

Gifts that can't be returned – Nov. 29, 2023

Christmas will soon be here . . . gifts. Ever returned? Regifted?

- Rules. Re-Wrapping is mandatory. Remove gift tags.
 - Family heirlooms are off limits... so are handmade items.
 - Be thoughtful . . . jasmine diffuser to one who likes that scent.
- “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” – **Rom. 11:9**
- God’s gifts will never be withdrawn. He doesn’t take them back
 - God doesn’t change His mind when He gives gifts, or blesses us.

What Gifts? Let’s look at the Christmas story . . . **Luke 2.**

1st Gift of Christmas - LOVE

- “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. . . 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.” - **Luke 2:7 ESV**
- God wrapped his love for us in the person of Jesus.
 - Mary gave birth, but God gave His love.
 - **John 3:16** – “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”
 - **God’s love** will never be withdrawn. He won’t take it back.
 - You **may refuse it, but it doesn’t stop it.**
 - God keeps loving us... when angry, unfair, don’t trust...

2nd Gift of Christmas – JOY

Luke 2:8-12 NLT – “That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. 9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, 10 but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be

afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring **great joy** to all people. 11 The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! 12 And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.”

- The message of the angels was good news of great joy.
 - There is **joy** in knowing we have a Savior – paid the price.
 - There is **joy** in knowing how much you are loved.
 - There is **joy** in knowing that Heaven awaits.
 - **Heb. 12:2** – “Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame.”
 - There is **joy** in the morning. Weeping endures for a night.
 - **John 16:22** – “you have sorrow now, but I will see you again & your hearts will rejoice, & no one will take away your joy”
 - **Psm. 89:15** - “Blessed are those who know the joyful sound, who walk, O LORD, in the light of Your presence.”

3rd Gift of Christmas - PEACE.

“Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, 10 but the angel reassured them.” – **Luke 8:9-10 (NLT)**

- Before the message could be given to the Shepherds – the **Angels had a task**: reassurance. **Peace**.
 - Shepherds not in **control** anymore. Something greater...
 - God knows us. Sees us. Doesn’t want us afraid; trusting.
 - **Psalms 23:1-2** “The Lord is my Shepherd ... He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters [peaceful streams].” (trust the Shepherd)
 - The Peace of God is a gift. . . sent to us just like angels.
 - Just like the Shepherds, we don’t hear God’s message until we’re calm; at peace.
 - We also can’t go off to tell Good News until we’ve been reassured. . . it’ll be ok – we’re not alone.
 - **John 20:21** – Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I send you.”

- This isn't peace b/c of the absence of problems
 - **John 14:27** – “I give you peace, the kind of peace only I can give. It isn't like the peace this world can give. So don't be worried or afraid.”
 - Paul – **Philip. 4:7** – “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
- Peace is so important, it's in the C-mas story 2x.
 - **Luke 2:13-14** – “Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”
 - **NIV** – “peace to those on whom his favor rests.”
 - **KJV** – “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”
 - **don't know** which is **accurate** - **Peace** to some, or peace to all – what I know is Peace is a **gift of God**.
 - **I know Peace can be forfeited by us – lack of trust - but God doesn't take it back.**

4th Gift of Christmas – **PURPOSE**

Luke 2:15-19 - When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” 16 They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. 17 After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. 18 All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, 19 but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often.

- **Shepherds** had a purpose – mission – tell their story.
- **They** were the 1st missionaries of Jesus.
 - **We have the same purpose. Tell** what God has done for you...
 - **Tell** what you've seen: lives changed, saving, healing, restored.
 - Nobody else can tell your story.
 - If you **can't talk** about Jesus to your friends... **wrong** friends.

- God's **calling on our lives doesn't change**... He doesn't take back His plan . . . like **Jonah** – He will patiently wait.

5th Gift of Christmas – **TRUTH**

Luke 2:20 – “The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.”

- It's exciting to see what God has done. Leads to praise/glory
- **Luke 18:43** - Instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus, praising God. And all who saw it praised God, too.”
- **But – it's even better** to discover we can trust God – His word is **true**.
 - **These aren't accidents**. We discover God; His promises are true.
 - Jesus was prophesied, true.
 - Jesus would rise again, true.
 - **Matt. 28:6** – “He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.”
 - Jesus is preparing a place for us, true.
 - We have eternal life.
 - We aren't alone; not orphans. God is with us.
 - Christmas: celebrate that truth. Emanuel.
 - Christmas: celebrate God's gifts to us.
 - These gifts can't be returned, taken away.

Song of the week: “He is the **Gift**” - by Megan Sackett.