

## **One Size Fits All**

### **Christmas Day 2011**

If your family is anything like mine, I'm reasonably sure that within the past 24 hours there has been a phrase or two that you have both heard and spoken multiple times. And no, I'm not referring to *Merry Christmas*, although I'm certain that's rolled off your lips plenty of times over the past few days.

Picture this scene. Everyone is sitting down to open presents. You unwrap a package and open the box, and what you find is that it contains an item of clothing of one type or another. Perhaps it's a shirt, a blouse, a sweater, or something like that. Now the person giving you the gift has one primary thought in their mind as you open the box. They are thinking, "I hope he/she likes it." In fact, they might even ask, "Do you like it?"

However, you, the one receiving the gift, is likely to be thinking, "I hope it fits." So one person is thinking or saying, "I hope he likes it" and the other is thinking or saying, "I hope it fits." My guess is that those two phrases have been uttered a time or two in the past 24 hours.

Now I believe there's a lesson in that observation. Simply put, our choices in gift giving may not suit, please, or fit the person for whom the gift is intended. We have different tastes and preferences in what we wear. When we buy something for another person, we trust that we understand their preferences and have correctly estimated their size. Who hasn't made a mistake in that regard?

According to the national retail association, the number three gift that's returned the day after Christmas every year is a clothing item of one sort or another. It either did not fit, or the person receiving the gift did not like it. You may very well be returning something in the days ahead.

You see, no matter how well we think we know someone, there will always be mistakes as it relates to gift giving, and that's because we falsely assume what the person needs or prefers in light of what *we* think they need or prefer.

Now as I thought about that, it struck me that God, in his infinite wisdom, knows what we need far better than we do. Quite literally, he knows our size and preferences. And further, the gifts he gives have eternal significance, quite unlike the gifts we opened last night and this morning.

So with that thought in mind, I want to discuss briefly what from God's perspective represents one gift that fits everyone, one gift that meets everyone's need, and of course that gift is what we celebrate today; the gift of a Savior. There are three things about this particular gift that I want to mention this Christmas morning. Let me identify them for you and then we will briefly talk about each one.

First, God's gift of Christmas fits everyone precisely because it is **God's** gift, and he makes no mistakes in gift giving. When he gives a gift, there is no return needed. Second, it fits everyone because it is a glorious gift. It has worth far beyond anything we might imagine. Its worth is eternal. The full benefit of this gift cannot be realized until that glorious day when we see God face to face. And then finally, his gift fits everyone because it is a generous gift. It's given without cost to us, yet it's worth is impossible to calculate. Thus, the gift of a Savior is **God's** glorious and generous gift, something that's needed by everyone and something that fits everyone perfectly.

Now as it relates to it being God's gift, one way to demonstrate that is to understand that it is something that's been in the mind of God from eternity past. I'm not sure when you started thinking about the gifts you'd like to purchase this Christmas. Perhaps for some of us, we were still puzzled about what to get right up to the last minute. But that last minute scramble for the perfect gift is not something that applies to God.

The Apostle Peter put it well when he said that Jesus came according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. Everything about the coming of Christ, the timing of his birth, the place of his birth, the means of his birth, as well as the events surrounding his birth went according to God's predetermined plan. He was not scrambling around at the last minute thinking about the perfect gift or looking for a way to make it happen. Christ's birth, including every detail surrounding it, was in the mind of God from eternity past. He orchestrated all of human history up to that point to bring Christ into the world at the perfect time. Who but God could do that?

But there's more to prove that Christ was truly **God's** gift. Not only was it his plan perfectly conceived and executed, it also fulfilled his purposes in every respect. As it relates to his purpose in coming, Jesus himself stated very directly what it was. In the gospel of Luke, he said that his purpose in coming was "to seek and to save the lost." Again, who but God could bring about the birth of a Savior who not only came at the right time according to a predetermined plan, but who also came to rescue and redeem men from their sin?

So can you see that those two aspects of Christmas demonstrate that the birth of Christ is God's doing, thereby making Christmas God's gift? And it is precisely because it is God's gift that it's perfect. His planning and his purpose make what we celebrate this morning a single gift that fits all people for all time. One size fits all.

But there is more. Not only is the birth of Christ God's gift; it is a glorious gift. Now I don't know about you, but the word "glory" is not part of my regular vocabulary. Yet it is a significant part of the Bible's vocabulary. The words glory or glorious appear in the Bible in excess of 400 times. Literally, the word means unspeakable, inexpressible, abundant, and immeasurable; splendor, honor, dignity, reverence and reputation. Wow! Given that definition, who but God qualifies? And further, as the only one who qualifies, can you see that all of his actions and all of his gifts are glorious as well? In other words, how can a wholly glorious God give his children a gift that's anything less than perfectly glorious?

I want you to listen to something Jesus said that demonstrates that the purpose for which he came was all about glory. In his final prayer before he went to the cross he said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.”

In that short passage, the concept of God’s glory demonstrated in Christ’s earthly activities is mentioned a total of five times. Everything about Christ is all about glory. God in Christ did something beyond human comprehension and understanding. What he did is glorious beyond our ability to adequately express. The gift of Christ is beyond the capacity of human words to describe. It’s truly an utterly glorious gift. And as such, it is a gift that everyone needs, thereby showing that the gift of Christmas is truly one gift that fits all.

But there is one last point to make as it relates to the gift of Christ. Not only is it God’s glorious gift, it is an exceedingly generous gift. Think of it this way. It’s a gift of eternal value and is absolutely unattainable under any circumstances apart from freely receiving it from God by his grace.

I did some research this week on the word *generous*. What I discovered is that it is an early 14<sup>th</sup> century French word. In its original usage, it refers to an unselfish, noble, unbounded, bounteous and gracious expression of kindness toward someone of lower rank. It’s a word that was originally used if a person of nobility acted kindly toward an individual of lower standing.

How fitting a definition as we consider God’s generous gift of Christ! God the Father looked upon our lowly estate, separated from him because of our sin, and bounteously, graciously, kindly and unselfishly sent his Son so that we might be redeemed from our sin and subsequently have an eternal relationship with him. Do you see the awesomeness of that? Why would God do that for the likes of us? Why?

Well, the only answer to that question lies in the first part of what we read in John 3:16; “For God so loved the world that he gave...” And note, he did not just give; he gave generously. He gave his Son to a people who are utterly unworthy and undeserving. Thus, the only way to fathom the generosity of Christmas from God’s perspective is to frame it in the context of his love for us; and to recall that God, who is of infinitely greater rank than we, condescended to generously give us the gift of his Son.

Now I want to take the three points I’ve made this Christmas morning and make them real for us. You see, in the midst of tinsel, ornaments, lights, squealing kids, gift giving mistakes, great meals, holiday travel and such who could argue that our culture has not attached to Christmas lots of stuff that shrouds what it means from God’s perspective.

Christ’s birth, Christmas, is God’s gift. He did something far beyond human comprehension, something only he could do. His plan to send a Savior was in his mind for all eternity. And he sovereignly orchestrated the course of human history in order to give us his perfect gift. He determined the time, the place, the means, the purpose and the final outcome. Yes, truly Christ is God’s gift.

But in addition, it is a glorious gift, a gift indescribable in its magnitude, its impact and its eternal implications for all mankind. It's a gift that all men need, and it never needs to be returned. It's a gift all men would be very, very wise to accept. It's freely available for men of all ages no matter where they live, the language they speak, the education they have, the things they possess, or especially the life they have lived.

And then finally, it is a generous gift. I don't know what your checkbook will look like once Christmas is past, nor do I know what your credit card statement will show. But no matter what, there is no way to measure our generosity this Christmas against God's as it relates to the generous gift of his Son.

The King of glory, the Creator of all that is, the God of the universe, the Sustainer of all life, the One who holds the stars in place, the perfectly holy God, has gloriously and generously given us a gift. My best advice to you is that, in the midst of your gift giving and receiving, you consider the gift of Christ for what it truly is; God's glorious and generous gift; the gift that fits all; the gift that brings us eternal life; the gift that never needs to be returned.

Once you receive this gift, you will never wonder if it fits or if you will like it, nor will you ever wonder if the giver might take it back; for it will be the greatest gift you have ever received, and that is precisely the way God intended it.