

December 24, 2018
By Robert J. Tamasy

Focusing On The Gift -- And The Giver

With another Christmas just the wink of an eye away, most of us are filled with expectations. These expectations, of course, are based upon how we perceive the annual holiday. For many, it marks the end of the calendar year, a time for seasonal parties and events, and perhaps a chance to take a break from day-to-day workplace demands. For some, Christmas is an annoyance, an unnecessary interruption to "life as usual." Such people align with Scrooge, the star of Charles Dickens's classic, *A Christmas Carol*, wishing "bah humbug!" to everyone daring to exhibit a festive holiday spirit.

Purists regard Christmas as a solemn celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, the arrival of God to earth in human form. Most of us, to some degree, see Christmas as a time for gift giving - and gift receiving. Little thought, however, is devoted to gift givers. Maybe that should change.

Because at its heart, Christmas is about both the gift and the gift giver. A familiar Bible passage tells us, *"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" (John 3:16)*. In this single verse we read about both the Giver, God the Father, and the Gift, Jesus Christ the Son.

It is amazing that a single event - the birth of a baby in a remote town called Bethlehem - would have such an enduring, worldwide impact. In many nations, on every continent, Jesus' birth is celebrated in a variety of ways. Traditions for how the day is observed differ from culture to culture, but they all revolve

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about a singular declaration: *"The Word [Jesus Christ] became flesh and made His dwelling among us" (John 1:14).*

This Jesus went on to live an exemplary, sinless life; taught principles that work regardless of one's belief system; died on a cross, making what Christians believe to be the once and for all atonement for the sins of the world; and rose from the dead, demonstrating not only victory over death but also the offer of eternal life to anyone who would accept this unique gift: *"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).* Another passage states, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23).*

So we see a clear distinction. When we receive gifts during the Christmas season, or give them to others, our focus is on the gifts. "What will I receive?" or "Will they like what I am giving to them?" The central, original gift of Christmas - the Son of God - also encourages us to concentrate on the Giver, whose amazing gift of forgiveness for our sins reflects His love, grace and mercy, available to all who would receive this gift offered freely to them.

But this gift goes far beyond just forgiveness, because it also presents to us the opportunity of new life, a fresh start. As *2 Corinthians 5:17 declares, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"*

This Christmas, amid the festivities, sharing of good food, enjoying time with family and friends, exchanging of gifts, and for many of us, the assembling for celebratory worship, I hope you take time also to reflect, to ponder of the benevolence of the Giver, as well as the arrival of the Gift.

© 2018. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace; Tufting Legacies*; coauthored with David A. Stoddard, *The Heart of Mentoring*, and edited numerous other books, including *Advancing Through Adversity* by Mike Landry. Bob's biweekly blog is: www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com.

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Reflection/Discussion Question

1. When you think of Christmas, what are the first things that come to your mind?
2. Why do you think gift-giving is such an important part of many Christmas observances?
3. Do you view the birth of Jesus Christ just as a religious or historical event, or as something of much deeper significance? Explain your answer.
4. In considering the gifts of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins, as promised in the Scriptures, are these gifts you believe you have personally received? Why or why not?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Luke 2:1-20; John 1:1-4,12-14; Romans 5:1-2,8; 2 Corinthians 5:20-21; Galatians 2:20

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