

The Gift or Just a Box

Luke 2:11

Isn't it amazing how we tend to fixate on the immediate and the excitement of the present? We hang on to that which grips our attention and emotion until in time it loses its luster and attractiveness as it subtly fades into little more than a memory. Once it has passed, we are left with only the present as the common, mundane, and often meaningless again preoccupy our lives.

This maxim was never so perfectly portrayed than at our son's fourth birthday party. We had invited perhaps 10-12 of his friends for the traditional celebration of games, ice cream, cake in the shape of a Hot Wheel car, and then the presents. As the gifts were opened, many of which were opened by his friends, there were the oohs and ahs as each child claimed the gift as his own.

It was only a matter of minutes later that our son was nowhere to be found. After our initial frantic response, we found him in his room playing with a cardboard box that had contained his expensive, die cast Corgi car given to him by his parents. That was it; within an hour and a half, the party was over, and everyone went their way.

Over the years I have thought back to that time 37 years ago, especially at Christmas. Isn't interesting how history tends to repeat itself in the form of human nature? Apart from some crisis or climactic event, we really don't change. When our thoughts go back 2,000 years to what had to be the most phenomenal birthday "party" (if I could reverently use that term) it had to be like no other. We're told that the spectacular brilliance and movement of the stars would pale any of the most complex laser light shows of today. Theologians agree that the "multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God" surrounding the angels was at a minimum in the thousands.

And the gift? Although like a four year old with a Corgi, we cannot comprehend. The "Savior" was born—the One who as Savior would make it possible to transform an impersonal, legalistic religion into a personal, unconditional relationship of grace with God Himself. No, like a four year old we just can't comprehend or simply don't. Most of us come to the annual party, have the cake and ice cream, open the gifts, and forget who the party was for. And like a four year old we wind up in some corner, figuratively playing with the cardboard box, not realizing the value of the gift it had once contained.

By the way, the birthday story didn't end there. That die cast Corgi is one of my son's prized possessions. He keeps it on a shelf for all to see, and some day he will pass it on to Lucas. As matter of fact, that birthday gift in a sense has become his life. In a certain way, that gift became who he is and what he does, and no longer is he satisfied with a mundane cardboard box.

So what is it that has captured our attention and has become our life, who we are and what we do? A meaningless "cardboard box" or the gift of the Savior, Jesus Christ?

LIFE RESPONSE

1. This week **MEMORIZE** and **MEDITATE** on Isaiah 9:6, "*For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.*"
 - (a) To what extent do each of these names of Jesus permeate and shape your character?
 - (b) How can you best integrate these attributes more fully into your life and those of your family?
2. When we think about Jesus as **Savior**, how does it refine and define who we are, our life, identity in contrast to the event of His birth and life? Again, put in the context of Isaiah 9:6.

3. Too often many see Christ one who is there to call on Him to meet a particular need, for encouragement or to bail us out of a circumstance. What can we learn about the importance of truly knowing Him relationally as “Savior” in every aspect of life? How would you define the depth and understanding of such a relationship?
4. Have you truly received Him as Savior?
 - . . . If not, why not now?
 - . . . If so, how is He reflected in your life?

“The ideas that define western civilization are based on Christianity. Because some of these ideas have taken on a life of their own, we might have the illusion that we can abandon Christianity while retaining them. This illusion is just that. Remove Christianity and the ideas fall too.” - Atheist, Fredrich Nietzsche quoted by Dinesh D’Souza - How Christianity Shaped the West - Imprimis, November 08

THE ATTRACTION OF THE GIFT

- The revelation of God
 - Luke 2:9
 - Ex 33:20
 - The reality of Savior
 - Luke 2:11
 - Savior/Messiah
 - Redemption
- Evangel

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE GIFT

Prophecy

Born in Bethlehem

Micah 5:2

Born of a virgin

Isa 7:14

Preceded by John the Baptist

Isa 40:3; Mal. 3:1

A child/leader born

Isa 9:6-7

His name – Emmanuel

Isa 7:14

Known as Son of God

Ps 2:7-8

From the throne of David

Ps 132:11

Fulfillment

Luke 2:4-6; Matt 2:1

Luke 1:22,23; Matt 1:22-23

Luke 1:17

Matt 1:32-33

Matt 1:22-23

Luke 1:32,35

Luke 1:32

THE ANTICIPATION OF THE GIFT

Promise to the nation	Heb 8-9; Gen 12:1-3
Promise to Mary (Zacharias/Elizabeth)	Matt 1:21; Luke 1:12-25
Promised of John the Baptist	John 1:29
Promise of the cross	Isa 53

THE APPROPRIATION OF THE GIFT

Taking that which Jesus provided and making it personal.

- As Savior John 1:12
- In character Isa 9:6
 - Wonderful Counselor John 16:13; 1 Cor 2:16
 - Mighty God John 4:24; Phil 3:10
 - Eternal Father Luke 6:20-26; Ps 68:4-6
 - Prince of Peace John 16:33; 14:27; Eph 2:13-16