
“He Chose A Baby”

Luke 2:1-7

"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to his own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

Luke 2:1-7 (NIV)

Children's Sermon: "The Best Gift—A Peanut Manger"

Needed—"Peanut Manger": Toilet paper cores, cut into quarters—half in the middle and sliced down the middle. Hot glue a bottom and top section to each other so that each is concave making a manger as pictured. Hot glue some grass or lichen into the bottom and place a small 2"x2" piece of cloth for a blanket. Take a shelled peanut and, using a fine point felt marker, make eyes, a nose and a mouth on one end of the peanut. Then place a shelled peanut in the manger.

What's the best Christmas gift you can give this Christmas? (Take answers). Here's the gift that I chose to give. Here it is (Hold a peanut). What do you think? Is it a good gift?

Actually it's the best give I can give. Just watch. First, I take this peanut. Then I get a felt pen and make a little face on the peanut. Then, I get a toilet paper core, cut it in half lengthwise and then in half width-wise. When I glue the halves together, this is what I get. What is it? It's a manger. And what do I put in it? My peanut.

Guess who the peanut is? That's right. It's the baby Jesus. And tonight that's my gift for you. Baby Jesus in the manger.

Why is that the best gift? Because the best gift we can give anyone this Christmas is Jesus. So, here's my gift for you. And here's another peanut. You can go home and prepare to give someone else the best gift they can have—the gift of the Baby Jesus.

And here's three important questions. What do we want everyone to know about the Baby Jesus? He loves us! And why did He come to earth as a Baby? Because He loves us! And why are we so happy He came to us? Because He loves us.

Finally, why do we love the Baby Jesus? Because He loves us. And THAT is the best gift we can give—Jesus' love. Merry Christmas to all of you!

Sermon:

Decisions, Decisions, Decision. Perhaps there's no time of the year during which we have to make decisions than we do Christmas. There's all kinds of decisions about how we're going to celebrate, where we're going to celebrate, with whom we're going to celebrate, what we're going to get and, the most important decision, how much will we spend?

Going through the stores one can hear two things: the musical sounds of Christmas and the repeating question, “What should I get for so-and-so for Christmas?”

For all of us, perhaps the hardest Christmas decision is trying to decide what to get that special someone in our lives. It can be a spouse, a child, a neighbor or even a favorite grandchild (or favorite grandchildren). Looking for the perfect gift is hard.

If you’re looking for the perfect Christmas gift for a man, I’d like to offer you some suggestions I saw the other day. It’s called, “*Rules For Buying Men Gifts.*” I don’t know who wrote it, but it sounds Andy Rooney-ish.

Rules For Buying Men Gifts

Rule #1: When in doubt...buy him a cordless drill. It does not matter if he already has one. I have a friend who owns 17 and he has yet to complain. As a man, you can never have too many cordless drills. For that matter any power tool is a good choice. He may not need it, or know what it does, but it will look good hung on the peg board in the garage.

Rule #2: If you cannot afford a cordless drill, buy him anything with the word ratchet or socket in it. Men love saying those two words. "Hey George, can I borrow your ratchet?" "OK. Bye-the-way, are you through with my 3/8-inch socket yet?"

Rule #3: If you are really, really broke, buy him anything for his car. A 99-cent ice scraper, a small bottle of deicer or something to hang from his rear view mirror. Men love gifts for their cars.

Rule #4: Do not buy men socks. Do not buy men ties. If God had wanted men to wear ties and bathrobes, he would have made men with collars on their necks.

Rule #5: You can buy men new remote controls to replace the ones they have worn out. And, to let him know you really love him, get him a spare battery for the remote. This will keep him happy for years.

Rule #6: Do not buy a man liquor. If you do, it will sit in a cupboard for 23 years. Real men drink whiskey or beer.

Rule #7: Buy men label makers. This is almost as good of a gift as cordless drills. Within a couple of weeks there will be labels absolutely everywhere. "Socks. Shorts. Cups. Saucers. Door. Lock. Sink." You get the idea. No one knows why. But it’s a great gift.

Rule #8: Never buy a man anything that says "some assembly required" on the box. It will ruin his Christmas and he will stay awake all night wondering why he still has parts left over.

Rule #9: Good places to shop for men include Lowes, Home Depot, John Deere, Valley RV Center, and Les Schwab Tire. NAPA Auto Parts and Sears Clearance Centers are also excellent men's stores. It doesn't matter if he doesn't know what it is. Just imagine what he'll say when he sees the box with the NAPA auto parts label on it.

"From NAPA Auto, eh? Must be something I need. Hey! Isn't this a starter for a '68 Ford Fairlane? Wow! Thanks."

Rule #10: Men love chainsaws. Never, ever, buy a man you love a chainsaw. If you don't know why...please refer to Rule #8 and what happens when he gets a label maker.

Rule #11: It's hard to beat a really good wheelbarrow or an aluminum extension ladder. Never buy a real man a step ladder. It must be an extension ladder.

Rule #12: Clamps. Men can never have enough quick grip clamps. No one knows why.

Rule #13: Buy your man Duct Tape. This is a man's most universal repair tool. All men know, if you can't fix it, duct it.

So that's how you get a man a perfect gift. How did you do, ladies?

No matter what the gift, once we make a decision to get the perfect gift, there's nothing that will stop us from getting it. Why? Because finding—and giving—the perfect Christmas gift is one of the greatest ways we show our love for that special someone. Nothing says, “I love you” like giving—and getting—the *perfect* Christmas gift.

That's what Christmas is all about. Celebrating the perfect Christmas gift. Tonight, we don't focus on the perfect gift you have given or received from someone else. We focus on the greatest and most perfect gift, the gift of Jesus Christ, *straight* from God Himself.

Luke describes God's perfect gift in His Gospel.

“While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” Luke 2:6-7 (NIV)

At this first Christmas there were no Christmas trees, no Christmas decorations, no outside lights, holly or mistletoe. In fact, there wasn't even any electricity for these, not to mention that Mary and Joseph didn't decorate their house for Christmas. Hmm...come to think of it, they didn't even have a house to decorate.

And yet, to Mary and Joseph, that first Christmas was the perfect Christmas. Why? Because they knew that God had chosen for them the most perfect gift they could ever have. For them and for us, the gift He chose was a Baby. A baby boy. And His name was “Jesus.”

Oh, what a gift it was! And what a gift it continues to be tonight. Yes, the gift God chose was the perfect gift. He chose a Baby...to save you and me.

When we receive the perfect gift at Christmas, don't we tell everyone about it? Don't we show it off? Aren't we proud that we got such a perfect gift? Of course we do!

If Jesus is our most perfect gift, ought not we tell everyone about it? God took thousands of years preparing us for that special, perfect gift. And when He chose a Baby, He chose the *best* and *most perfect* gift we could ever have—Jesus.

Are we proud of that gift? Don't we want to show it off?

Over the years, it seems that our society has increasingly forgotten God's perfect gift. Every year it seems that “Merry Christmas” has given way to “Happy Holiday” or “Seasons Greetings.”

A couple of weeks ago I shared with the Sunday Morning Bible Class how I was in a Family Bookstore in Saginaw. These stores are Christian Bookstores. I went to the cashier to pay for some items and the cashier said, “Thank you. Happy Holidays.” To which I said, “Shouldn't we be saying, ‘Merry Christmas?’”

Here's a poem that I believe describes what's happened to Christmas.

T'was the night before Christmas and all through the town
Not a sign of Baby Jesus was anywhere to be found.

The people were all busy with Christmas time chores
Like decorating, and baking, and shopping in stores.

No one sang "Away in a manger, no crib for a bed".
Instead, they sang of Santa dressed-up in bright red.

Mama watched Martha Stewart, Papa drank beer from a tap.
As hour upon hour the presents they'd wrap

When what from the T.V. did they suddenly hear?
'Cept an ad.. which told of a big sale at Sears.

So away to the mall they all flew like a flash...
Buying things on credit... and others with cash!

And, as they made their way home From their trip to the mall,
Did they think about Jesus? Oh, no... not at all.

Their lives were so busy with their Christmas time things
No time to remember Christ Jesus, the King.

There were presents to wrap and cookies to bake.
How could they stop and remember who died for their sake?

A mother took her three-year-old daughter to church for the first time. The church lights were lowered, and then the choir came down the aisle, carrying lighted candles. All was quiet until the little one started to sing in a loud voice, "*Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you...*"

That’s what we’re here for tonight, isn’t it. We’re not here to exchange presents, have family dinner or see Santa Claus. We’re here for one purpose: to say “Happy Birthday to you, Jesus.”

Happy Birthday, Jesus. Happy Birthday. Thank you for giving us the most perfect gift of yourself to save us from our sins. Thank you for the perfect gift of heaven.

And, Jesus, because you gave us the perfect gift, we’ll not just sing “Happy Birthday.” But we’ll give you the greatest gift we can offer—ourselves.

Yes, Happy Birthday, Jesus. Receive the gift of ourselves...for you. Amen.

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