

The Perfect Christmas Gift

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Date: 22 December 1985

Preacher: Harry Robinson

- [0 : 0 0] The ninth lesson is taken from the Gospel according to St. John, the first chapter beginning at the first verse. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- He was in the beginning with God, all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was light, and the light was the light of men.
- The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness is not overcoming. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came for testimony to bear witness to the light that all men might believe through him.
- He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light. The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him.
- Yet the world knew him not. He came to his own and his own people, received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- [1 : 2 9] And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. This is the gospel of Christ.
- Thanks be to God. Time.
- Thank you.
- Thank you.
- Thank you.
- [3 : 3 6] And it's available to you, at least in form, in the first chapter of the letter to James, where it says,
- He knows when you're asleep. He knows when you've been good or bad, so be good for goodness sake. And I want just to assure you that if you comply with the conditions laid down in that song, you will never, ever get a Christmas gift.
- And the reason is that if you were to comply with those conditions, you would have some sense of deserving.
- You've been good, and you haven't cried, and you haven't done the things that you shouldn't do. And you've been good for goodness sakes.
- And so the only thing you might get at Christmas is a reward for being good. But that's not the perfect gift.
- [5 : 4 2] The perfect gift is for people like you and me, who are characterized by a little girl that you've all heard of, who had a little curl right in the middle of her forehead.
- And when she was good, she was very, very good. And when she was bad, she was horrible. And that comes closer to a description of who you are and who I am.

And the reality of that is reckoned when the perfect gift is given. And the gift is perfect not because it goes to a perfect person as a perfect reward for perfect behavior.

The gift is perfect because of the heart of the one who gives it. And God has designed for us, who sometimes are very good and sometimes are horrible, God has chosen to give us a gift, which is the wonderful expression of who he is.

And if you listen carefully as I read from the Gospel of John, you will know that this gift is Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and that he came to his own home and his own people received him not.

[7 : 17] But to all who received him, this perfect gift, that is, who believed in his name, he gave power to become the children of God.

The gift he has to give us is to make us his children. And if he had to wait until we were very, very good all the time, then Christmas would never happen.

Year after year would go by, and it would never happen. But Christmas has happened, and Jesus Christ has come as the perfect gift to very imperfect people to show us the nature of the love of God.

And we receive gifts at Christmas, and they must be primarily not to mark the deserving of the one who receives the gift, but to express the love of the one who gives it.

And that's what makes a perfect gift from us to somebody else. I want, just before I stop now, to remind you of people whom God has given as a gift to us as a congregation, and who are no longer with us.

[8 : 52] That doesn't mean that they've gone to heaven. It means that they're still very much part of the church militant, but they've gone to wonderful places.

Because their post office isn't that reliable, the postcard or Christmas card I would like to send them is our prayers for them as we remember them as part of our congregational family.

And I know you are very proud of these people. They bring a lot of richness to our life. And I'd like to remind you of who they are. So listen carefully and see if you recognize any or all of the names.

There's Drew and Judy MacDonald, and Drew is studying for the ministry in Anglican School of Theology in Halifax. And Mike and Karen Mason, who are in Hope, where Mike is writing and Karen is doctoring.

And Robin Taylor, who's gone to Belfast, where he's doctoring. And Jim and Louise, who this year have gone to Prince George to be youth director in a Presbyterian church there.

[10 : 07] And Dietrich and Joe Bartel. And Dietrich is teaching in the Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg. And David and Jill Hicks, who are teaching in the Deaf School in Ontario.

And Kendall Harmon, who's studying for the ministry in Pennsylvania. And Matthew Hill, who's studying for the ministry in Massachusetts. And Archdeacon Bill and Mary Ann Hawken, who spent time with us here.

And Pat and Rose Patterson in their parish in Duncan. And Brian and Judy Telfer in their parish in Gladesville, Australia. And Bob Wismer, who's studying for the ministry in Montreal.

And Jenny Wong, who's in charge of St. Matthias Church. And Steve and Fona Andrews.

And Steve is finishing his second year as a research assistant for John Stalk. And he's going to come back for ordination here in Canada.

[11 : 20] And Marcus Brockmule is studying in Cambridge to teach theology. And Andrew and Margaret Brockett have gone to Toronto, where Andrew is studying law.

And Matthew Allen is in Stony Plains, Alberta. He's actually in St. John's Shaughnessy right now. But he's teaching at St. John's Boys School there.

And Don and Margaret Cormack have gone back to Singapore. And he's teaching in a discipleship training center. And Joanne Curry is in Switzerland on her way back to Nepal.

And Rachel Dreidegger is back from Niger and is taking training in tropical medicine in Toronto. But she's here tonight, too.

And Evan and Jane Effa are continuing studies in medicine in London, Ontario. And Karen Goldstone studying nursing in Edmonton.

[12 : 21] And Beryl Gordon's retired and living in Toronto. And Roger and Sue Chilton are studying for the ministry in Oxford, England. And Johanna Kloss is teaching in a blind student school in Hong Kong.

And Margaret Kuhl is teaching in New York State University in Fredonia. And Seng Chuan and Jenny Ng have a congregation to which they minister in Singapore.

And Sue and Brian Salter are leading for Zimbabwe on Thursday of this week.

Helen Warkington is in Niger nursing there. And Jessica Bell is in Frobisher Bay. And there are others as well.

But those are the people who, having received the good and perfect gift, are in other places seeking to share that as we seek to share it with one another here in this congregation over this Christmas season.

[13 : 31] It's good to sort of send a prayer Christmas card to them. As we think of how much they have enriched the family of St. John's in years gone by.

And how much we pray that they will be used by God in wonderful places in many parts of the world. I think I forgot Helen Houston is from the call. And who also is here tonight.

So we can remember her as well. And give her our Christmas card. Her son. Thank you. The Lord be with you.

Let us pray. O God, who makest us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of thy only Son, Jesus Christ.

Grant that as we joyfully receive him for our Redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold him when he shall come to be our Judge, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end.

[14 : 53] O God, who art present in every place, we pray thee to protect with thy loving care our dear ones who are away from us.

Let thy fatherly hand direct them. Let thy fatherly hand direct them. Prosper them in thy way. Grant them daily strength for their daily needs.

And inspire in them an unwavering faith in thee, that they may live always to thy honor and glory through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

May he who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and things heavenly fill you with the sweetness of inward peace and goodwill.

And the blessing of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always.

[15 : 57] Amen. Be seated for a moment. There are three very brief announcements.

First of all, the services for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are on the back cover of tonight's bulletin. The family services are Christmas Eve at 7, and then the communion service on Christmas Day.

Secondly, there is apple juice. I believe it's hot apple juice and coffee and tea for all of us immediately following the closing parol of this service over in the Perry Hall.

Thirdly, you may have noticed that unlike most services, there hasn't been a formal offertory. There are sides of the back and fights at the back.

If you wish to leave an offering, you may do so as you leave. Now, we're going to sing our final hymn, or should I say final carol.

[17 : 04] It's number 228. But, please note, we will not sing verse 4 or verse 7. In a second hymn, I will be really ready for the Beatles mic by Cloud, and keeping comment reading or not wearing PMors.

So, to pass the back to me on the back of second était let Eminem. Here we are we go with time for each other. CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

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CHOIR SINGS Thank you.

Thank you.

[20 : 44] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.