

Sermon Notes

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The
Greatest
Gift.

12-18-11



Reflections

Have you ever stopped and asked yourself what the best and greatest gift that you ever received might be? It might be easier to think of the least wonderful gift you ever received but let's think back over the years and try to remember what still ranks as the best gift that you ever got for any occasion. Do you have it in mind? Can you remember from whom you received it? How old were you? What was the occasion? Do you still have that gift? Do you remember how you felt at the moment you first knew that it was yours? Now let's add to our review some of the "people gifts" that we've received. How about your first love? How about your first son or daughter? Have you noticed that it is easier to remember the people that were "given" to you than the things that you received? The best gifts turn out to be the ones we love and have shared our life with over time.

The world received the greatest gift of all when Jesus was born in that lowly cave in Bethlehem yet He has been rejected by many who He came to save and restore to fellowship with God. John reminds us that: *He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:10-13 NKJ)* Jesus became the gift of life through His death on the cross and His resurrection and He still offers the gift of eternal life to all who will receive it. No gift is greater or more profoundly important than the salvation that Jesus still offers to those who will accept Him. Not only did Jesus give us the opportunity to be reconciled to God through His sacrifice, He also has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives us the assurance of our relationship to Jesus. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (Romans 8:14-16 NKJ)*

We, mainly my wife, taught our children to send thank-you notes to all those from whom they received gifts. Regardless of the occasion, each gift-giver was sent a personally written note saying thank-you for your generosity and often how the gift would be used and enjoyed. In

following this plan of response, our children were taught to have a heart of gratitude for all of life's gifts and blessings.

Jesus taught that He had come to serve rather than to be served, and in His ministry He healed many. At one point in time, ten men with leprosy came to Him seeking their healing. Jesus healed and cleansed them of their leprosy as He sent them to the priests to be declared clean. As they went they were cleansed. One, who was a Samaritan, returned and worshiped at the feet of Jesus in gratitude for his healing. Jesus responded... *And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, ¹⁶ and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? ¹⁸ "Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well." (Luke 17:15-19 NKJ)* It is important to note that Jesus responded to this man's faith even though he was not a Jew. It reminds us that it is by faith that we must live regardless of our life and background. He has said that all who believe on Him can be saved.

Among our church family there are many who have been healed, restored to relationships, and have had prayers answered for their need when it was brought to the Lord in prayer, because in addition to the greatest gift He has given us, our salvation, Jesus continues to provide for our needs every day and in every circumstance. Each time we receive from Him these blessings, we should respond like the one leper, and he a foreigner in Jewish thinking, when he returned to Jesus and worshipped Him in faith and gratitude.

Think of how you felt when a grandchild or son or daughter began to bring to you the drawings that they had labored over. That simple gift was, no doubt, met with much gratitude and praise for the heart behind such a gift. In fact, most of us still might have a file of some of those earliest gifts. Remember how their little faces glowed in the excited tones with which we received and displayed their gift? Now let's be reminded that we come to Jesus as a child who is seeing, through the eyes of faith, our father from whom we have received our salvation, and our sustainer who meets our every need on a daily basis. Does that not fill your heart with gratitude? It should. There has been no greater gift offered to us than that gift of His salvation through His sacrifice on the cross. It truly is the greatest gift. **Pastor Doug**