

“The Greatest Gift”

Christmas Eve

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2)

December 24, 2020

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory now and forever. Amen. (2 Pet 3:18)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

What kind of gifts did you ask for this year? One of the favorite things to do this time of year is to create a Christmas wish list. You used to look through the catalog of toys and Christmas gifts and circle everything you want. Now, you might create a list online and send your favorite people a link to what you want – it even helps you pick out the right size or color – the exact item of what you want.

Then the gifts are wrapped and placed under the tree. And in the days leading up to Christmas, it’s hard to not stare at the gift. Perhaps pick up the gift and shake it. You wonder to yourself, “Did I get what I asked for?” One thing I will advise against, kids, don’t snoop around looking for Christmas presents. You’ll think you’re getting one thing, but that gift is actually going to one of your sisters. And all you end up with is disappointment.

It’s at Christmas time that we give gifts. It’s the only holiday in which we do all sorts of gift giving. Retailers are most happy during the month of December. It’s different than the 4th of July or Easter. It’s different than birthdays. At Christmas we give gifts to all – not just to one.

The giving of gifts at Christmas acts out the central event of Christmas. Jesus wasn’t simply born – he was given to us. Jesus is the gift – **The Greatest Gift.**

Paul says – ³² **He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?**

In Jesus’ day, many were looking for a specially gift wrapped present. There was a lot of hype leading up to it. God told his people about the promised Savior that he would crush the serpents head (Genesis 3). He would be the “Restorer.” (Isaiah 11) His “greatness (would) reach to the ends of the earth.” (Micah 5)

Then Jesus came. If you looked into the stable and peered into the manger – you’d see two poor parents with a tiny baby wrapped in

swaddling clothes. The people were hoping for, and expecting, a king. And one look at Jesus may have prompted them to think – That’s it?

We know all about disappointment. If we looked at each calendar year as a gift, 2020 would leave us very disappointed. There were so many expectations for this year. It was an Olympic year. An election year. A year for some to graduate and others to get married. Then came COVID. So many things were canceled. Graduations turned into the drive thru variety. And even when events weren’t canceled, so many things were not what we wanted or expected. A year of expectation turned into a year of disappointment. With only 6 days left on the year, we may very well look back and think, “That’s it?”

The gift of Jesus is so much more than a baby in a manger. This baby, the Gift, also tells us something about the “Giver” – the Father. This Gift, this baby is a testimony of God’s love and an assurance of his continued promises.

³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all... Jesus was God’s Son from all eternity.

How can we comprehend or imagine what God gave up for you and me?

For thousands of years God watched a world constantly disobey him and turn their backs on him God could have said, “Forget it. I’m not going to send my Son to them. I love my Son way too much to have him live with them only to be ridiculed, mocked, beaten and killed.” But 2000 years ago, God kept his promise as he wrapped up his Son and gave him as a gift to the world.

...how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

If God followed through on that promise, doesn’t that give you confidence that God will keep all his other promises as well?

- Angels will guard you (psalm 91)
- God will be with you wherever you go (Joshua 1)
- Romans 8
 - o A God who will work out all things for your good

- Make you more than conquerors so that nothing will separate you from God's love
- There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

Look at the manger. Look at God's gift – to you. Humanly speaking, the Gift looks small. The Gift looks fragile. The Gift looks dirty and maybe even disappointing. But after what we heard today, I pray you don't look at that Gift and say, "That's it?" Rather, look at this Gift and say, "That's it! That's what I need! That's God showing his love to me! That's God's keeping his promises for me! That's quite a gift. That's the Greatest Gift!"

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Phil.4:7)

³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all— how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?