according to law, the estate was to be divided among the several surviving cousins who were the next of kin. Also as prescribed by law, the deceased's household goods and other items of personal property were to be converted into cash in a public auction. During the sale, the auctioneer held up a framed photograph, but no one bid on it, including the cousins. Later, a woman approached the auctioneer and asked him if she might purchase the picture for a dollar, which was all she had. She said it was a photograph of the deceased man's only son. She went on to relate that she had been a servant in the deceased's household when the boy lost his life trying to rescue a drowning person, and that she had loved him very much. The auctioneer accepted the dollar and the woman went home and placed the photograph on a table beside her bed. It was then she noticed a bulge in the back of the frame. She undid the backing and there, to her amazement, was the rich man's will. The instructions in the will were simple: "I give and bequeath all my possessions to the person who cares enough for my son to cherish this photograph."

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988), p. 321.

There are a few important "realizations" that I would like to share with you today about Christmas and God's wish for mankind.

I. Christmas is a time to realize that God's love is plentiful (16a).

A. Christmas causes the world to stop and look around.

- The world sees their shortcomings.
- They recognize the sick, poor, and mistreated.
- A feeling of doing something special is promoted among the world.

B. Christmas should cause the world to realize that there is one resource that is plentiful.

- God loved the world.
- His love is still overflowing the hearts of anyone who will drink of the river of life.
- He wanted the world to feel the warmth of His love and recognize the depth of His love for them.

C. Since there is no shortage of God's love, then every Christian should be a well of love being poured out in this world.

■ The kids were putting on the Christmas play. To show the radiance of the newborn Savior an electric light bulb was hidden in the manger. All the stage lights were to be turned off so that only the brightness of the manger could be seen, but the boy who controlled the light got confused--all the lights went out!

It was a tense moment, broken only when one of the shepherds said in a loud stage whisper, "Hey! You switched off Jesus!"

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) p. 86.

II. Christmas time brings the realization of how precious God's gift was (16b).

A. Jesus came as a babe in a manger.

- He was a symbol to the world of hope.
- He was the embodiment of peace.
- His birth was designed to bring joy to the world.

- B. He died on a cruel cross being despised and rejected.
- His life was filled with much pain and sorrow, for He was called a man of sorrows.
 - He was wounded for our transgressions and the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we were healed.

- C. He still wants the world to realize the awful cost.
- He gave the most precious gift He could give – His Son.
 - He put Himself in the gift and sent it to the world.

■ During the Christmas season when our daughter was three years old, the number of presents under the tree slowly increased as the day approached. Caught up in the spirit and excitement of gifts and giving as only three-year-olds can be, one morning she was picking up, examining, shaking, and guessing what was inside of every package. Then, in a burst of inspiration, she picked up a big red bow that had fallen off one present and held it on top of her head. She looked up at me with twinkling eyes and beamed a smile as bright as the Star as she said, "Look at me, Daddy! I'm a present!"

Her words were more true than she realized! Our children are indeed the most wonderful gifts God gives us, at Christmas or any time. We may appreciate the gifts of talents and skills, either God-given or acquired; but do we consider our children as divine gifts--presents from God? What is more unique and special than our children? To help us understand the kind of God we have, the Lord went so far as to send us God's own Son--the most remarkable present of all!

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) pp. 230-231.

III. Christmas time is also a time to realize how God desires to protect His creation (16c).

- A. He desires that all should be saved and that none should perish.
- He stands ready to hear, forgive, and bless mankind.
 - Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.
 - He is Immanuel- God With Us!

■ It was just a couple of weeks before Christmas in southern California a number of years back. A friend of mine, then assistant pastor in a large local

church, shared with me this true story that happened in his own family. His wife and her sister had been Christmas shopping and were speeding along the freeway on their way home. It was a cold, blustery night, dark and rainy. His wife and her sister were busily chatting in the front seat of the car. My friend's three-year-old daughter was in the backseat by herself.

Suddenly the two adults were aware of a strange, unnatural, and horrifying set of sounds as they heard the back door of the car open, the whistle of wind, and a sickening muffled sound. Quickly they turned and saw the child had fallen out of the car and was tumbling along the freeway.

Panic! The mother slammed on the brakes and pulled the car to a wrenching stop, jumped out and ran full speed back toward the child. When they arrived at her motionless body, they noticed something strange. All of the traffic was stopped, lined up like a parking lot just behind her body. The child had not been hit by a car. In fact, the car that would have hit her was stopped just a few feet short of her prone form. Wonder number one.

A truck driver jumped down out of his cab and was bending over the girl as they arrived at the scene. He said, "She's still alive. Let's get her to a hospital quickly. There's one nearby." He picked up the child, they all got into his large truck, and sped off to a nearby hospital. The child was unconscious but still breathing. Wonder number two.

When they arrived at the hospital, they rushed into the emergency room and the doctors immediately began to check her vital signs. The room was hushed. Finally the doctor spoke. "Well, other than the fact that she is unconscious and scraped, she appears to be in good shape. I don't see any broken bones. Her blood pressure is good. Her heart is fine. So far, so good." No apparent gross damage. She was only bruised and skinned from her vicious tumble along the freeway. Wonder number three.

The mother bent over her child. Her eyes were full of tears and her heart was filled with gratitude for such a miracle. Suddenly, without warning, the child's eyes opened, she looked up at her mother and said, "Mommy, you know, I wasn't afraid." Startled, the mother said, "Oh, what do you mean?"

"Well," she said, "while I was lying on the road waiting for you to get back to me--I wasn't afraid, because I looked up, and right there I saw Jesus holding back the traffic with his arms outstretched."

Wonder after wonder--and every wonder true.

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) pp. 249-250.

B. His name is Jesus and He came to save His people from their sin.

- Jesus died so that we could live, and that we should live more abundantly.
- He is preparing us a place in heaven that is unfathomable.

IV. Christmas time leads us to the reality of a permanent existence with God (16d).

A. You shall have eternal life.

- God never stops giving to those whom He loves.
- We need to remind the world that God so loves them.

B. His gift is an open door so that whosoever enters will receive all the gifts of God, present and future.

- Presently we have received God's forgiveness, love, anointing, peace, blessings, and guidance.
- The future blessings contain things like a glorified body that will never know pain, sickness, or death.
- These blessings reveal a new name, a home in heaven, a eternal future with Christ, and a life free from the temptation of sin or the presence of the devil.

Conclusion:

Jesus wanted His disciples to realize the importance of His gift to them. He wanted them to realize that He was a daily gift in their lives. He pointed them toward salvation and not judgment and destruction. He wanted to cause their minds to think on heaven and the eternal splendor.

Today, Christmas has a reason for existence. It is not to point out a precious manger seen where Jesus came and everybody was happy ever after. No! We are to realize that Jesus came as a gift from God that the world would see His love for them, realize how much He loved them by giving His son, know His desire to protect them and keep them safe, and be reunited with them once and for all time in heaven.

For Christmas to be fulfilled it will take each of us today opening our heart and allowing Christ to fill us with His precious love, power, and anointing. Then we must go into the world and share Christ with the world.

■ Nicholas was born of wealthy parents in A.D. 280 in a small town called Patara in Asia Minor. He lost his parents early by an epidemic but not before they had instilled in him the gift of faith. Then little Nicholas went to Myra and lived there a life full of sacrifice and love and the spirit of Jesus. Nicholas became so Christlike that when the town needed a bishop he was elected. He was imprisoned for his faith by Emperor Diocletian and released later by Emperor Constantine. There have been many stories of his generosity and compassion: how he begged for food for the poor, and how he would give girls money so that they would have a dowry to get a husband. The story most often repeated was about how he would don a disguise and go out and give gifts to poor children. He gave away everything he had. And in the year 314, he died. His body was later moved to Italy where his remains are to this day.

But the story of Nicholas has spread around the world. There are more churches in the world named after St. Nicholas than any other person in all the history of the church. Oh, people have done strange things to him. The poet, Clement Moore, gave him a red nose and eight tiny reindeer. And Thomas Nast, the illustrator, made him big and fat and gave him a red suit trimmed by fur. And others have given him names--Belsnickle, Kris Kringle, Santa Claus. But what's important about him is that he had the mind of Christ. Because of his gentle selfless love, he touched the whole world. And this same mind of Christ is to be in us.

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) pp. 85-86.

Each of us needs to become like Nicholas who was trying to be like Jesus.

My Challenge:

- Ask God to help you open your heart and accept all of God that you can hold.
- Ask God to help you to show the love of God to the world and remind everyone you can of what the Christmas spirit means.
- Ask God to fill your heart with His wish for the world that you would be willing to sacrifice whatever it takes to save a soul from hell.