

Regifting

December 21, 2007

Have you been to Tucson lately for shopping or even a simple errand, especially to Park Place or Tucson Mall? It is insane. People drive around like maniacs and parking is horrendous. Just to park your vehicle, you have to become a stalker. You find a person coming out of a store with many shopping bags in her hands, so you follow that person to her car slowly. You stop your vehicle behind her car and put your blinker on to mark it as your parking spot.

But the lady in the car is taking all the time in the world before she starts her car. She pulls down her visor mirror and puts on lipstick and pats her face with whatever that is. Finally she puts away all those things into her purse, so you think, "It is about time, lady. Let's get moving here." To your total surprise, she gets out of her car for more shopping. And the vehicles behind you start to honk loudly.

One of the biggest activities during Christmas season would be gift giving. One problem with that is there are far more people to whom we think we should give gifts than our wallets can stretch. Out of that dilemma, people use gifts they have received to gift someone else. I can safely say we all – or, at least, the majority of us have done that and will do it again. They call it "Regifting".

According to the Encyclopedia, 'regifting' is the act of taking a gift that has been received and giving it to somebody else, sometimes in the guise of a new gift.

Several rules of etiquette are proposed regarding regifting:

- 1) Rewrapping the gift
- 2) Not using the gift before regifting it
- 3) Not giving the gift back to the original gift-giver.

However, a consumer survey indicated that the majority of people regift because they perceive the gift will be appreciated by the receiver, they don't find regifting rude, and a significant number do so to save money.

When God sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ to this earth, He sent His very best gift to mankind which needs the Messiah of hope and life. We are going to learn about God's indescribable gift Jesus this morning.

A. THE ARRIVAL OF THE SMALL GIFT FROM HEAVEN

Luke 2:7 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.

Jesus didn't come to the earth on a white horse as a conquer of the world so that He could conquer all the enemies of ours with His mighty raw power.

Jesus didn't come to the earth as a brilliant scholar of Jerusalem Pharisee Institute to give us His profound insight about the life we live.

Jesus didn't come to the earth as a prominent politician who would promise everything, but fulfill nothing or to make Caesar Augustus and king Herod pay homage to Him.

Jesus didn't come to the earth as a savvy financial wiz so that He could make us all financially secure and meet our every single physical desire.

But He came in a tiny and crude package. He was not born in a golden crib in a king's palace in Jerusalem, rather was born in an animal's manger which was stained with animals' saliva inside of a cave stable. Jesus took His place in a manger so that we might have a home in heaven.

The Savior was not wrapped in satin sheets, but in swaddling cloths which were for dead person. There in a manger rested the greatest gift in the plainest of wrapping.

His birth seems so insignificant to everyone that the shepherds who heard about His birth from a group of angels had to look for Him in Bethlehem.

B. GOD'S GIFT TO HIS ENEMY

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We don't generally buy gifts for our enemies, do we? We don't give a gift to a person who slandered us in the past year or told lies about us. We don't give a gift to that irate neighbor who never has a kind word to say or lets his yelping dog disturb our peace. We don't give a gift to someone who tried to run us out of business. Nor do we send a gift to the thief who stole the car stereo a month ago.

But when God sent the ultimate gift Jesus Christ His Son to us, He did it while we were still His enemies. We did nothing whatsoever to merit or deserve this gift. In fact, what we really deserve is judgment, because we all have sinned against God without an exception. We all have deliberately crossed that line. But the amazing truth of Christmas is that in spite of our sins, God sent His Son to save us.

C. NOT AN AFTERTHOUGHT GIFT

Revelation 13:8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Sometimes we forget somebody from our gift giving list or we receive a great gift from someone whom we didn't expect anything. So we scramble to find a gift for that person.

But the gift of Christ was not an afterthought. Long before there was a stable in Bethlehem, long before Adam and Eve ever set eyes on each other, and even before the creation of the universe, God decided to send His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins.

From before the beginning, God knew humankind would fall short of His glory. God made a decision from that very moment that Christ would come to this earth to live and die and rise again from the dead for utterly helpless mankind. God's gift to us proves His purpose to redeem us.

Jesus came near to us so we could come near to Him. Christmas is not about tinsel or shopping or gifts under a tree. Christmas is about the Gift God gave on the tree where Christ died for our sins, giving us the gift of eternal life. That is what He has accomplished. That is what Christmas is all about.

D. THE GIFT YOU WANT FOREVER

How many times have you received Christmas presents only to think, "Yikes!" in your heart, but you know you have to be pleasant to the one who gave that present and say something nice. So you say, "You shouldn't have..." or "I really don't deserve this..." And you truly meant it.

But the Gift from our Father in heaven is much different. Jesus Christ Himself is that Gift. He came to set us free from the bondage of Satan and death. God gave us that Gift because there is no other way for us to have eternal life. It came out of God's abounding love. In other words, God's eternal love is the source of our eternal life.

Jeremiah 31:3 Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

God did not create us because He was lonely. The fact of the matter is that God is independent of humankind. In other words, God does not need us, or the rest of His creation, for anything.

God did not create humanity because He had to, but rather because He chose to. He chose to make us, and He chooses to love us.

The love of humans has a time limit. The love between parents and children, the love between husband and wife, and the love among good friends – some die, or some discard it for someone else. But God's love still stands when all else has fallen.

E. GIFT EXCHANGE WITH GOD

Matthew 2:1-2 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

Matthew 2:9-12 When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. 11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

The wise men brought gifts to Jesus: gold, frankincense and myrrh. What kind of gifts are these for a child? Myrrh, after all, is an embalming element. Why give an embalming element to a baby? I believe these wise men had insight into who Jesus was. They gave Him gold because they recognized it was a proper gift for a king. They gave Him frankincense because that is what a high priest used when he went into the temple to represent the people before God. They gave Him myrrh because they recognized that this King would die for the world.

What can we give to God this Christmas? What do you give to God, who has everything? What does God want from us? He wants our lives. The greatest gift you can give to God this year is yourself. The greatest gift you can give to God is to enter into a brand-new year of opportunities and say, "Lord, I give You my life and my heart. I give You my talents which you gave me. I give You my abilities as you

enable me. I give You my weaknesses so that I may depend on You for everything. I offer myself to You. Here is my gift to You."

God wants our obedient hearts for Him more than anything else. We can not have the obedient hearts God wants if we compromise the principles and precepts of the Bible. We cannot just make our own rules as we go along and expect that God would be pleased with our lives.

I heard from a person who chose to live her life as she wants, "That is not how I interpret the Bible." I would say, "Guess what, genius, it doesn't matter how you want to interpret the Bible. The Bible makes it very clear how we are supposed to live a holy and righteous life for our God. Anything other than God's way is ungodly and it is a sin."

Let's be like these wise men and worship Him and give praise and adoration to Him. You will be glad you did, because you can never outgive God.

F. WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH GOD'S GIFT?

John 4:19-26 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

John 4:39-42 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did." 40 So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of His own word. 42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

Once we receive Jesus into our hearts like this Samaritan woman, we can not hog that wonderful gift all to ourselves. We need to share it with others. This is not only the pastors and evangelists' job, but the job of everyone else who is born-again. So let's regift it to someone we know – our family members, relatives, neighbors and coworkers.

Let your life be a beautiful wrapping paper of this wonderful gift from God. Let them see how Jesus changed life, then they will want to see the content of your gift.

2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Remember, it is not a gift unless you offer it with a sincere heart to bless the other person, because you want that person to have eternal life in Christ Jesus.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) Let's be like these wise men and worship Jesus and give our lives to Him. We will be glad we did, because we can never outgive God.

2) With Christmas just two days away, begin to prepare your heart for the celebration of the birth of our Savior. Meditate on the fact that Jesus was born to die so that we might live.

This is the gift He extends. And if you receive it, you will experience the merriest Christmas of all.

By the way, don't say "Happy Holidays". Call it what it is. You don't need to be politically correct, but be godly correct. Say "Merry Christmas!"