

Appreciate God's Christmas Gift.

Text: 2 Cor 9:15

Suggested Hymns:

34, 33, 23 pt 1, 19, 633

1) By Admiring the Attractive Gift Wrapping

2) By Seeing with Eyes of Faith the Unique Gift

3) By Showing Our Gratitude as God Wishes It

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 2 Corinthians 9:15, ¹⁵ *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

On Christmas Eve many families gather in their living rooms for their annual, time-honoured Christmas Eve observance. There you will find the decorated Christmas tree with its bright ornaments and tinsel, its brilliant lights, telling us that it was worth the hours of careful work to add to the beauty of the scene.

Christian homes may have a beautiful and simple manger scene, depicting the only real Christmas story ever written, the story of the very first Christmas on earth.

Then under the tree many attractively wrapped packages had mysteriously appeared, one seemingly more beautiful than the other. Some one may have commented, *“How pretty the gifts look wrapped as they are! It seems almost a shame that they must be opened, because they make such a pretty picture.”*

But opened they were, in short order, amid shouts of delight, expressions of pleasant surprise — and for the next few hours there was nothing short of joyful bedlam.

I dare say that the same scene was enacted in practically every home in our congregations last evening or early this morning. Who is there, who can ever reproduce an accurate word picture of this happy occasion?

However, for Christian families the height of Christmas joy is in another Gift. To them this Gift remains precious and priceless. It is the one good and perfect gift which comes down from above from the Father of lights.¹ It is an enduring Gift, which brings to all people constant happiness and peace.

It is the Gift to which Paul refers to in our text when he exults: *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!* In order that we may recapture for ourselves a greater appreciation of this wondrous divine blessing and really experience Christmas joy to the full, let us now go to Bethlehem in spirit and learn to *Appreciate God's Christmas Gift*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. We Appreciate God's Christmas Gift

By Admiring The Attractive Gift Wrapping

Our text for Christmas Day is very short; yet it says more to us about Christmas than a quick reading would at first indicate. It gives us a picture of Christmas that is well worth remembering. It says, *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!* To describe this gift people have also used words or phrases like - inexpressible, unspeakable, priceless gift, wondrous gift² or choicest gift.³

We are accustomed in our day to wrap in a special way, carefully, and attractively the gifts that we present to others. Whenever this is not done, we almost feel that something is lacking. God in His own way also presents us and all people this day with a beautifully, attractively, and carefully wrapped Christmas Gift.

Let us consider that for a moment.

The Christmas Story

A great many years ago, a man from Nazareth, Joseph by name, took his betrothed wife, Mary, to the home of their ancestors in the little village of Bethlehem in Judea.

It was a rather long and tedious journey for them. It was especially not easy for Mary to undertake the trip just at this time, because she was awaiting the birth of her first child. Owing to her condition, the trip was made even more slowly than otherwise. No doubt it was well toward evening when they arrived in ancient Bethlehem. To their dismay the little village was overcrowded, so much so, that every available place of lodging was filled.

Naturally the officials of the Roman government, who were there to conduct a census and to collect taxes for the Emperor, were given the best accommodation. Then the keeper of the inn, took the opportunity to reserve the rest of his rooms for the more wealthy and prominent citizens, making it almost impossible for anyone else to secure lodging.

Very likely Joseph canvassed the entire village to find shelter for his wife and himself. At every place he was met with a refusal. There was no room. At last the innkeeper relented enough, because of Mary, to allow them the use of his stable. Here in these mean and lowly surroundings, in the quiet of the night, Mary's Child was born. She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and quietly laid Him in the manger, a makeshift crib, but one which served its purpose.

The Purpose of the Gift Wrapping

This is the Christmas story. In our time it has been filmed many times, has been dramatised over the air, has caught the fancy of poets and hymn writers.

At least once a year the general public hears the story and is moved by it. If you ask me why this is so, then I can only say that this is the "gift wrapping" selected by God for His Gift to men. God wanted this Child to be born in just these surroundings and under just these circumstances in order to make certain that people would never forget this event.

He used just these things to obtain and to hold the attention of men. What He really wanted to accomplish was that men might remove those gift wrappings and find the real Gift that was inside, the Christmas Gift from heaven.

It is not the stable, the manger, the innkeeper, nor even Joseph or Mary that add to any importance. It is the Child!

For that reason I ask you to join me in gazing upon this new-born Child, and while looking upon Him recall the words of Scripture, 2 Corinthians 8:9, ***For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*** By doing that you will truly know that He is God's *indescribable* Gift!

2. We Appreciate God's Christmas Gift

By Seeing With Eyes Of Faith The Unique Gift

How Mary and Joseph Saw the Child

Only two people really knew that night when the Child was born that it was God's *indescribable* Gift. Mary, His virgin mother, had heard it directly from the heavenly messenger, the angel Gabriel, who told her, *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*⁴

A similar message had come from Heaven to Joseph. The Lord had told him explicitly, *“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”*⁵

These two people knew and believed that the Child lying in the manger was not an ordinary child, but that by way of a miracle the Son of God had taken on human flesh and blood and was born into the world.

Moreover, they knew that in this Child were fulfilled all the wonderful promises of God for the salvation of the world. Just looking at the Child as He lay in the manger, they could not see that *“His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*⁶

However, when they looked with the eyes of faith, they saw in the Babe the sinless Son of God, their Lord, and their personal Saviour. They rejoiced in the *indescribable* Gift of God which had brought them eternal Christmas blessing.

Revealed to the Shepherds

God was not satisfied that only they should know of His *indescribable* Gift. Out on the hillsides around Bethlehem tending their flocks were a group of shepherds. They were also sons of David in their calling. I am sure that often enough they thought of David's Stay and Comfort as they went about their tasks. No doubt all of them repeated time and again the memorable words of the Shepherd Psalm: *“The Lord is my Shepherd.”*

These men were to be the first to see their very own Good Shepherd. Suddenly an angel came to them radiating the full glory of heaven and saying, *“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.”⁷

They heard in addition the grandest of hymns by the celestial choirs, **“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”** They could not wait an instant. They came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.

They were not in the least disturbed by the humble and lowly surroundings in which they first saw the Child. With the eyes of faith they beheld their Lord and God, their Saviour, their Good Shepherd. They knew they were looking upon God’s **indescribable** Christmas Gift. They fell down and worshipped Him. It was the most wonderful moment of their whole lives.

Back they went to their flocks, but they were new men altogether, the proud possessors of the most glorious Gift ever given to men, the unspeakable Gift of God.

What We See in the Child

Now you and I are asked by God to draw near also. **“Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.”⁸** One looks upon a tiny and seemingly helpless Infant in that manger bed. But let us understand from the beginning that here is also **“Christ the Lord”!**

When we say that He is Lord, we confess that we are looking at both God and Man. Of this Little One alone it can be said, **“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”⁹**

When we now see Him as the Christ, we recognise with the eyes of faith that here is the Prophet of all prophets, the all-glorious High Priest, the eternal King of heaven and earth. We see here the One who can teach us the truth of God and make us wise unto salvation. We see here the One who as Priest can atone for all our shortcomings and make us holy even as He is holy.

We even see it being accomplished, because we cannot look upon that manger bed without seeing the shadow of His victorious Cross over it. Nor can we fail to see here that this is He who now sits upon His throne in glory, ruling all the world, ruling you and me with His love and grace.

And, yes, here is indeed the Wonder of all wonders, God came down from heaven, moved only by love to poor and lost sinners, come to put an end to all our woes, to deliver us from sin, death, and the devil, and prepare for us an eternal Christmas in heaven.

Thinking about these things, we, too, must call Him with Paul the “*indescribable Gift*.” Never will we find the words to describe Jesus Christ and all that He means.

All that you and I can do is that, like the shepherds, we kneel down and adore Him and thank God for bringing us to faith in the Christ Child and for keeping us in that faith. If we see the Gift of God in this manner, then, also like the shepherds, we shall appreciate the Saviour by glorifying and praising God for all the things that we have heard and seen concerning the Child.

3. We Appreciate God’s Christmas Gift By Showing Our Gratitude As God Wishes It

This is what Paul sees in Jesus. This is why he exults, “*Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*” That means more than just saying, “Thank You.” To Paul it meant that He would use the Gift of God, Jesus, and that he would serve Him faithfully.

Gratefulness for a Gift

To give you an idea what we mean about being thankful for a Christmas gift let us consider a simple illustration. Suppose a child received a new bicycle for Christmas this year. I know that you would have said “Thank you” again and again for this wonderful present. Now if you are really thankful, you will take very good care of this gift. You will be happy to make it something very useful by being glad to ride quickly to the store or to run over to Grandmother’s place to do her errands, etc.

How We Appreciate God’s Wondrous Gift

Our thanks to God will be more than just our presence in church today, the raising of our voices in the wondrous Christmas hymns. That part of saying “Thank You” is just the beginning. It is a wonderful beginning, to be sure, and one that is pleasing to Him who freely gives us every good gift.

We give thanks properly for a gift when we enjoy using that gift, displaying it to others, and showing them how precious it is to us. We will let men know that we have laid our sins on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God.

We will share with them the fact that in our prayers to Him we have always found Him to be the Friend for every need, the Helper of the helpless. For, like the shepherds, we simply are compelled to tell others about the real Christmas Gift of God.

In other words, our thanks to God will be the surrender of ourselves to Jesus, our time, our talents, our goods, and whatever we may have so that others will have Christ in Christmas.

We will let the love of Jesus for us be a truly wonderful gift, and we will let that love radiate from us to others. We will begin this in our own homes, in our dealings with those who are near and dear to us. We will do that in the place where we work, whether we are employer or employee.

We will, in short, live better because the life that we now live we live by faith in the Son of God, who died for us and shed His blood for us. In that way we will truly appreciate God's wondrous Christmas Gift. In that way we can keep Christmas all the year, because we will keep Christ with us.

In wishing you all a blessed Christmas, let me say that I wish nothing more for you than this that you can say with all your hearts with me: ***Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*** Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ James 1:17

² Hymn 23, 633

³ Hymn 19

⁴ Luke 1:35

⁵ Matthew 1:20-21

⁶ Isaiah 9:6

⁷ Luke 2:10-12

⁸ Luke 2:15

⁹ Colossians 2:9