



The Wonderful Gifts of Christmas

Message for 9 am Christmas Day Service on Saturday, 25th December 2021

What are we to do with God's Christmas gifts?

For my 50th birthday I was given a very special present – a sewing machine. It had been years since I had used a sewing machine, so I had to relearn how to thread the machine, change the settings, and choose the appropriate needle for the right fabric. But, it did not take long, before I was off and away making dresses for myself, to my heart's content!

Then, after a while, I looked at my very full wardrobe, (as I have no need to share with anyone) and I realised I didn't really need any more dresses.

I began to wonder what creative activity I could use my new machine for. I discovered there were bags of clothes being discarded, unable to be used in the Boutique. So, I started to search on YouTube on all the items that could be made from jeans, shirts and old curtains! I was off and away, making gifts which would bring a smile to our customers.

A sewing machine is wonderful – it can either be used to serve one's own needs, OR it can be used to bring joy and blessing to others.

It is a gift that is designed to be re-gifted.

Have you ever re-gifted a gift?

Admit it, we all have! It is not hard to recall the time, we receive something that we didn't like, nor would never use, and so you decided to re-gift it to someone else!

At our Carol service we spoke about God's Christmas gifts.

We learned that God always gives gifts that we cannot afford, nor do we deserve. And he always gives gifts that we are in desperate need of receiving.

You'll recall that we discovered that there are five gifts that God gave us at Christmas.

The first were part of his Christmas promotion campaign. They were the gifts of **Hope, Faith, Joy** and **Peace**.

The final gift, which is actually the greatest - is **His Son Jesus Christ**.

Today, I'd like to teach something quite startling!

The gifts that God gave at Christmas are not just designed to be enjoyed and put to use in our own lives – they are designed to be re-gifted to those in our community!

Now, let's return to my sewing machine!

Point 1 | God's gifts are designed to be received, unwrapped and put to use so that they may bring blessing to others.

We are so used to the notion of giving and receiving that we often forget, God's gifts are not designed purely for our personal enjoyment.

We learnt last night, every one of God's gifts are essential for life in this world. We cannot live with Jesus, we cannot live without the gifts of hope, faith, joy and peace which only God can give.

Yes, the world has some cheap alternatives, that quickly break or stop working.

On the other hand, God's gifts last forever. They never break, never fail, and can be applied to a variety of situations.

But, amazing as these gifts are, we are not to regard them as for our personal use alone.

So, my question I'd like to pose, especially to those who have received the gift of Jesus Christ is have you unwrapped His love and put it to good use?

Have you planted the seed of **faith** in your hearts, experience His **joy**, and the security of his **peace**, and His **hope** keeps your eyes steadfast – If so, how are YOU, regifting these gifts to others?

Point 2 | How does our receiving of the gifts of God's love, faith, joy and peace give us opportunity to bring blessing to others?

Let's go through each one.

The first and greatest gift, the most essential of all, is the gift of God, freely given, in **His Son, Jesus Christ**.

The receiving of Jesus, however, is not just a truth that you mentally store away in your brain, only to be pulled out when someone asks if you are a Christian.

Nor is receiving Jesus, to be treated like a religious outfit, put on your Sunday best for Church, but hiding it away throughout the week.

Rather, the reception of Jesus in our hearts opens the way for a new life to be born. We become a new person. Although our outward appearance may not change dramatically, inwardly we have received the seed of the Holy Spirit, which is designed to grow in our hearts.

And grow, this seed, does – in fact, it produces an abundance of good things: spiritual realities the world has not yet seen, heard nor experienced.

*So, how does our receiving of the gift of **Jesus Christ** bring blessing to others?*

As the seed of God's spirit grows in our hearts, the qualities of God begin to shine through us – we become channels of blessing to those we encounter.

In the book of Acts, when Peter and John were brought before the Council because they didn't like all this talk about Jesus – they noticed first their boldness.

Then they realised, that although *"they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures, they were men who had been with Jesus."* (Acts 4:13)

The more time we spend with Jesus, in relationship with Him, the more others recognise His presence in our lives.

And the presence of Jesus, gives us all the spiritual realities which the world so desperately needs.

We might be asked by those who have not unwrapped their gift of Jesus, 'how can you believe in a God you cannot see?'

They don't understand that we do not believe because of our own intelligence or perceptiveness. Rather the seed of the Holy Spirit within us, grows faith within our hearts. We grow stronger and stronger in our ability to believe and trust in God's ability to move in our lives and in the lives of those we love.

*So, how does our experience of the gift of **faith** we have received, bring blessing to others?*

Although many people in the world don't understand our faith, they admire it. When I worked with the teens as a Scripture teacher, they would often say, "All this good news about Jesus sounds great. It just all seems too good to believe."

It is not until people see the life of faith being lived out vividly before them, that they grasp the invitation Jesus is making.

As the gift of faith grows in our heart, it produces the fruit of **hope**. Hope is the anchor and security that when all the world is spiralling out of control, we are secure that God has everything under control – and know that he is bringing everything to His pre-planned conclusion.

*So, how does our experience of the gift of **hope** we have received, bring blessing to others?*

In a world which is deeply concerned over the future, the state of the planet, the shortage of food, and corrupt leaders – the voice and security of hope is immensely valuable – for we know how to trust in Jesus' promise.

At the end of the Bible, we are told the future of those who receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. They will enjoy a place where,

"God's home is now among his people! He will live with them and they will be his people. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things [will be] gone for ever." (Revelation 21:3-4)

And living with such a hope, ensures our hearts blossom with the flowers of **joy**.

So, how does our experience of the gift of joy we have received, bring blessing to others?

It doesn't mean we never have hard or difficult days, nor does it mean we never cry. But it does mean, undergirding all difficulty is a spring of joy that bubbles up from within our hearts – that our God is working in and through us.

Finally, with the faith, joy and hope thriving in our hearts, the fruit of **peace** becomes evident to those around us.

How does our experience of the gift of peace we have received from God, bring blessing to others?

When everything is spinning all around you, and panic and anxiety crouches at your feet, the peace and calmness of the person who has unwrapped their gift of Jesus, suddenly becomes very unique!

Jesus told His followers before He returned to heaven, *"I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."* (John 14:27)

Application | Are you ready to regift God's Christmas gifts?

When someone says to you, 'how can you be so at peace, with all that is happening in the world?' it means that they have 'seen' God's gifts working in your life.

You can answer them,

'Because I have received and opened the Christmas gift God offered me – the gift of His Son Jesus Christ. Once Jesus' spirit was planted inside my heart, all these amazing blessings began bubbling out. Stick with me and I'll show you, how you too can enjoy God's wonderful Christmas gifts.'