

A Christmas Wish

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Preacher: Phil Meulman

[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on December the 13th, 1998.

The preacher is Phil Mielman. His sermon is entitled A Christmas Wish and is from Psalm 22.

Well, Christmas is an exciting time, isn't it? Yes?

Christmas parties. Who has been to a Christmas party today? Just put your hand up. Oh, yes, yes.

Who hasn't been to a Christmas party so far this year? Oh, there's a couple.

Oh, you've been to one. Yeah, we went to one the other week. Yes. Well, anyway, Christmas is exciting. There's lots of Christmas parties. There's school holidays, time away from home at a special location if we're lucky.

[0 : 59] We eat lots of food and spend time with the family. And at Christmas, I always choose to go on a diet at the wrong time of the year because Christmas comes around. But I don't know about you, but as a child, I used to dream of Santa Claus, or many of you people down here call him Father Christmas, and picture his sleigh coming to my house and dropping off presents.

I used to dream of times that we as a family would all sit around together boasting about our presents and playing with them. But I would also spend a lot of my time at Christmas wishing for this, wishing for that, wishing, wishing, wishing.

Dreaming. Dreaming. Oh. Warwick. Are you trying to be a postman? Oh. Thank you. I'm actually trying to preach a sermon here, Warwick.

Thank you very much. Well, look at that. Thank you very much, Warwick. I've always wanted a present. I wonder what it is. Do you think that I should open it?

Yes, I think I should. Well, look. It's way too... No way. Wow.

[2 : 20] Wow. It's a stereo. It feels a bit light, though. No. There's a tag.

There's a piece of paper in here with a message. The person who holds this paper is entitled to one wish, providing he or she does not wish for more wishes.

Oh, dear. Well, that's pretty exciting, I guess. Well, I can't be too greedy, can I? But what should I wish for? What do you think I should wish for? To be rich?

To be irresistible? And really, really cool? If you've seen that Tim Tam ad, you'll know that's a dangerous wish to make.

Well, what would you want? This is not a rhetorical question. What would you want to wish for? Health?

[3 : 32] Brent? Rich. What was that? Rich. Rich. Wow. Yep. Jessica? Good health?

A couple of people want to be healthy. Yeah, Tom? World peace. Ebony. A reindeer.

A reindeer. Wow. Well, we all wish for things from time to time. And Christmas is the time when we do the most wishing in some respects, isn't it?

You see, some people go right over the top at Christmas, especially with their Christmas wish list.

Just look at how difficult it is to get into the shops in December to do your shopping.

It's bizarre. It's incredible trying to do your Christmas shopping. All this overcrowding on the streets and in the shops, what it does is it leads to what some people call Santa claustrophobia.

[4 : 35] Well, all this wishing can lead to a myriad of pitfalls. As parents, it can be all too easy to think that if we don't give our children all they wish for, we'll be letting them down, ruining their Christmas.

Or that we'll look like, the fear is that we'll look like stingy parents if their friends' parents buy them bigger and better things than we do.

It's all too easy to get conned into thinking that we can buy our children's happiness. Then there's the danger of the Christmas credit card blowout.

How many of us as parents here overspend buying presents for friends and families that we really can't afford? And wishing that our money would go further.

You're in for it too, kids. There is the danger for you kids who wish for everything. The danger is that you won't be satisfied with the things that you get.

[5 : 49] Especially if you don't get what you really, really want. You end up not appreciating the things that you do receive. That's the danger. There's the story of the little girl who wrote to her grandma after opening her present.

Thank you very much, grandma, for the nice gloves you sent me for Christmas. They were something I wanted but not very much. Well, other kids can become over-demanding.

One dating father asked his small daughter well in advance what she would like for Christmas.

Shyly, she announced that she would like a baby brother. Well, to everyone's surprise and delight her mother returned from hospital on Christmas Eve with a baby boy in her arms.

When the father repeated the question the next year there was less hesitation from the daughter.

Well, if it wouldn't be too uncomfortable for a mum I would like a pony. Now, so far I've been talking about so far I've been talking about material things on our Christmas wish list haven't I?

But maybe your Christmas wish list is more noble than mine. Maybe you wish for things which will benefit others as well. I heard a couple of people call them out.

[7 : 19] Like world peace good health food for everybody just like there seems to be abundantly on our Christmas tables at Christmas lunch. Well, these are all good and honourable things and there's nothing wrong at all about thinking and praying for those sorts of things and even contributing toward those sorts of schemes.

things. But even if I could wish for world peace abundant food and so on and so on and so on in the end it's only wishful thinking I think.

World history has shown that. Human beings are unable to live in peace. Greed greed greed means that we are unlikely to share our resources with others abundantly anyway.

Well, what a glum picture I've painted. People overspending greed selfishness. What hope is there for our world? Where can we turn?

The Bible has a radical solution to these dilemmas. The Bible reading that Hayden read is one of the most widely read passages in scripture and the very first line says from Psalm 23 The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want.

[8 : 44] The Lord is my shepherd or he's my guide I shall not want or to put it another way the Lord is my shepherd I have everything I need. I have everything I need.

Well, this is a motto which is hardly going to be picked up and used by retailers in their Christmas advertising, isn't it? They're not going to use that sort of motto. Those words I have everything I need fly in the face of a world which says to buy, buy, buy.

Or it has a lot to say to the person whose motto is shop till you drop. It has a lot to say. And I suspect that people who shop till they drop, who wish that they could have the latest piece of technology, who get angry at the fact that their best friend's dad has got a new car and they don't, don't know what it means to have the Lord as their shepherd or their guide.

If the Lord was their shepherd, as the psalmist says here, then they would have everything they need. What does it mean to have the Lord as my shepherd?

To have everything we need. Put simply, it means to have a relationship with the creator of this world. It means that we don't have to put our hopes in the latest technology, even in people.

[10 : 14] And whenever we do, whenever we put our hopes into technology or into people, in some way we will be let down.

The internet the other day let many VCE students down as they were trying to get their results off the computer, didn't it? Even your best friend will let you down at some stage in your life because not even your best friend can give you everything you need.

But God can. The creator of this world can. The creator of you and me can. He gives us everything we need.

He provides firstly for our physical needs. Let's just think for a moment about what it is that we need to survive. Water, food and air to breathe.

the very basic necessities of living. I know that we can buy some of those things from the supermarket shelf. But God is the provider of these things.

[11 : 25] Our life, friends, our life is not dependent upon a computer, Barbie dolls or even a university degree. It is dependent on the very basics of life.

as people, God has given us the responsibility to administer these resources wisely. But ultimately, God is the provider.

So God provides for our physical needs. God also provides for our spiritual needs as well. And whether you like it or not, we are all spiritual people.

some years ago or some time ago, the age reported that Melbourne is a very spiritual city. A whole article was written on it. More and more people are turning to spirituality.

Well, the God who provides our every need also provides for our spiritual needs. But God hasn't provided for our spiritual needs by letting us turn to whatever is the latest fad.

[12 : 28] Far from it. God has provided for our spiritual needs in a very unique way. And when we let God be our shepherd or our guide, as this psalm says, we begin to see that he does indeed provide for our every need, physical and spiritual.

How does God provide for our spiritual needs? As humans, we have ruined the chance of a close relationship with God.

We have, in effect, cut ourselves off from him spiritually by trying to go it alone. In other words, by saying, hey God, I can do this living thing without you.

I don't need you. And we see evidence of that in our world today, don't we? Because many people do live their lives without God. Physically, they might be okay, they might have plenty of wealth, they might have plenty of money and food on the table and so on.

But spiritually, they are dead. They are cut off from God. And that's why people keep on wishing for all sorts of things to fill the void of God's absence in their lives.

[13 : 50] things to fill the void of God's absence. The spiritual nature which is in each one of us though, looks for a way back into a relationship with God.

Well, God has provided for our spiritual needs and he's provided for our spiritual needs in Jesus Christ. At Christmas time, we recall his coming into the world as a baby in a very unique way.

Jesus is God's son brought into the world to tell us how to enter into a relationship with God and has given up himself for us in death on the cross so that we might be able to come back into a spiritual and physical relationship with God which lasts forever.

his resurrection from the dead and the solid evidence of this resurrection is proof that we can have a life with him that will last forever.

And we enter into that relationship with God when we stop putting ourselves first and letting God be our shepherd, be our guide, letting God be in control.

[15 : 08] the wise men that came to visit Jesus as we saw in the video, recognised Jesus as a king and they worshipped him.

They brought gifts for him to symbolise that. Now the greatest gift that we could ever offer God is ourselves.

Offering ourselves to him. Now God came to this earth in the form of Jesus Christ and he went way beyond the call of duty and he gave us the greatest gift ever, the greatest gift beyond price and that gift was his own son so that we might live with him forever in eternity.

And a place in heaven is guaranteed for us when we surrender ourselves to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Well as I said or started off Christmas is all about giving.

It's all about joy. It's all about peace and so on. And it's an exciting time of the year. It's all about as well knowing that God has taken the initiative to make his peace with us through his son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

[16 : 37] And it's a reminder that God has provided for us everything we ever need, physically and spiritually. so this Christmas, do we celebrate it wishing for all the toys and things that we want or do we celebrate it knowing that God has given us the greatest gift of all, his son, Jesus Christ.

My Christmas wish is that you might come to know Jesus and be able to say with joy, the Lord is my shepherd, the Lord is my guide, I shall not want.

At the conclusion of this service, I have some little booklets out there which are called Why Christmas and we've got some other books called Why Jesus. We have a limited number. If you are interested in having a look further and talking about those sorts of things, then please come and grab a book from me.

and if you want to talk about those things, then please come and see me or Paul or Warwick or someone you know who has a relationship with God and we'd be very happy to talk to you about those sorts of things.