

Sermon for December 24, 2017 – Christmas Eve Children’s Service

John 3:16 NIV84

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

Gift giving has two parts: the first part is the love the gift giver shows in choosing or making the gift – excited about the joy it will bring the recipient. The second part is the appreciation and love the recipient shows the gift giver by reacting to the gift and using it.

Could you imagine giving a really special gift to someone – spending lots of time and money to get it just right – only to see the recipient ignore your gift, or treat it as it were not all that special? That would really hurt, wouldn't it? On top of this, it might sadden you because the person you gave the gift to doesn't understand its value – how it was given to make his/her life better and bring happiness.

Yes, how a gift is received is often as important as how it's given.

Throughout this service you learned about the great gift God gave you at Christmas and the reason he gave it. *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.* Why? *So that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

Yes, God gave you the wonderful gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation all wrapped up in the birth of His Son. So, let me ask you: what are you going to do with this gift? Are you going to say, "Wow, thank you God," and proceed to throw it in some spiritual closet or drawer – only to forget about it? I pray not. Rather I hope that you receive God's gift in faith and love – wanting to learn more about the meaning it has for your life. I pray that you treasure this gift of Christ more than an iPhone X or Samsung Galaxy smartphone – using it every moment of every day of your life.

Why?

Because, even though the gift God gave you has (in and of itself) true and everlasting value, it won't do you a bit of good unless you receive it in faith, as the Bible clearly says: *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*"

Make no mistake about the gift God gives you in His Son: it proves beyond any shadow of a doubt that He loves you and is willing to forgive any and all sins you have committed against him. There is nothing you must do to be reconciled to God. The LORD has done it all.

However, just as no gift benefits you if you don't use it, the same is true of God's gift of His Son.

Use him. Treasure him. How? Not only by turning to Christ at Christmas, but throughout every day of the year. Call upon him in prayer: laying all your trials, sins and burdens at his feet – confessing your need for his forgiveness, mercy and help. Then remember what Jesus says in His Word: he took on human flesh and blood with the specific purpose of forgiving your sins and reconciling you to God. Take every

opportunity you can to read or hear about his promises to watch over and help you throughout your life – giving your existence true meaning and purpose.

God so loved you, that he gave you his one and only Son - just think of what that means! *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?* (Romans 8:32 NIV84)

Yes, God's Christmas gift is truly amazing. Don't let it, therefore, become like a holiday decoration that you only pull out once a year. Let the Christmas message of peace with God through Jesus sustain you every day of your life, as you look to him in love and take every opportunity you can to grown in faith and love through the study of his Word.

And why will you want to do this?

Because: *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" Amen.