

Luke 2:1-20
“Our Father’s Gift”
The Nativity of Our Lord

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Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
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Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, Our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

[Introduction]

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ. When I grew up I was told that the reason we give gifts at Christmas time is because God already gave us Jesus, who is the greatest gift of all. So I tried to imagine getting Jesus as a present, and it never really worked for me. The baby Jesus lying in a manger always seemed too far away. I couldn’t quite connect to the idea that Jesus is the best gift ever given, especially when there were LEGOs and video games that I could play with right away on Christmas morning.

The idea of that Jesus was the real gift I should be celebrating at Christmas time went over my head. It was just too abstract for me to take seriously.

But lately, I’ve returned to this idea of gift giving as a model for understanding the birth of Jesus at Christmas time. I’ve gone back to it, because I’ve gained a new perspective, that of a father who takes great joy in giving my sons gifts and seeing the joy on their faces as they tear off the wrapping paper and see the surprise that’s hidden underneath.

Just yesterday, we let our kids open one present on Christmas Eve, and we gave our one year old a stuffed bunny that he grabbed out of the bag and squeezed with all his tiny might. Seeing him cherish that present brought joy to my heart.

[Gifts from Our Father]

But what about God? Jesus tells us to address God as our heavenly Father at the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer. If God is our Father, does he enjoy giving his children gifts just like human parents do? When God sent His Son, Jesus to earth, what kind of joy did God feel when Mary looked down at the newborn baby in her arms or when the shepherds stood in awe of the heavenly hosts that came to announce the birth of Jesus.

The only way to know what God is thinking or feeling is if he reveals himself to us through one of his messengers. In the Gospel of Luke, God sent an angel to announce the birth of his Son. This angelic messenger did not share its own words and opinions but God's Words and opinions.

When the angel appeared and shone in the glory of the Lord, it said to the shepherds, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (*Luke 2:10-11*)

Through his messenger, God sends "good news of great joy" not just for the shepherds but "for all the people."

God could have had the angel say, "Just so you know, God is sending you a savior tonight" without any mirth or any excitement.

God didn't have to send a messenger at all, if he didn't want to. Jesus could have come and done his ministry without needing a heavenly birth announcement to a bunch of shepherds. But no. God sent his angel, because he wanted to share the good news of great joy with us, his children.

God is happy and excited to give us the gift of Jesus, because he "so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (*John 3:16*)

[Socks and Underwear]

Unfortunately, when God gives us the great gift of Jesus, sometimes we end up acting like he gave us socks and underwear for Christmas. Yeah, we'll take it, and we'll probably even use it, but it's not something we're overly excited about.

We don't usually rejoice over socks and underwear. But we ought to rejoice over Jesus.

The shepherds rejoiced when they went away "glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them." (*Luke 2:20*)

The shepherds are a model for how God wants all people to react when they receive the gift of Jesus. Like a father who wants his son to rejoice in his present, God wants us to rejoice in the gift that he gives us.

[Conclusion]

Even if we don't always receive God's gift with joy and praise, he is still happy to keep on telling us about his Son, our Savior. God is never finished telling us about Jesus. He sends his messengers after you; although, they probably don't always look like angels that strike fear into you at the very sight of them. Most often, God sends his people to deliver the message of Jesus.

It may come through a word of encouragement from a friend, or in a Christmas letter. It comes through hearing God's Word, like you're hearing it today in the sermon and the liturgy. God is telling you that something wonderful has happened. He has sent his Son to be your Savior, so that you can believe in him and have eternal life.

God keeps sending his messengers. They come and remind us that we have a Father in heaven who loves us and who pours out his most precious gift upon us. So when you hear a Christmas song about Jesus, or you see drive by a nativity, rejoice! God has given you the gift of his Son. Amen.

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
