

December 28, 2025

**God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing
Advent Sunday 5**

Living a Grace-Fueled Life of Giving

This is the time of year when we think back to when the Three Wise Men went to see the baby Jesus, and, according to the Book of Matthew, "*presented unto Him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh*." The Wise Men are well-known for their gift-giving. We don't know a lot of facts about the Wise Men, except that they were Wise and they were Men. LOL. The real claim to fame is that they set an example for us to follow in the lifestyle of giving, worship and adoration. **Let's look at a few verses on this subject.**

- **Luke 2:11,12...**¹¹ *today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David.* ¹² *This will be the sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.*
- **Matt. 2: 10,11...**¹⁰ *When they saw the star, they were overjoyed beyond measure.* ¹¹ *Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary His mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*
- **2 Cor. 9:15...** *"Thanks be unto God for His UNSPEAKABLE gift."*
- **Rom. 6:23...** *"For the wages of sin is death; but the GIFT OF GOD is eternal life."*

The Bible recounts for us the giving nature of our Great God.

- God gave Adam and Eve a piece of skin from an innocent animal to replace the fig leaves and cover their shame of nakedness.
- God gave Noah a plan for the ark that would provide for the saving of his household when judgment came.
- God gave Abraham a promise concerning his seed. It would be as the sands of the sea, as the dust of the ground, as the stars of the sky.
- God gave Sarah a precious miracle child in her old age, and she named him Isaac.
- God gave Isaac the promised ram to take his place on the sacrifice altar on Mount Moriah as Abraham raised the dagger up.
- God gave Jacob twelve sons who were destined to become heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, the people of the Lord.
- God gave Joseph a position as prime minister in Egypt that he might rescue his own from sore famine in the days ahead.
- God gave Moses the power to work miracles before Pharaoh.
- God gave the Israelites possession of the land flowing with milk and honey.
- God gave kings to preside over His chosen people.

- God gave prophets to plead with His people and tell them of amazing things to come.
- God gave the Scriptures to prophesy of a Messiah who would come to deliver and save.
- God gave the shepherds a pronouncement by the angels that Jesus was born.
- God gave Joseph the patience to understand the strange circumstances of a virgin with child.
- God gave the world the Prince of Peace.
- God gave the Wise Men a star to lead them to the young Child with their gifts.
- God gave Jesus the place of sinners on the cross to bear the sorrow and shame, and Jesus gave his life for sinners. God offers to give all men the pardon for their sins that they might know the joy of everlasting life.

I think you would agree that mankind can learn a lot about giving from God.

John 3:16... tells us that "*God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*".

James 1:17..., "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights*".

Jesus told the woman at the well in **John 4:10**...

"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have

asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water"

Paul states in **Romans 8:32**..., "*He that spared not His own Son...shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"*

Paul later stated in **1 Timothy 4:14**, "*Neglect not the gift that is in thee*'., and **2 Timothy 1:6**... "*stir up the gift of God, which is in thee*'."

Ephesians 2:8 ... "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God*" **2 Cor. 9:15**... *Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.*

God is the ultimate sacrificial giver. When He sent Jesus to die on the cross for us it was the greatest grace gift ever imagined. Maybe we should consider our giving nature it sit unconditional and sacrificially or is it carefully and conservatively orchestrated.

Let me share with you a rather famous old story that pointedly teaches about sacrificially giving...Grace-Fueled Giving...

"The Gift of the Magi" is a short story by O. Henry. The story was first published in *The New York Sunday World* in 1905

Plot Summary

Della Dillingham Young has one dollar and eighty-seven cents with which to buy her beloved husband, Jim, a Christmas gift. She is dismayed at how meager the amount is, as she has spent months saving. The Dillingham Youngs are very poor, with Jim's earnings having been reduced from thirty dollars a week to only twenty dollars. Della's dismay leads her to throw herself upon her "shabby" couch in her cheap and worn-down apartment. She reflects that she has spent many hours fantasizing about buying Jim a nice gift, one that would show him how pleased she is to be his wife. However, with only one dollar and eighty-seven cents, she knows she will be unable to acquire a suitable present.

Inspiration strikes when Della catches sight of herself in the mirror. She pulls her hair down and lets the long tresses settle around her. The Dillingham Youngs have two prized possessions: Della's beautiful hair and Jim's gold watch, which he received from his father. Della quickly ties her hair up again and, after shedding a few tears, leaves the apartment.

Della walks to Mme. Sofronie's Hair Goods store with a "brilliant sparkle" in her eyes. She asks if Madame Sofronie will buy her hair, to which the Madame replies that she will need to see it first. Della lets down her hair, and Madame Sofronie offers her twenty dollars for it. Requesting only that the Madame make the process "quick," Della agrees to sell her hair. She spends the next two hours searching for the perfect gift for Jim and finally decides upon a simple but tasteful platinum watch chain. She remarks that the watch chain suits Jim perfectly, as it is understated but undeniably valuable. Once the chain is attached to Jim's watch, he will be able to proudly show off his prized possession without being ashamed of the battered leather strap he currently uses in place of a chain.

Della rushes home, elated with her purchase. She carefully curls and styles her shorn hair but is disappointed with the results, remarking that she looks like a "Coney Island chorus girl." She begins to worry that Jim will be upset that her hair is gone. When she hears Jim

approaching the apartment, she stands beside the door and prays that he will still find her attractive.

Jim enters the apartment and immediately stares at Della with an inscrutable expression on his face. Della throws herself into his arms and exclaims that she has sold her hair because she "couldn't have lived through Christmas" without buying him a worthy present. She reassures Jim that her hair grows "awfully fast" and pleads with him to "be happy." Jim, seemingly in a daze, asks Della if she has truly cut off her hair and looks around the room almost as if in search of the lost tresses. Della nervously confirms that she has indeed sold her hair, but she reassures Jim that she is still the same person even though her hair is gone. After all, she sold her hair so that she could give Jim a nice gift.

Jim, coming out of his trance, pulls Della into an embrace and reassures her that he loves her no matter what. He then pulls a package out of his coat and tells Della that she will understand his reaction when she opens it. Della eagerly opens the package and is elated to discover that it contains a pair of beautiful tortoise shell combs that she had long admired in a shop window. Her elation turns to hysteria as she realizes that her hair is gone, but she tearfully tells Jim that her hair will grow back quickly. Eager to give Jim his gift, Della rises from her seat and presents the watch chain to Jim. However, rather than taking out his watch as Della requests, Jim instead sits down on the couch and tells Della that they should put away their presents, since they are "too nice to use," given the couple's current circumstances. He then explains that he sold his watch in order to afford Della's combs. The story ends with the narrator commenting on the nature of gift-giving and generosity. Though the narrator describes Della and Jim as "foolish," he also proclaims that among those who give and receive gifts, they are the wisest.

It is very obvious that **Jesus is God's greatest gift to us.**

Jesus – God's Extreme Gift of Love

- **A love that is so extreme, that was so sacrificial, it should take your breath away**
- **It is that type of love for us that caused the Creator of
Every star in heaven,
Every drop of water in the oceans
Every bird in the sky
Every fish in the ocean
Every animal on the planet**

To send His One and Only Son into this world to be born as a baby, to grow up and to suffer as He withstood all temptation to sin, and then to die a brutal death so that He might give you the gift of salvation.

1. **If you have not received this** extreme gift of God's love in Jesus Christ, today is the day to do so.
2. **If you have experienced this extreme love let's choose to live a life of Grace-Fueled Giving. Generous with our Love and Care.**