

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
Executive Pastor Carey Dean
December 25, 2022
The Gift
James 1:17

My grandmother taught me many things. Even though she is now with the Lord, there is not a Christmas that comes, that I do not remember and treasure her all the more. I was the oldest grandchild, and yes, I was her favorite. Her love of giving and my love of receiving was a perfect match. But over the years, I changed. The older I got, the more my joy grew in not the receiving, but in watching my grandmother give. She lived to give. No doubt most have come into this room overflowing because you have been able to give your perfect gifts to people you love finally.

We have been created in God's image. The joy to give is not a unique or special personality trait. The joy of giving comes from our Creator, who gives and gives and gives with infinite joy. God's generosity is on display from Genesis to Revelation. The giving of God's only Son represents the epicenter of His generosity.

On this Christmas morning, we want to celebrate this big truth found in this simple belief statement: God is the giver.

James 1:17 ESV

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

1. GOD GAVE HIS BREATH OF LIFE

Genesis 2:7

7 then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

God took the dust He created and formed Adam. And out of Adam he formed Eve. The dust represents both the beginning and end of Adam's earthly life. But Adam's life did not come from the earth, it came out of God Himself. This moment is the climax of God's good creation. The breath of God became the life of Adam. And God declared It to be very good. This morning the first gift of God we celebrate is God's breath of life. We are living beings made in His image because God is the giver of life.

Our need for a Savior entered when Sin entered the heart of Adam and Eve. God invited them to enjoy all of His creation, but not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Satan tempted them, and they said, "yes" to sin and "no" to God. Instead of leaving us forever dead in our sin, God's plan was to redeem us back to Himself by giving us gifts we did not deserve. But before we could place faith in a Redeemer, we first had to understand our lostness in sin

After rescuing His people from Egypt's captivity, God brought Israel to Mount Sinai. It is here that another Gift of God was given. Sometimes love gives a gift we didn't ask for or even want, but desperately need. That is exactly what God did for His people. This leads us to this morning's second gift from God.

2. GOD GAVE HIS LAW

Holy people don't need the law, but sin-filled people do. God's law is good and holy. It exposes everything holy in God and unholy in us. The purpose of God's Law is that we would agree with God and declare...

Romans 3:23

*23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
But the law also served as a tutor and guardian until Christ came.*

Galatians 3:24

24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

But God didn't give us His law and then isolate us in the hopelessness of our sin. God was not silent to His people. Instead of silence, God sent prophet after prophet to speak God's words of both hope and warning.

3. GOD GAVE HIS PROMISES

Hebrews 1:1

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets

This horn represents our next gift from God. This is a shofar which is made from a ram's horn. The shofar is familiar to us in the story of Abraham and Isaac. It is the infamous moment when God commanded Abraham to go to the mountain and offer up his son Isaac. As Abraham's obedience was about to be completed, God interrupted and asked for the ram in the thicket instead. This shofar symbolizes the voice of God to His people. It was used to call the people of Israel into special gatherings and celebrations, being warned of danger, and going into battle.

The Old Testament is no less than the voice of God himself. (Lenski) "At many times" — quantity. Instead of saying it once and being done with it, He spoke to generation after generation through prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel. "In many ways" — quality. His voice has always been and will forever be unlike any other voice. Creation knows the voice of its Creator. His voice holds our confident hope because His promises are proven true every time.

Now that the Law has done its work and exposed the heart that is in sin, the cry of God's People became, "Come, God who is with us, Come and Rescue us from ourselves..."

Throughout December, we have been lighting one of the candles in the Advent Wreath. With each candle lighting, we said,

“O Come, O Come, PEACE,” and PEACE came

“O Come, O Come, HOPE,” and HOPE came

“O Come, O Come, JOY,” and JOY came

“O Come, O Come, LOVE,” and LOVE came

And last night we lit the center candle. This candle represents the fullness, source, and means of Peace, Hope, Joy, and Love. This center candle we say, “O Come, O Come, Jesus.” And Jesus, the Light of the World, came to defeat the darkness in us and all round us. The fourth gift is why we are here this Christmas morning.

4. GOD GAVE HIS ONLY SON

John 3:16–17

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Dust: Jesus was not created from dust. The Son of God became the Son of Man by leaving Heaven’s throne and walking on this dust like you and me.

Law: Jesus came not to condemn the law but to fulfill it.

Promise: Jesus is the promised Messiah. Before Jesus came, God’s voice was heard through the prophets. When Jesus came, God’s voice was clearly and directly heard from the Son of God’s lips and life. Which leads us to the fifth gift of the morning. The fifth gift we celebrate actually comes with a mixture of joy and sorrow.

5. JESUS GAVE HIS LIFE

Galatians 1:4

4 (Jesus Christ) who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age

God gave His Son not to set up an earthly kingdom, but to die for our sins. On that cross, He gave the gift of salvation to us. On that cross, He gave us something we could never achieve on our own, forgiveness for our sins. On that cross, His death became our opportunity to live. On that cross, Christ overcame all of death’s curse and sin’s power.

But death could not hold Him! Because of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection, death is swallowed up in victory. And we cry out...O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?

The Gifts of God continue to magnify themselves from glory to glory. But all gifts have Jesus at their epicenter. The gifts of God prior to Christ's coming point to Him. The gifts after Christ's coming, point to Him! Christ stands as THE GIFT of God to us. God came not only to be with us but to live in us.

6. GOD GAVE HIS HOLY SPIRIT

As a believer in Christ, the gift of the Spirit isn't outside of us, but inside of us. The Holy Spirit is our helper, convictor of sin, teacher of God's word, guide into wisdom, and sanctifier of who I have been made to be in Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:12

12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

And our 7th and final gift this morning is...

7. GOD GIVES ETERNAL LIFE

This final gift is an eternally special one. Jesus didn't just come to earth to save us from sin. He came to save us from sin and to God. His salvation affords us a life everlasting with God Himself. Jesus wants us not to simply know the story about Him, he wants us to know Him personally and intimately for all eternity. He calls us sons and daughters, His sheep, His church, His Body, and His bride. We are forever His bride! This wedding ring represents a relationship that is a picture of what is to come. Jesus is dressing us as His bride, and we will forever abide with Him.

1 John 2:25

25 And this is the promise that he made to us — eternal life.