

The Gift of God's Love

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[0 : 00] skill skill Okay, if you have a Bible, if you turn to Romans chapter 8, Romans chapter 8 is going to be where our Christmas meditation is from this afternoon. If you've been with us the last few weeks or following online, you know that in the month of December we've been in a series called

The Best Christmas Ever. We've been looking at the four gifts of Advent, the gifts of hope, the gifts of peace, the gift of joy, and we're going to conclude that series today looking at the gift of God's love. And we're going to look here at Romans chapter 8, which is a very familiar passage to probably a lot of you, but it's not really a passage you tend to think about when it comes to Christmas. And so now that you have gotten nice and comfortable, guess what I'm going to ask you to do?

I'm going to ask you if you're able to please stand as a way of honoring the reading of God's Word and recognizing the authority it has in this place. The Apostle Paul writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, God, we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we're more than conquerors through Him who loved us. And I am sure that neither death or life or angels or rulers, things present or things to come or powers or height or depth or anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. And God's people said, amen. Let's pray together. So Lord, we thank you for this time now that we come under the authority of your word.

We ask God that you would help us meditate on and rest in the truth of Christmas, the truth of your love to us in Jesus Christ. And I pray it in his name. And God's people said, amen. You can be seated.

Josh's hands were trembling so bad he could hardly even hold the phone. He paced back and forth, whispering, hurry up, hurry up, hurry up, hoping that his wife Tara would answer. When she finally did answer the phone, Josh joyfully announced to her, honey, you're not going to believe what I just found. I just found \$45,000 cash hidden in our garage. You see, just one hour before that phone call, Josh and his wife had closed on a brand new home and they had just started moving in. Josh walked into the garage and he looked up and he noticed like a roll of carpet that was up around the attic. And so he got a ladder and he climbed up. There he found several old World War II ammunition boxes, all of them filled with cash. And when all was said and done, it totaled about \$45,000.

[4 : 27] Josh said that his mind immediately began to think about everything he could do with that money. We could remodel parts of our new home. We could repair a car. I mean, there's a lot we could do with that kind of money. And all of that stopped when his wife said what he knew was right.

You know, you're going to have to call the previous owners. The home had previously belonged to a father of six who had just passed away.

Josh knew the money was likely something that the man had been storing away to leave to his family. And even though the money was now legally his, he knew it didn't actually belong to him. And so sure enough, he called up the family and gave all the money back. When he was interviewed and asked why he did that, what he said really stuck out to me.

It caught my attention. Josh said this, quote, I didn't give them the money because of ethics. I gave them the money because of fatherhood.

[5 : 35] I imagined how much Arnold, the previous owner, loved his kids and wanted to take care of them. And as a father myself, I felt a kindred spirit.

So while sure, I had the legal right to keep it, I knew it wasn't the fatherly thing to do.

Josh gave the money back not just because it was the right thing to do. He gave it back because it was the fatherly thing to do. There's something about fatherhood, and not just fatherhood, but parenthood that loves to give things to their children, right?

I mean, any parent worth their salt loves to take care of their kids. We want to make sure that they've got a safe place to live in. And we want to make sure that they've got clothes on their back. We want to make sure there's food in their stomach. But beyond just covering the basics of what they need, we occasionally like to spoil our children.

[6 : 45] Anybody? Maybe the occasional trip to the amusement park, or a fun shopping trip, or a day out. And yes, even the occasional ice cream.

And all God's people said, if you don't give your kids ice cream, you're a bad parent. I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. But we know that not just covering the basics, we want to spoil them from time to time.

Oh man, and then comes Christmas. Christmas where we love, am I right parents? We love to give our kids gifts. I, full confession, spoil my children at Christmas time.

I love to do it as a dad. Now listen to me. Don't misunderstand what I'm saying. I'm not talking about extremes like entitlement. I'm not talking about parents that don't have the ability to say no.

Yes, all of that's true. Here's all I'm saying, and it's what you already know. Loving parents love to give things to their kids, right? Right? Loving parents love to give things to their kids.

[7 : 52] And if that's true for us, have you stopped to think lately what that means regarding God's love for you?

Jesus says this in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7, verse 9, which one of you, if his son asked for bread, would give him a stone? If he asked for a fish, would give him a serpent?

If you then, who are evil, that is, you that are sinful, if you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him? In other words, the Bible does not present God as some kind of remote, cold, cranky, irritable, unapproachable, mean-spirited, turn the lights off, and you know, money doesn't grow on trees kind of God.

Instead, it presents God the Father as the type of Father that when you come to Him by faith, He is approachable and kind and patient and tender-hearted, and according to James, loves to give wisdom to all who ask.

[9 : 08] He loves to give you gifts. He loves to pour out His love on you. In fact, in Luke chapter 15, you know, we call it the prodigal son, the story of the lost sons.

The Father is not depicted as waiting on the doorstep, waiting for the son to come home, tapping his foot, arms folded, waiting to just say, well, it's about time you finally woke up.

How is the father pictured in that story? A father who runs to meet his son. And then to the older son that can't even comprehend this kind of fatherly love, the father even goes outside and tries to winsomely persuade him of the love the father has for him too.

In other words, faith family, the father's love towards us is extravagant. Amen? And Paul in Romans 8 here emphasizes the love of God to us in Christ Jesus.

He says things like, who can separate us from God's love? And we're more than conquerors through him who loved us. And for our meditation this afternoon, and meditation just means instead of preaching two hours, I preach one.

[10 : 32] It will be shorter. But for just our meditation today, I just have one verse that I want us to think on, and then we'll be finished with the sermon. We have more to do.

Verse 32. Verse 32. He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Three things I want to meditate on this afternoon. And the first is the initiative of God's love. The initiative of God's love. Paul says that God did not spare his own son, but he delivered him up for us all.

In other words, God is the one who took the initiative to love us. God is the one who made the first move. God did not wait around for us to get our act together before he loved us.

Aren't you glad for that? I'll love you as soon as you straighten up. It's not how it happened. God initiated his love towards us. God delivered Christ up for us.

[11 : 41] In other words, he didn't wait for us to ask to be loved. He just loved. He just did it. Earlier in Romans, the Apostle Paul says this, Romans 5.8.

For one would scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person, one would dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, you didn't get your act together.

You were still sinners. And Christ died for us. Or what about one we all know, John 3.16? Why don't we just all say this together? Let's say it. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son. And whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. In all of these verses, faith family, God is the one taking the initiative to love.

Now let me ask you a question, and I want you to be honest. You can answer out loud if you want to. Does something mean more to you when someone takes the initiative to do it on their own?

[12:52] Or when you have to ask them repeatedly? The initiative, right? That's obvious. It means more to you the gift or the act of service or whatever it is that they're doing means more to you when they take the initiative rather than they have to be asked repeatedly.

You know this. Which do you appreciate more as a parent? When your child finally takes the trash out after being asked 20 times? Or, listen, or the child that sees how busy you are knows how helpful it would be to you and takes the initiative on their own.

Well, of course. We would all say it's the one that takes initiative that is the most loving. And that is what makes God's love for us so amazing.

Namely, He just did it. He didn't wait for us to ask. He didn't wait for us to get it all together. He just loved.

He took the initiative all on Himself to love us and deliver Christ up for us. Number two. Look at the verse again. He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?

[14:14] The second idea I want us to think about is the independence of God's love. That is, not only did God take the initiative to love us, His love for us is completely independent.

Now, what I mean by independent, that word graciously that you saw, that's in the ESV, the word actually means freely. In fact, some of your translations will say, how will He not freely give us all things?

The idea here is simply that God's love is completely independent. It's free. It's gracious. Are you listening? It's not based on any conditions.

Now, let me ask you the second question. Does a gift mean more to you when the person is obligated to do it or they do it freely on their own?

Wait, obviously when they freely do it on their own. See, you could actually take the initiative, but you still might be obligated to do it anyways. But here's what's awesome. Look at it on the screen.

[15:15] God not only took the initiative to love us, He was unobligated to do so. He didn't have to, but His love for us is gracious.

Amen? It is free. It is independent. And that is very hard for us to get our minds around because we live in a culture, even more so at Christmas time, where we expect gifts.

Right? I mean, some of you this Christmas, you're expecting a gift. And particularly as kids. Man, we wake up on Christmas morning as kids and we're expecting something to be under the tree.

But listen to me. I mean, we've got to rewire our minds to understand what it really means to have the gift of God's love. It's not a wage. You didn't earn it.

It's not some type of a paycheck. It is a, listen, gift from an unobligated giver. He took the initiative to love you when He didn't have to do it.

[16:21] And that's what makes God's love so amazing. Amen? One more thought. Look at the verse again. He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?

Lastly, is the invaluableness of God's love. You have no doubt heard something like this said before, that while God's love to us is free, it was costly to God.

And Paul says in that verse that God did not spare His own Son. That is, God gave us the most valuable thing anyone could ever give us.

He gave up the most valuable thing to Him. In other words, not only is the gift more appreciated when there's initiative, not only is the gift more appreciated when you weren't even obligated to give it, but the gift is also meaningful, whether it's financially or personal, when it has value.

When the gift has something of value, it means even more. Think about it. If I give you a gift that doesn't really cost me anything, it lessens the gift. Are you with me?

[17 : 44] And here's how I know this. Here's how I know you know this. How many of you have ever regifted something? A little housewarming to new beginnings. Thanks.

Actually, I gave this to you for your wedding. This model? No, this exact one. I'm sorry. I'm embarrassed. I'm sorry. It's okay. I hope you like it. I love it. Thank you. Come on, be honest. How many of you have ever regifted something?

You. You sinners. That's like the unpardonable sin, right? Regifting is that idea that when you open up a gift and you say, this would be such an awesome gift for somebody else.

That's regifting. Now, what's the point that I'm trying to make here? The point is this. Notice it on the screen. A gift that doesn't mean anything doesn't mean anything. Are you tracking with me?

[18 : 54] A gift that doesn't mean anything doesn't mean anything. But if I give you an expensive gift or a rare gift or a thoughtful gift or something that personally meant a lot to me, you feel more loved.

You would say, wow, that person, Lord, help us understand this. that person must actually love me. Because they took the initiative to do it when they weren't obligated to do it. And they couldn't have given me anything more valuable.

that is God's gift of love to you in the person of Jesus Christ.

It is the greatest gift ever. And so, I want you this Christmas, please take some time and all of the craziness to stop and think about the fact that you have been given a gift initiated entirely of God independent of anything that you have done and there is nothing more valuable than Jesus in all the world.

[20 : 13] And that so proves God's love for you that the Apostle Paul can say this, I am sure that neither death or life or angels or rulers or things present or things to come or powers or height or depth or anything else in all creation will be able to separate me, separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Faith family, Josh gave the money back to the family not because it was the right thing to do, he gave it back because it was the fatherly thing to do.

He imagined a father who loved to give things to his kids. This Christmas I want you to know that God has given you the greatest gift of his love in sending his son Jesus.

And he didn't do it out of ethics, he did it out of fatherhood. he did it because he loves you.

And that will make this the best Christmas ever. And all God's people said amen.

[21 : 47] Let's pray. Lord thank you for your love towards us that is undeserved, a love towards us you are unobligated to give, you loved us because you loved us.

And you demonstrated that love in such a profound way that you delivered up your own son. And if you would do that for us, will you not also in him graciously give us all things?

We are a blessed people beyond words. and I pray this Christmas, I pray in this very moment we would dwell and think deeply on the gift of love we have from you in Jesus.

And Lord now we enter into a time of remembrance where we think about this very verse. We're reminded that you delivered up your own son as he came into the world that first Christmas and he lived the perfect life for us and he died on the cross for our sins and rose from the grave to give us brand new life.

May we celebrate that and rejoice now as we remember in Christ's name, Amen. Nab