

Love BIG
Loving Like God, Christmas Series for 2018
It's For You...
Matthew 2:1-12
December 30, 2018

Welcome and intro...

Gift giving and Christmas are like cookies and milk, peanut butter and jelly, Scooby and Shaggy, or better yet...Batman and Robin, oh yeah. We love gifts. We love giving them and we love receiving them. We love shopping for them – okay, some of us love shopping. Then there are those of us who go with the “grab it and bag it” method of shopping. For the most part we love wrapping – may not do a good job of it but we love it. Gifts jazz us. We enjoy seeing people open their gifts and really love it when it's a surprise and the person is moved to tears. Let's be honest...we love gifts.

[Pic of Gifts]

Some of us are wearing things today that we got for Christmas as gifts. Someone took the time to care about you and buy you something they thought you might like. You opened up this year for Christmas and thought...I'll wear that next Sunday. And if someone compliments you - you'll let them know who got it for you. There is something wonderful about gift giving and gift receiving. We have phrases like: “it's better to give than to receive” and “it's the thought that counts” that remind us of the true meaning behind gift giving...to show someone that we care.

A big part of the account of the first Christmas is wisemen who brought gifts to Jesus over 2000 years ago. They wanted Jesus to know that there were kingdoms in the east who recognized the birth of this new King and they wanted him to know they cared. The love of God that came to the earth was not missed by those who were considered wise and were living in foreign countries. So, what did they do, they brought gifts. It's what we do right. When you want someone to know how important they are or how valuable they are to us we give them gifts. When we're invited to supper at someone's house, we usually take a gift of some sort. Gifts are important things.

One, giving communicates value. Giving a gift tells the other person that they are important to us. And let's be honest, the cost of the gift is a part of the communication, and I don't mean just the financial cost. There can be a cost that goes into a gift that has very little to do with money and much more to do with time or effort. The story is told of a child in West Africa who wanted to give a gift to his teacher. On the last day of school before Christmas break, he presented her with his gift...it was a unique sea shell that is found only on the coast of their country. When the teacher opened the box to see the gift of such a unique shell, she was surprised. She knew the financial condition of this boy's family and knew he could not afford such a fine gift. She smiled at her young student and then said, these shells are only found on the coast. How did you come about such a beautiful gift? The boy told his teacher that he walked the 10 miles to the coast, found the shell on the beach and walked the ten miles back. She began to cry and to tell him that he did not have to make such a walk. He looked at her and said these words: “the long walk was part of the gift.” Gifts communicate value.

Two, giving communicates significance. Each of us have given a gift to someone we thought was important to who we are. It might be a boss who gave us a chance or a neighbor who was there in a time of need. It might be that you've given a gift to someone who helped you up or helped you out and you wanted them to know that what they did was significant. That person who stood by you or supported you or listened to you when everything looked bad got a gift from you because you wanted them to know that what they did was significant...that it made a difference in your life. Gifts proclaim significance.

Third, giving communicates love. When we give a gift, there is often a bit of our hearts that goes into the gift. We want the person to know they touched our hearts. In 1905 a story was published that by O. Henry entitled – “The Gift of the Magi.” The story is about Mr. and Mrs. James Dillingham Young. They were a very poor couple who had but two possessions which they valued. One was Jim's gold time piece, the watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. As Christmas approached, the two wondered what gift they could buy for the other. They loved each other dearly and so, each of them decided to sacrifice for the other. The young woman sold her hair and bought her husband a beautiful chain for his prized pocket watch. All the while, the young man sold his watch and bought an assortment of combs, all made of the finest materials. When he got home, he was stopped in his tracks...her hair was gone. She assured him that her hair would grow back and then, she opened the package with all the combs. She was a bit embarrassed but quickly gave him her gift. He opened the box to find the watch chain. His head dropped and he put

his face in his hands. With her hand on his shoulder she asked what was wrong. That's when he told her that he had sold the watch to buy the combs. With a smile of love, they hugged knowing that they were loved.

That's what giving can do. It's what God did for us in sending his son. It's what the wisemen did two thousand years ago. It's what we're called to do. We are called to deliver our love to God in BIG ways that brings honor and glory to God. When we give with a heart that values other, sees others as significant, and a desire to show love...we are living out God's call to be generous givers.

Jesus says that this gift is for you because you are valued, significant and loved. Maybe you're here this morning and you don't necessarily feel like you are worthy of the gift or that you deserve what God has done for you. I want you to know this morning that you are loved, that if there was no one else on earth, Jesus would still have come and given his life as a gift for you. It is my hope that you can receive the gift of God's love through Jesus and live free from this day on.

As Christmas is just five days behind us – we are still excited about the gifts we received at Christmas. Are we equally excited about the gift we received 2000 years ago on Christmas day? We will share that excitement and joy with others?

Jesus calls us to love BIG and share the gift with others.

How will you share this amazing gift of Christ's love by telling others they are significant and loved?

There will be an untold number of opportunities this coming year for you to share the gift of God's love to others. Will you commit to looking for those opportunities and sharing the love of God, His wonderful gift, with others.