

The Gift of God

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. Let's pray, shall we? Father God, you are so good to us, so gracious, so merciful, so loving.

And Father, thank you that this day we take time to remember the greatest gift of all that you've given to us in your son, the Lord Jesus. So may all that we look at in these next moments together, may they be glorifying to him.

And would you speak to us to your glory, we ask. Amen. Well, a very merry Christmas. And now we get down to the real business of Christmas.

Who can remember what they got for Christmas last year? Who can remember what they got last year? Put your hand up if you can. That's amazing, isn't it?

Put your hand up if you've already opened a present this year. If you've already opened a present this year, there's some great restraint I can see in Brunsfield. Put your hand up if you've still got more presents to open when you get home.

[1 : 06] We weren't allowed to open any presents in my house. Put your hand up if you've already got exactly what you wanted for Christmas. Oh, I think the parents did very, very well.

You're right. It was. What I want to talk to you about this morning is presents. Is gifts. Is what they're all about and why they're important.

For example, if you shelled out unimaginatively and gave the ones that you love all the presents from the 12 days of Christmas, Christmas, you would have spent a remarkable 27,097 pounds and 55 pence.

It's quite an expensive Christmas. The most expensive Christmas present on the list would be the seven swans coming in at just over 10,000 pounds.

The two turtle doves, on the other hand, have increased the most since last year. They're up to about 300 pounds, which is a 30% increase on what you would have paid for Christmas 2015.

[2 : 19] The reason being is there is a global shortage of turtle doves. If you're looking for a new venture for 2017, turtle dove breeding could be incredibly lucrative. The 12 drummers drumming, 11 pipers piping, 9 dancing ladies and 8 mills are making will all cost you more than last year, principally because of increases in the living wage.

However, there is one gift that you would have paid less for this year, and that is the partridge in the pear tree. The pear tree has remained constant since 2015.

However, partridges are about 15 pounds cheaper because there is a surplus because they've started breeding them in South America. I'm sure, though, many of you broke with the tradition. You've all got more imagination than just shelling out for random birds, random people and gold rings. So I wonder what you did get.

I've been passing Mrs Gemmel a lot of hints over the years about what I'd like to be in my stocking. This was the first thing I wanted, a chess set. Not just any chess set, but this chess set.

[3 : 33] The Aspie chess set, retailing at 44,000 pounds. I also wanted a skateboard to try and be cool. Now I'm going to be unemployed. I thought it would be cool to kick around town on a skateboard.

But this skateboard, the Louis Vuitton skateboard, 8,250 pounds. Also, if I've got to go for job interviews, it's important to get the right look. So I thought cufflinks would help.

And not just any cufflinks. But the Foundry 47 cufflinks made of decommissioned AK-47s, retailing at 30 grand. Hopefully I'll have to sign a contract.

And it's important when you sign a contract to have a nice pen. And I had in mind this one. The Goldsmith Jack Row pen, 43,500 pounds.

And also you have to be clean shaven for a job interview. So I needed a new razor because I don't have one. 100 grand for the Zafiro razor. Now I know my wife loves me.

[4 : 33] So I'm pretty sure my stocking will be bursting with all of those presents and lots more besides. But I wonder, what did you want most for your Christmas?

What gifts are you looking to open this afternoon? And I want to tell you about a gift that's available for all of us. That makes all of those look like knickknacks and trash.

A gift that is utterly amazing. A gift that is available to all of us. And I want to tell you the story of it from John chapter 4.

Now the story takes place next to a village in the back of nowhere called Sychar up in Samaria. It is the middle of the day.

It is boiling hot. There is no one around. The streets are utterly deserted like the streets of Edinburgh driving in this morning.

[5 : 31] There's nobody about. It's the middle of the day. All the people have been doing their work early in the morning to escape the heat. And now they're back home enjoying life.

But in this scene, in this village in Sychar, there is one lonely figure sitting by a well. He has journeyed a long way from down south in Judea. His name is Jesus.

And he sits there alone. Jesus had travelled with his disciples, but they've all dispersed to try and find food. And Jesus sits there alone, resting after the long journey.

Jesus sits there alone in the boiling heat. And all of a sudden, a woman, a lone woman comes to the well to draw water.

She is notorious in Sychar. She has a bad reputation. She has been married five times. And is having a relationship and living with a man she is not married to.

[6 : 37] She's found life very unsatisfying. She's alone. And she comes to get water in the middle of the day because it's just less hassle than seeing and listening to all the other women make her feel horrible.

And reminding her what a mess she's made of her life. And she gets to the well and she sees Jesus, this low Jewish man, as a Samaritan woman.

And she's very anxious. This meeting is socially unacceptable. Jesus was a Jew and she was a Samaritan and they don't mix. Jesus was a man and she was a woman.

And they don't mix. Jesus was a holy man and she was in everyone's eyes an notorious sinner and they don't mix. This meeting breaks every social convention imaginable.

Not only were they in the same space by the well, but Jesus sparks up a conversation. He says this, will you give me something to drink?

[7 : 47] The woman was shocked and all she could think of saying was commenting on how dangerous it was for the two of them to be in the same place alone, chatting together.

And the woman said, you are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink? Jesus then spoke a single sentence and it's this that I want us to remember this morning. He said this to her. If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

Jesus here is saying something absolutely remarkable about the greatest gift that he is.

The greatest gift that's available to each of us today. He refers to himself as the gift of God. This woman comes utterly dissatisfied in life.

[9 : 02] Is very worried about the conversation there happening. And right in the middle, Jesus says, if you knew the gift of God. He says, I am the gift of God.

I am priceless, eternally valuable, unique, unfathomable. I am an undeserved gift that God has given you. Jesus says to the woman, if you knew who I am.

If only you could see who it is standing right in front of your face. If only you got that this person speaking to you wasn't some faceless Jewish stranger loitering near and where.

If you could only see, if you would only realize that you are having a conversation with God himself. God's perfect gift of his perfect son to a lost and fallen world.

Not only is Jesus a gift, but Jesus gives us gifts. He says, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that asked you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

[10 : 08] Jesus, the gift who gives a gift. The gift of God isn't only the giving of his son, but also what the son is able to give. He promises us living water.

Water. Eternally satisfying, soul quenching, infinitely refreshing, perpetually fulfilling, always fresh, pure water.

Jesus says, if only you got who I was, I would give you a gift that's of infinite value. And you would receive eternal life.

The bewildered woman asks some more questions and they have a conversation during which reveals that he knows everything about her. He knows about all the husbands, all the men, all the gossip, all the slander, all the mess.

Jesus knows about her reputation, her relationships. He knows about her ruined life and her great remorse. And Jesus stands in front of her and says, he is God's gift.

[11 : 10] Come to satisfy her deepest longing by giving her another chance through new and eternal life. Living water that will eternally satisfy.

The truth is that Jesus who spoke those words on that day in Sychar in Samaria speaks those same words to each of us today. That if we get who he is, we can come to him and ask that he would be our king and that he would give us living water.

So when we open our gifts today, let's remember these words. If you knew the gift of God, who Jesus is, you would ask him and he would give you living water.

So with that, I am finished. We're going to sing another song and then our time together is over. But please ponder these things when you go home to eat ridiculous quantities of turkey and rip open presents.

There is a present that God has given you this Christmas that will last for all eternity. The gift of his son who came to live and die for you that you might receive from him living water, eternal life.

[12 : 22] Jesus says, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that you asked for a drink, you would have asked him and he would give you living water. Let me pray.

Father God, I thank you that the most precious gift that any of us can receive this Christmas is to receive from you the gift of your son. And that in him we might have eternal life.

So, Lord, may these truths be precious to us. Father, may they be the things that we're building our lives around. May Jesus be the king of who we are. So, Lord, give us this living water we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.