

The most wonderful gift!

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[0 : 0 0] God so loved the world that he gave his only son probably the best known verse in the whole! of scripture perhaps the Lord is my shepherd gets there but certainly in the top two or three! and I wanted to talk and think a little bit about the most wonderful gift the most wonderful gift in my life and in my career and my work I've met many many people as have you lots and lots of people and as I meet people I'm interested in people and so I like to find out about them a little bit about where they're from and who they are and what they do and over the years I've met some really interesting people and some really clever people and some really gifted people it's rare to meet somebody who hasn't got any gift that I have met some folk who it takes a while to find what they're good at or what they who they are and I look around church this morning I look around the congregation I see gifted people

I see clever people beautiful people wise people and I'm envious I look at our wonderful musicians and singists and I think goodness me if only I could play one instrument not only is my wife a marvelous person and good looking but she's also can play many many instruments which leads to some resentment I can only play the fool I watch people who have done remarkable things in this building who can use power tools and drills without breaking it or drilling through something important or themselves and I admire that gift too

I admire that skill I can't do that I can do some things by the way if you look really hard and then topically for today there are people who can wrap presents really really well I have an ex-colleague an old colleague of mine who's written books on how to wrap presents and she told me that she was doing this and I laughed which wasn't necessarily the correct response and then she showed me the book and it's just lots of pictures of her wrapping presents and people buy it who knew?

well done I'm not in the premier league of wrapping presents but I can wrap bottles because my father was a pharmacist and in the days that he trained you had to wrap bottles in paper rather than put them in a carrier bag but however good you are at choosing gifts buying gifts wrapping gifts giving gifts none of that gets close to the most wonderful gift of all of Jesus Christ and we're here this morning to worship and to celebrate and to give thanks to that birth that birth of a child is always something to celebrate the birth of Jesus is a one-off and constantly life-changing and as we come into our celebration of Christmas and whatever you're doing for the rest of the day just want to focus for a moment on that verse that I read in John 3, 16 it's so well known because it's fundamental to who we are it's fundamental to what we do and although it's not typically a verse that's read at Christmas it's one which has so much to say on Christmas Day it starts with God's deep abiding love for you

God so loved the world now it sounds that that sounds like the world generic global and of course it is but it also God so loved you you you sitting in that chair or that pew or wherever you are God loves you profoundly deeply and abidingly if that's a word and we can't move from the point of Christmas Day without embedding for ourselves the love of God to you as an individual and to us as a community and to us as a world God loved us so much he sent Jesus we've heard the the passage from Luke chapter 2 about some angels turning up to some shepherds and then the shepherds going to see Jesus he sent Jesus because he knew there was no alternative why?

[6 : 33] because we have all fallen short of what God requires of us and it's not terribly trendy to preach about sin on Christmas Day so I'll not spend much time on it but we can't move away from why did Jesus come?

why do we have a Christmas Day? why did God send Jesus? because without that without that happening we would perish and God didn't want that God didn't want us to be separated from him what God wants is for us to be in communion with him in relationship with him both in our life here and our life eternal and that's a wonderful thing and that is a gift of God forgiveness of sin eternal life is a gift from God because he loves us so very much so profoundly and God knew God knew that the only way for us to be in relationship with him is for there to be the Easter story but it starts with the Christmas story the birth of a tiny vulnerable baby in inauspicious circumstances to two unknown people and he grew into the saviour of the world so Christmas is a celebration of the greatest miracle and the greatest gift you can ever know and whatever your gifts are that are under the tree

I haven't opened anything yet I don't know I don't know a little bit more sympathy would be fine would be fine it's alright we'll leave it but there are some presents with my name on because I peeped and later today when I'm allowed we'll be able to open them and there'll be some nice presents I'm sure and I hope and trust that there are presents for you and there'll be nice presents who knows what they are if it looks like a bicycle in wrapping paper it's probably a bicycle but whatever happens you've already received the greatest gift of all you've already received the most wonderful gift in Jesus it's impossible to list all the benefits of having been given the gift of Jesus in our lives in my life in your life but somewhere quietly today maybe when you have had more turkey than is good for you or if you're vegetarian more carrots than is good for you just sit and reflect with a cup of tea coffee whatever sit and reflect on what Jesus has done for you what he's done for you this year and what he promises to do next year we must never forget in the busy and complicated lives that we live in the busy and complicated world in which we live that

John 3.16 is a great place to start God so loved the world that he sent Jesus give thanks for that today give thanks for that every day and as for power drills and violins they're not that important bless you