

# *All I Want for Christmas* **YOU!!!**

Matthew 2:1-12  
December 29, 2019  
*Songs and Words*

This is the Sunday between two gigantic holiday celebrations – Christmas and New Years. The season of celebration started at Thanksgiving, unless you work in retail – for you it started back before Halloween...which has become the second in decoration dollars spent each year, second only to Christmas. The Light is still out shining the darkness. Amen?

So, today we wrap up our series called *All I Want for Christmas* with the answer to that phrase. Let me first say that I hope you got all of the things on your list this Christmas. That's what many of us do right, we write a list of the things we'd like to receive at Christmas. In some families, the list is made up of those things that family members wouldn't normally buy for themselves and Christmas is the time to get those things that you'd like to have but, would never buy. In other families, Christmas list are made up of things that are needed because – well, we need them. Things like socks and underwear, right. In other families, Christmas gift giving is all about the surprise. There's no list, no hints, it's all about giving what you want that person to have. I think of the wisemen and the gifts they gave Jesus...not sure how a baby is going to play with frankincense, right...but, that's what they wanted to give so, good luck with that. Sounds a little crazy but, there are families that really make it work. No matter how your family does gift giving, I hope you received things that made you smile.

But, what if we go a different direction, now that Christmas is over? What if we look at gift giving a bit differently. What if we look at what God

wants for Christmas. It's an interesting thought, right. **What does God want for Christmas?** I mean, maybe your mind went to peace on earth and you wouldn't be wrong. Maybe you thought of fuzzy puppies and other cute critters and you'd still be right in many ways. Or perhaps you thought about God just wanting people to get along, stop all of the political stuff. Or maybe you thought that God wants people clothed and fed and sheltered and visited and you wouldn't be wrong – actually, you'd be practically quoting the Bible. But, there's something much more basic, there is a place God starts before He goes after all of those things.

There is a beautiful Christmas poem by Christina Rossetti that was put to music and became the carol, *In the Bleak Midwinter*. It tells of the unlikely and challenging conditions surrounding the birth of Jesus, of the angels singing their praises, the shepherds visiting the holy family and the wise men who travel so far to see the newborn King. The writer says what many of us feel today...

*What can I give Him, poor as I am?  
If I were a Shepherd I would bring a lamb.  
If I were a Wise Man I would do my part,  
Yet what can I give Him, Give Him my heart.*

The truth is, many of us see ourselves as the poor who have nothing to give to Jesus – at Christmas or any other time of year. **We either do not see ourselves as worthy or we don't see what we have as good enough for Jesus.** But, let's look at the account of the birth of Jesus again and consider what Jesus (God with us) might want for Christmas.

From the beginning of the story, God is connecting with very real people. There is a simple and humble girl. By all accounts she is just an unknown and unimportant girl from a small village in the northern region of Judea. She is not a superstar or a beauty queen. She has no regional or national or global recognition. Mary is just a girl like many other girls. Mary

possessed something that God wanted her to give as a gift...herself. You see, what Mary gave to God was exactly what God was looking for. She said it in a phrase that is recorded for all time, "Let it be to me as you have said." She gave her all to God.

She was not alone. Joseph, a carpenter from that same northern town of Nazareth was also asked to give something that God wanted. That first Christmas almost didn't happen if it were not for Mary and Joseph's gift of themselves. Joseph, like Mary, must have been skeptical. It is recorded that Joseph was at a point of unbelief that almost forced him away from Mary. So, God intervened in a dream. And so, Joseph, like Mary gave himself to the desire of God. He surrendered his reputation, his future, his happiness, his doubt and gave it all to God as a gift on that first Christmas.

And what about the shepherds, what did they have to give? The song suggests that they could have given a lamb. In those days that would have been a pretty good gift. It still is a pretty good gift today. Just two months ago, my wife Julie gave a lamb and a goat to Mabinti, pastor Michael's wife at our sister church in Mabolleh, Sierra Leone. The lamb will grow up to produce more lambs, and eventually bring a lot of food to the table. A lamb is a pretty good gift. But, we have no record of the shepherds bringing any gifts to the baby Jesus or his parents other than themselves. And that was all God wanted. The angels did not direct them to bring any gift, just to go and see. And so they did, giving their time, the security of the sheep they left behind, their livelihoods, and giving their reputations if they were wrong.

And what about the magi who served at their kings command. These men and those who accompanied them gave more than gold, frankincense and myrrh. Those were the material gifts given from their kings to the King. What they gave was themselves. They risk their lives making a

journey we would never dream of taking today. To my knowledge, there has never been a modern attempt to recreate the journey of the wisemen. Oh, we recreate Lewis and Clark, Stanley Livingston, Harriet Tubman, Robert Peary and a bunch of other people but, not the wisemen. Why? Because what they did was insane. Who would hitch up their saddle to a camel and ride from the far east to the middle east, over uncharted territory, into enemy lands, into extremes of weather, all while keeping the animals, and yourselves alive for what most likely took a minimum of one year and most likely two to three years round trip. Can you imagine leaving home in the morning and saying, “see ya in a few years honey.” NO! Who does that? The gift those magi gave was their lives to the King of kings. At any moment they could have been killed, captured and sold into slavery, beaten, starved, lost, froze to death in the mountains or heat stroke in the desert. They surrendered their personal safety and security and gave it to God as a gift.

None of the people in the story were superhero's. They were people just like us. A young girl figuring out all the stuff of teenage life and the future in front of her, a young man working hard to make a living and looking forward to his new life with Mary. Guys out working the night shift watching over the sheep just like every other night. And state workers sent on a gift giving/fact finding mission. All of them, people just like us who all gave the one thing God was looking for then – and the thing God is looking for today - the thing God has been looking for from the beginning of creation, If you've been following me you know that the answer is to the question...what does God want for Christmas. **The answer is YOU.**

God has always wanted you. The God who created you has always wanted you to come to him through his Son Jesus Christ. It's always been that way. Reading through the Bible we find that every act of God is an effort to bring people into a relationship with Himself. Time and time

again, God is actively trying to connect people with Himself. Miracle after miracle, event after event, rescue after rescue...mountain tops and valleys, peacetime and war, rogue kings and simpleminded judges, innocent apostles and well meaning evangelists. Everything that God was doing was an attempt to bring just one more person into a forever attachment with God.

We are here today, not by accident but, because God wants a never ending bond to happen between you and God. And here's what I want all of us to hear and download today...God was willing to give everything for you as His gift to the world and to each of us. And **God is asking that we give back our lives as a gift:** what we love, what we're holding on to, what we believe is going to give us security, what we think is important, what we have come to trust in, what we're leaning on for support, what we're hooked to or hooked on, and especially what's got a hold of us and we think it has control of us. It's time for us to give it all to God and let God have His way with us. It's time to let go of all of the stuff and the junk and the baggage and the bondage and starting today...start giving your life to God every day, in every situation, in possible circumstance, at home at work, at the gym, on the golf course, on the Peloton, in the car, in front of the tv or the computer screen, on the internet...

It is time for people who believe in God to start putting their whole trust and their whole lives into His as a gift back to God – cause that is all He's asking for this Christmas...

Will you give your life to God through Jesus today?