

THE GIFTS WE GIVE, ISAIAH 9:6

The Joy of Giving #2

◆**Intro:** So there you are, pouring coffee at a table in the yard while working with Habitat for Humanity. You see the resident-to-be pausing for a drink. She's a young mother with a daughter about 10. You geared up to come because you believe that Jesus wanted you to give of yourself, and him, to the world around you, but you didn't know where to start. So when the church advertised this event, you signed up. But you also feel that somehow, somewhere, sometime, someone has to do more than physical labor. People don't just come up and say, "Tell me, what are your religious beliefs causing you to come and hang drywall here today?" So you gear up again and say to the mother, "Excuse me, I just want you to know...well, see these folks from my church? We're here because there is a God who really loves you, and can change your life. And we want you to know that." She smiles politely. "Yeah, that sounds nice and all. But really, what good is God?"

◆Today is part 2 of our series the Joy of Giving. To learn to be a giving person you and I need to be convinced of the benefit of what we have to give, that we have something worth sharing. When we give, whether it be money, time, skill - we are trying to be a river pouring out God and his graces, gifts. But what are these gifts we are trying to give away? Lets use some of the Christmas labels for Jesus as memory points for what the gifts of Christ and Christmas are.

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◆**1. Wonderful Counsellor reminds us that we bring the gift of God's wisdom.** When you love and serve someone in Christ's name you are giving a present: knowledge of truth, and truth always works. Among the things we have to offer someone is the wisdom of God's son, both for eternal salvation and temporal salvation. I did not say temporary, but temporal. That means "in time". That is to say, Jesus' wisdom will save your soul, but more than that, it will save your life, the one you're in. We'll focus on wisdom for this present life here and the other later with the title Everlasting Father.

◆A. People sometimes accuse followers of Christ of being too heavenly minded to be any earthly good. That's nonsense. It is precisely those who think a lot about heaven that do the most good on earth! Their freedom from the fear of death liberates them to unselfishness, risk, service, and suffering.

◆"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." Hebrews 2:14, 15, NIV.

◆Here the biblical writer is talking about eternal salvation. But just a few verses later he also reminds us of how Jesus' wisdom helps us now as well!

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◆ *"Since he himself has gone through suffering and temptation, he is able to help us when we are being tempted." Hebrews 2:18, NLT.*

◆ Jesus wisdom and truth is not just waiting for you to use it in heaven. It is available to you now. Now lets not get the wrong present wrapped here. Jesus is not showing us how to earn our salvation and "make it" to heaven from here. He did that on the cross. But theres a whole lot more that the Wonderful Counsellor gives. He knows how to live life the best. He knows what to do. He knows God's truth!

◆ When you want to give the present of Jesus to someone, a good place to start is anywhere that Jesus' teaching has helped you. For example, you might say, "What good is God? I'll tell you. He freed me from the power of alcohol." Or maybe Jesus love in your life has enables you to be humble where before you were arrogant. Have you learned to apologize by the grace of Christ? Tell someone about that present! Did the God's wisdom on finances save you from your uncontrolled spending and debt? That's another gift that comes along with the Wonderful Counselor. Has God saved you from a foul mouth? Where has God's wisdom made you life better? That's part of what your testimony and a present you have to share.

◆ The Heidelberg Catechism puts it like this: "He has set me free from the tyranny of the devil." Tyranny is the oppression of an evil ruler, someone whose got you locked into a no-win situation.

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That, my friends, is what sin is. Sin is tyranny. Talk to anyone in Narcotics Anonymous and see if they don't think drugs are evil rulers! Talk to anyone addicted to internet lust and see if they don't feel trapped, and controlled?

◆ Don't forget this too: saved people can still fall into the Devils traps. While he cannot ruin your salvation, he can help you scrape your knees, and break your arms on the trip there. What good is God? He knows how to live so that I don't fall into things that ruin my living, my marriage, my parenting, my job, my character...

◆ Any other gifts we bring as river people offering the fresh water of Christ?

◆ **2. Almighty God reminds me that we bring the gift of God's power.** This goes very closely with what we've already been seeing.

◆ **A.** But even when we know wisdom, or know the right thing to do, it doesn't mean we have the power to do it. Haven't you noticed times when you knew what you were doing or planning was wrong but you just didn't/couldn't stop yourself? But where meetings, and sponsors, and accountability partners couldn't change your insides, Jesus can! He can cause you to *want* different things. So the almighty ability and power of God is a gift that comes into someones life through faith in Christ. Ability to follow wisdom where you couldn't before. It's God's power that

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raised Jesus from the dead, and that almighty power can give you resurrection too!

◆**B.** God's power extends over both the spiritual realm and the physical realm. During Jesus' ministry he sent out 72 disciples and gave them the power to heal. He told them "...heal the sick. As you heal them, say, 'The Kingdom of God is near you now.'" (Luke 10:9) "When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to him, "Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!" Luke 10:17, NLT.

◆ Understand this; when you come to Christ in faith you are gaining access to power of God that you did not have before. When you bring the name of Jesus to someone's life you are bringing the present of Jesus' power. Power over sickness, and power over evil spirits that plague people. Power over bad habits.

◆ *"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds." 2 Corinthians 10:4, NIV.*

◆ Use his name! Command in his name. Pray his name. John DeVries in his little book *Why Give?* shares stories of missions in India like that of a little boy who, after accepting Jesus at a Bible camp, went home and prayed in Jesus name over his mother who'd been cursed by the local witchdoctor with a walking disability. At Jesus name she was healed. In the marvelous little book "I just Saw Jesus" Campus Crusade records it's making of

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the Jesus Film and bringing it all over the world and showing it to native peoples in the bush. Many times everything was set up but the projector wouldn't run. All the wires were set but...nothing. The missionaries laid their hands on the projector and prayed in Jesus name and it began to run. They stood there through the whole film because when they took their hands away, it stopped. The Apostle Paul wrote...

◆“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”
Ephesians 6:12, 13, NIV.

◆With Jesus comes the gift of power, of Almighty God. When you pray, pray like you remember that. When you give, whisper his name in prayer along with any gift you give.

◆**3. Everlasting Father reminds me that we bring the gift of eternal hope.** Because of Jesus, we believers are currently living a life that will never end. (Try saying this if you are a Christian: “I’m going to live forever!”) With Jesus we have stepped into eternity already.

◆““I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be

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condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” John 5:24, NIV.

◆A. Christians know that the gift of Christ in someone’s life means forgiveness of sin, and life after death, eternal salvation. Because Jesus took our place in his death, he took our sins and we get to live by faith in his merit. Can you believe it? What good is God? Well for one, he has the gift of salvation from sin!

◆“Sin pays its servants: the wage is death. But God gives to those who serve him: his free gift is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 6:23, Phil.

◆Jesus tells us how to live forever! (John 11:25-26). I am going to be around 1000 years from now. When the earth remembers me no more, I will be alive and kicking! There is a Shangri La. There is a fountain of Youth. It's the person Jesus, the Messiah. Jesus is eternal. Jesus is one with the Father. The HC puts it like this: “Because I belong to him Christ, by his Holy Spirit assures me of eternal life...” What is so good about God? Well, do you want to not die/live forever, and in a better way than this fallen place? He promises it! That's what's so good about God. That's what you are giving when you give in his name!

◆B. Further, when someone comes to know Christ through a gift you give, or a service you serve, another present you bring to them is a Heavenly Father. So because of Christ, God’s Son, God is my father and will be forever. A Dad that never stops thinking of you, and loving you, and planning for you. When we live lives

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of giving, we bring the present of “family”, God’s family. Right away, race is no longer a barrier. Gender is no longer a barrier. Men and women, Indian and Dutchman – become brother and sister through the Eternal Father. Nothing crosses racial or cultural differences like the family of God. It’s been his intention all along. God gave John a vision of heaven in the book of Revelation.

◆ *“After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.” Revelation 7:9, NIV.*

◆ **4. Prince of Peace reminds me that Jesus brings the gift of peace.** Makes sense right? That includes victory over all kinds of things like fretting, and worry, and anxiety, and inner turmoil. A big reason we have peace, of course, is that Jesus forgives our sin and our sin is what causes all these other things in the first place. A good king or prince is one who provides for his people. Who protects them from danger and need; the things we fret about. Children don't fret when they have parents who are always there to listen, to love, to feed, to clothe, and teach and hold them. That’s what someone gets when they get God!

◆ A. What happens when we get older is, we think that we have to do it all ourselves. We live as though we do not have a parent to care for us. So we keep all our cares, and we fret over them.

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We mull them over. We think about them and tense up our stomachs. We don't go and talk to our Everlasting Father.

◆ "What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labours under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless." Ecclesiastes 2:22, 23, NIV.

◆ But we do have a ruler who provides for us.

◆ *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Matthew 11:28, 29, NIV.*

◆ "He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." Acts 14:17, NIV.

◆ B. The Heidelberg Catechism puts it like this: "He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in Heaven. In fact all things must work for my salvation." What good is God? In Jesus, I always have someone watching out for me! No matter the circumstance, war or pestilence, peace time and harvest! Psalm 4 says I will lie down in peace and sleep for you alone, O Lord, will keep me safe.

◆ **Conclusion:** Understand that when you tithe you are giving more than money. When you go out with other church members to work on a Habitat house, or sing carols in the mall –whatever and however you "give" you are giving and bringing more gifts

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along with you. These gifts are all the things that accompany Jesus: his wisdom and knowledge (Wonderful Counselor); his power and might to heal and to overcome evil (Almighty God); his family and unstoppable love (Everlasting Father); his peace (Prince of Peace). Do you need to remember what good God is when you are witnessing to someone? Just remember some of his names and it will come back to you.