

Melva's Corner

THE PERFECT GIFT

December 4, 2006

(Ephesians 2:8-10 NRSV)

Central Truth: As much as we view the coming of Jesus as God's greatest gift to us, God views the incarnation from a different perspective. Jesus comes to earth to give the Father a gift.

Does it seem strange to anyone else but me that the biggest shopping day of the year in America is the day after Thanksgiving? It's kinda like we're saying, "Let's get this giving thanks stuff out of the way and focus on football and shopping."

The Christmas creep (i.e., the marketing creep of Christmas catalogues, sales, and promotions) begins earlier and earlier each year, so that now, Thanksgiving is the big day of non-shopping in the six weeks of out of control shopping mayhem. Thanksgiving is the pit stop where we rest up for the big shopping weekend.

I really think something has been lost from our ability to give thanks. The Holy Spirit's emphatic reminder to "be content with what you have" (Hebrews 13:5 NRSV) almost seems weird and truly out of step with every other value we pursue.

This time of the year, we should start thinking about Jesus' journey - a journey from the right hand of God into the womb of Mary, from the adulation of the angels to the murderous plans of Herod, and from the portals of glory to a bed of straw in a wooden box licked clean by feeding livestock. No matter how you look at it, the incarnation of God in human flesh, Jesus coming to us as Immanuel, is a costly miracle and a sacrificial gift given to us by the One to whom we owe everything. Listen to the dialogue of these two powerful Scriptures as they proclaim both sides of this truth.

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before God made anything at all and is supreme over all creation. Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and

earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see - kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created through him and for him. He existed before everything else began, and he holds all creation together. (Colossians 1:15-17 NLT)

Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8 NLT)

Yet as much as we view the coming of Jesus as God's greatest gift to us, God views the incarnation from a different perspective. Jesus comes to earth to give the Father a gift. This story is for us, but it is not about us. It is about Him. It is about our Father's love and grace. It's about our Father wanting us back so badly that He sent His Son to buy us back. Jesus came to give us as a gift back to God. He came to redeem us, to reclaim us, and to bring us home to His Father.

“Christ also suffered when he died for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners that he might bring us safely home to God . . . ” (I Peter 3:18 NLT)

To put it in plain English, we are Jesus' gift to the Father. We are the real Christmas gift. Jesus traveled the long distance, He paid the high adoption price and He risked everything so that the Father could have us back as His holy children. So as we sing “Joy to the world, the Lord is come . . .” let's remember that the real joy is in heaven where a loving Father looks down on His precious children and prepares for the day He brings them home.

As decorations spring up everywhere, let's give thanks to the real Christmas gift! The perfect Christmas gift!

Yes, it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas on the outside- let's also make it look like Christmas in our hearts on the inside.

Scriptural References:

By grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God - not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. (Ephesians 2:8-10 NRSV)