



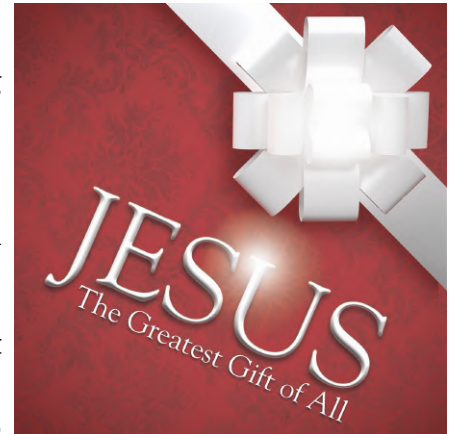
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## The Greatest Christmas Gift

Gifts are a deeply entrenched and greatly valued part of Christmas. Ask any child! Surveys show that 75% of children say receiving gifts is their favorite part of Christmas.

Even so, gift giving can be an intricate, complicated mine field. “How do I choose the right gift?” “How do I respond when I get a gift I don’t like?”

Then some people have gone through receiving a gift that was not what it appeared to be. A boy had been nagging his dad for weeks, “All I want for Christmas is a game console. I *really* want it!” His dad told him that he couldn’t afford that. When the family opened their presents there was a huge box with the boy’s name on it. He tore off the paper only to see a big diaper box. He ran to his room, locked the door and cried for an hour before his dad coaxed him out to open the box. Inside the big diaper box was ... the game console he wanted.



As Christians we know the greatest Christmas gift is Jesus. Even so, it is possible for us not to have a clear focus here. In 1659 the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony canceled Christmas. They were not opposed to celebrating Christ’s birth, but thought it was better to cancel Christmas celebrations rather than risk confusing the true meaning with the irreligious celebrations. As one man of that era wrote, “men dishonor Christ more in the twelve days of Christmas than in all the twelve months besides.”

Rather than complaining or even cancelling Christmas, let’s sharpen our focus on Jesus, the greatest Christmas gift, the greatest gift ever given. We could write volumes here, but let’s remind ourselves of a few of the highlights.

Jesus is

- Immanuel, that is, *God with us*. (Isaiah 7:10,14; Matthew 1:23). As the carol sings, “Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate Deity.” Jesus not only came to us two thousand years ago, but He comes to be with us now.
- The Savior. The apostle John wrote in his first letter, “the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world” (4:14). He is the only one, the only way to be released from the tyranny

and penalty of sin to life forever with God. As John wrote in the next chapter, “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one who has the Son has the life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have the life” (5:11-12).

- Then reflect on the seven “I am” statements of Jesus in John’s gospel that tell us who He is and what He brings to us.
  - “I am the bread of life” (6:35)
  - “I am the light of the world” (8:12)
  - “I am the door” (10:7,9)
  - “I am the good shepherd” (10:11, 14)
  - “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25)
  - “I am the way and the truth and the life” (14:6)
  - “I am the true vine” (15:1)
- Jesus, as we read in John chapter 14, is preparing a place for us in heaven with Himself and is coming again for us.
- Jesus is our peace, not only with God, but peace within as we live in a world that is anything but peaceful. As Jesus told us, “Peace I leave you, My peace I give you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, nor fearful” (John 14:27).

All of this is only the start of why Jesus is the greatest gift ever given. So we can and should shout with the apostle Paul, “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Let’s keep our focus sharp by not looking at all that is lacking and wrong, but focusing on the greatest gift, by “looking only at Jesus, the originator and perfecter of the faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

Pastor Lyle