

The Paradox of Christmas
A Free Gift Yet Costly
Luke 2:1-18

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3 So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. 6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. 17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. 18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. NKJV

Christmas is almost upon us. And many of us have been working very hard to get just the right gift for those on our list. Some buy very expensive gifts while the rest of us have to limit the amount we spend or we will be all year paying for them.

The commercial where the wife is lead to the garage to find a new car with a big red ribbon around it are surely few and far between. Or as the jewelry stores would have us think, you can get the same amount of money in a box that will fit in your hand and is guaranteed not to rust.

And of course then there is Santa giving all kinds of gifts to the little girls and boys who have been good. Or not. If being good was a requirement, Santa would be in the unemployment line. And beside Santa doesn't have to buy the toys, he has elves to make them.

The idea of a gift is that it is free to the receiver and the cost is borne by the giver. And hopefully gifts are an expression of love and not a bribe or payment for future or past services. That is what makes me skeptical about a gift exchange. You don't get a gift unless you give a gift. Then is it really a gift.

But God's gift to us is beyond measuring by human standards of measure. Let us look at the concept of the Gift of God's Son.

I. God's Gift was costly

A. The account of Hannah and Samuel

1. She was childless and despised by Elkanah's other wife.
2. Over a period of years she had longed for a child she could hold and love as she had seen other women do.
3. But there seemed to be not hope, for it was not to be.
4. Then one day in fervent prayer she poured out her heart to God and God answered her prayer.
5. But in that prayer she had made a bargain with God.
6. If God would give her a son, she would give him back to God, and so she did.
7. What a costly gift, to give your only son to God and be separated from him and seeing him but once a year.

B. The account of Abraham when God tested his love.

1. Abraham and Sarah like Hannah had no children.
2. They were finally 100 when God gave them their first and only child together.
3. But now as Isaac has come to his teen age years God is testing Abraham's love and his faith.
4. God tells Abraham that he is to sacrifice Isaac to Him.
5. So the very next day Abraham rises early and takes Isaac and two of his servants and heads off to where God has commanded him.
6. And he would have followed through if God had not stopped him.
7. 3500 years ago a son went up a hill carrying the wood for the sacrifice and God spared him.
8. 2000 years ago, God's son went up a hill carrying the wooden cross He would be sacrificed upon and God did not spare Him, but delivered Him up for us all.

C. 2 Cor 9:15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! NKJV

1. What value would you place on the life of your child?
2. How much more so the Son of God.
3. More than His death, His suffering and shameful treatment.

4. But knowing all that would happen, God sent His only begotten Son into the world, born of a virgin and laid in a simple manger for a bed.
5. John 3:16
6. John 3:16 For God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world that He [even] gave up His only begotten (unique) Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life. AMP

II. God's Gift is Free

- A. All real gifts are free.
 1. But I thought I have to put that in there because of the double-tongued world in which we live.
- B. God's Gift is beyond us.
 1. We can't buy it.
 2. We can't earn it.
 3. We will never deserve it.
 4. Everyone is in need of it.
 5. We can't have eternal life without it.
 6. Our life here will be empty without it.
 7. We would never have imagined it.
 8. We can never fathom it.
 9. It will take eternity to fully appreciate it.
 10. It costs us nothing.

III. But you must receive it

- A. A gift is not a gift unless it is received.
- B. If you never open it, you really have not received it.
- C. Many people have Jesus all nicely wrapped up setting on the mantle but they have never unwrapped Him.
- D. They know the fact and all the details and yet they have never experienced what He wants to do in their lives.
- E. Actually, maybe that is why they still have Him in the box.