

CHRISTMAS 2020: GOD'S GREATEST GIFT:  
"THE GIFT IS GIVEN - AND A QUESTION IS ASKED"

12.24.20

Wow - what an amazing story. Who of us can ever find the words, as the apostle Paul wrote, *to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - Paul, Ephesians 3:18b-19a*, and God's purpose, according to Paul? That we, as a result of the life of that baby born in Bethlehem, *may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God - Paul, Ephesians 3:19b*. And Christmas gives us that first look at how our Heavenly Father *is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his [majestic] power - Paul, Ephesians 3:20*, His incredible love and His awesome, amazing grace. But, you know, as amazing as this story is, and remains so after 2,000 years, it was just the beginning. A wedding day is glorious and wonderful but, for all its celebration, it is ultimately just the first day of a marriage. Likewise, the Christmas story would be a first day as well, but in that first day would be the beginning of an incredible story of salvation and redemption that would be some 33 years in the making. And by the time it was done, we would understand that this baby in the manger came for so much more than just a celebrated moment in time. He came to die, to become a sacrifice, an offering of His perfect life for our sinful lives. As the apostle Paul said so well: *God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God - Paul, II Corinthians 5:21*.

That's what Christmas is all about - but, in the world in which we live, there often seems to be something missing. And yes - there is.

Tonight, of all nights, we tell the story of God becoming one of us. Matthew and Luke share the perspectives of many of the participants - Mary and Joseph, shepherds in a nearby field, angelic messengers, and an angry, paranoid king. But it is the arrival of visitors from eastern lands that I want to focus on this evening. They came to find and worship "the king of the Jews," and they came bearing gifts to celebrate His coming. We haven't forgotten that particular tradition over the years. We carefully check our lists to make sure that nobody - family or friends, adult or child - is forgotten. Everybody's gifts are carefully made ready - everybody's, that is, except one. We plan and prepare and purchase for a season that too often overlooks the reason for the season - Jesus! It's His birthday we're celebrating. Let's not ever forget that. Instead, let's ask ourselves what He would wish for most.

What do you think Jesus would wish for most - from you? You know, every year, millions of people have no problem making "New Year's Resolutions." Those are quickly made and, often, just as quickly forgotten. But those resolutions are made to ourselves - from us to us. What we'd like to do is something a bit different. You'll find a birthday card along with this message. Inside is a verse celebrating Christ's birthday. But there is also space to write a note to Jesus - a note indicating what you would like to give Jesus for His birthday. Then put it up on your refrigerator as a reminder of the gift you've given, or maybe use the card as a bookmark for your Bible or devotional. But take a moment to think about it and write it from your heart. If that's where it comes from, you can know He will love it!

***"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace" - God speaking, Numbers 6:24-26.*** Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night. God bless, everybody!