

edit

a Christmas talk by J.R. Hall

this Christmas was on Sunday & I was one of the speakers

don't know what year

take gifts out of the sack.

These Christmas packages are from our grandchildren in Oregon. Do or did you have a lot of similar packages under your tree this morning? If these packages have been there for several days, I am willing to surmise that they have been shaken, tipped, and guessed at frequently. I doubt if our David was every surprised on Christmas morning. Somehow, no matter where they were hidden, he always managed to ferret out what he and probably what everybody else was getting for Christmas.

The giving of Christmas gifts probably represent the gifts the wise men brought to Christ--Gold, Frankinsense and Myrhh. Gifts offered only to those of Royal Blood.

Christmas gifts have some things in common.

1. They are constructed of perishable materials. They wear out, rust, break, are eaten or used up, or are broken.
2. The obtaining of them took time to choose, shop for, and wrap.
3. They had a price that had to be paid.
4. Gifts are usually reciprocal. We give to those we love. They give to us.
5. Sometimes the gift we receive costs so much that there is no way that we can give a gift of like value.

Since most Christmas gifts are perishable, their life-line is often short and fleeting. The gifts that so delight us today, no matter how valuable, are often not even in existence by the next Christmas.

There are gifts, of course that can have an eternal value, provided they are used and not left on our shelves. Gifts of the scriptures, for instance. Journals--if kept. Books which contain the words of the Prophets or have themes or plots that uplift, enlighten, or inspire. Great

poetry, good music.

Gifts which expand our knowledge, ^{and} help us to understand God's Universe and our own surroundings. Gifts which help us to develop our talents, such as art supplies, or sheet music, or craft tools. These are the gifts that have most impact on our lives.

A good book can be re-read often, with resulting new insights. Our journals help us to understand our selves as we re-read them, and may in later years help a loved grandchild to realize that Grandmother or Grandfather had some of the same problems that they have. The scriptures never grow old or stale. New insights are on every page.

And of course, some gifts are just for fun. They make us laugh, or give our homes a touch of beauty. Maybe that new dress in the box tagged "Betty" will be the one she will remember all her life as "her favorite dress".

Contrast these with the spiritual gifts given to us by our Savior and our Heavenly Father. They do not wear out, rust, break, or use up. Our Heavenly Father knows each of us well and he matches his spiritual gifts to fit ^{each of his children} ~~the child~~. Have we opened the package containing our individual spiritual gifts, or are they still under the tree, so to speak?

Sometimes these gifts are discovered as we fulfill a church calling that we thought we were not suited for. Sometimes as we serve others, we find that we have gifts of compassion and understanding we did not realize we had.

And these gifts do have a price. Not for the giver, but for the receiver. For instance, consider the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of the Holy Ghost is a spirit of power. We are given this gift when we are baptised. But he can't be a power in our lives unless we listen to his

promptings and live as we should. He cannot live in an unclean tabernacle.

However, if we lose the spirit of the Holy Ghost, we can regain his presence if we repent and become worthy, once again, of his presence.

Peter said to Christ when Jesus told him that where he would go, Peter could not follow. And (John 13:37) Peter said unto him, ^{Al} Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake."

38 Jesus answered him, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow until you have denied me thrice." And Peter, in his humanity, did deny that he knew Christ three times that night, and then the cock crowed. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Before he and his disciples went to the Garden of Gethemane, Christ told his Apostles that when he left them he would send them another comforter. He told them: (John 9:5) "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. (John 14-15-18) "if ye love me keep my commandments, and I will Pray the Father and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever. Even the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you.

When Peter and the other apostles received ~~the power of~~ that other comforter, the Holy Ghost, they became power houses. Peter became the head of the Church in the meridian of time--and never again denied the Christ, even in times of great danger to himself.

When Christ was betrayed with a kiss outside the Garden of Gethemane, he was taken for trial before the Sanhedren--the ruling body of the Jews. No expensive lawyers came forward to plead his case, as was certainly fitting ^{for} one who was "the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords." But Jesus Christ knew that what was about to happen was what he had

come to earth to do. Indeed, in the garden, he had already submitted to the will of the father. He knew that the salvation of all mankind was dependent upon him.

And before the Sanhedren, and later before Pilate and Herod, he refused to defend himself and submitted himself as a lamb to be the supreme sacrifice so that "as in Adam all men die, so in Christ shall all be made alive."

With quiet dignity when taunted by his prosecutors who cried: Art thou the Christ? Tell us. (Luke 22: 67-71) ... he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask YOU, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God." And they accused him of Blasphemy and took him to Pilot.

Pilot passed the buck to Herod, who passed it right back to him, and they found no wrong in him. But the crowd prevailed and Pilot passed the sentence of crucifixion upon Christ. ~~But~~ before the multitude Pilot took a bowl of water and washed his hands and said: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person." The crowd roared back: "His blood be on us and on our children."

I wonder if ^{there} ~~their~~ were any Almas, besides perhaps Nicodemus, at the trial of our savior and I wonder if in the quiet of the night his accusers trembled at what they had done and wished that they, like Pilot, could wash their hands of The blood of Christ?

Jesus Christ offered to be the Lamb of God in the pre-existence. This role he fulfilled fully in the Garden of Gesthemane and on the Cross on Cavalry. The universal gift of this sacrifice was the free gift of the resurrection for all mankind. We talked about gifts being reciprocal. Not this one. But we can do what he asks: "If ye love me--keep my

commandments. *a small price indeed.*

~~Insert 8~~

His sacrifice opened up, also to all mankind, the possibility of eternal life in the presence of our Heavenly Father and his son, Jesus Christ. This possibility ^{also} has to be earned by ~~our~~ righteousness and obedience to the commandments of God.

~~Insert 8~~

Christ ended sacrifice by the shedding of blood. He taught a gospel of love, not of retribution. He was the perfect example. "do as ye see me do" "If ye have seen me, ye have seen the Father." "Love your enemies." "Do good to those who spitefully use you." "Forgive all men their trespasses against you." *His ministry was a pattern for being, together with all of*

~~This Christmas Sabbath as we celebrate the birth of our Savior, let~~ *Christendom,*

~~us remember the glorious spiritual gifts which are available to all of us and which have lasting value:~~ *eternal gifts reminds us -* Mathew 6: 13, 19-21

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Enjoy this wonderful Christmas season and find some quiet ^{today} time to open your scriptures and read again the wondrous ^{and} story of the birth

of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. ~~What can we give him--We can give him our hearts."~~

whose birthday we celebrate this ~~holy~~ Christmas sabbath with all of Christendom. what gift can we give him? We can give him our hearts.