

The Presents of Christmas – 12/26/21

What a blessing to be all together, and what a great way to celebrate Christmas. Just because the day has passed doesn't mean the celebration is over.

As I mentioned last week, this is going to be different than anything we've ever done on a Sunday morning. It's going to be kid friendly, student friendly, and interactive. Which means we need your enthusiastic participation. Enthusiastic participation; whether you're new, regular, young, or old. So get loose and get ready. Are you ready?

It's all based on **Ps 16:11**. One verse. Where David is speaking to God, and says:

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (ESV)

One verse, with 3 statements.

Let's say it together. *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* ***** (Leave on middle screen.)

➤ I'm going to guess you got a few presents yesterday. Kids? Did you? I'm also going to guess that some were better than others. Adults? You don't have to give it away. You can take it back tomorrow. Or give it as a white elephant gift *next* year.

Fortunately, because of Christmas, we have some gifts that are keepers. Presents that never grow old and never wear out. And our verse this morning contains 3 of them. Life, joy, and hope.

You make known to me the path of life; that's the first present. *In your presence there is fullness of joy*; that's the second present. And *at your right hand are pleasures forevermore*. That's hope; the blessed assurance of being with Jesus.

In fact (Erin interrupts), that's where we're going to start; the hope of heaven. The hope of being in God's presence. The hope of being face to face . . .

Hope (Erin and Grady)

Song

Joy (Robbie and Eric)

Song

Life (Me)

Hope, joy, and life. At Christmas, God made known the path of *life*. That's the third present of Christmas.

When I was growing up, about your age, I used to *walk* to school. Just under a mile. It was a really small town, and the only trouble in those days was the trouble I got into *myself*. Especially since my older brothers were there. (**Photo**) They led the way and made sure I followed. At least for a couple of years.

But pretty quickly, when I reached 3rd Grade, my brothers went to high school and I was on my own. And that's when my mom put the fear of God in me.

She put me in the car, drove the route, and told me to stick to the path. “*This* is the way,” she said; foreshadowing the Mandalorian by 50 years. “And you better stick to it. I mean it mister. Stay away from the highway, stay away from the woods, and don't dilly-dally.”

So what you do think *I* did? Got near the highway, explored the woods, and got into trouble. Which was fairly harmless for an 8-year-old boy walking *home*; following *that* path.

➤ But the path of *life* is a different story. The path God makes known to us so that we reach *heaven*. Home with a *capital* H. “This is the way,” he said (Bible). And then sent Jesus to confirm it. Jesus, who said “*I am* the way. *I am* the life.” The path to school is one thing, but the path of life is another. Ignore that, and you're in trouble.

Unfortunately, people have been ignoring God's path for centuries. Like **Adam and Eve** in the Garden of Eden. Half the kings of Israel; like **Saul**. Or **Judas**, who betrayed Jesus. Even false teachers in *our* day; who ignore most of *this* (Bible) and bring upon themselves swift destruction it says in 2 Peter 2:1.

There's a way that seems *right* to a man, but the end isn't good. Or as Jesus said it, there's a narrow road and a wide road. Ignore the narrow one, and you're in trouble.

➤ Even *deviating* from the path of life leads to no good. You know, following it most of the time, but sometimes not. Like dilly-dallying on the way home and doing something wrong.

Think **Moses**; who took matters into his own hands and forfeited the blessing of entering The Promised Land. Or **King David**; who sinned grievously and made a mess of his family. Or **Jonah**; who ignored God's path and was thrown overboard in the middle of a storm. Only to spend 3 days in the belly of a fish; the depths of chaos.

Deviating from the path God makes known, leads to no good. Not that you can't recover. Not that God doesn't forgive; and redeem. But that the time is lost. The damage done. Opportunities missed.

But if you *follow* the path God makes known, if you *follow* Jesus, if you *follow* the way; you'll experience *life*. Capital *L*. Life to the full and life forever. Life with him now, and life with him later. Follow the path God makes known, and you'll experience his very *presence*. E-n-c-e.

That's the presents of Christmas. His *presence* within. His *life* within. Spending every day, coram Deo; in the *presence* of God. (**Summary**)

➤ So let's read it one more time together. And this time, say it to God; just like David. *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

Hope, joy, and life. 3 presents of Christmas, and one way to get them: Jesus. Let's stand and proclaim it.

You Are Loved