

You Aren't Going to Believe What I Got You for Christmas – 1 Cor 2:6-9

Introduction – It's one of my favorite things to hear (and say) during Advent, during those Christmas-shopping days. It evokes a wonderful sense of expectation, thoughtfulness, and appreciation. Among the other symbolisms in so many of the Christmas traditions, this points to the wonderful truth that God had prepared something in the sending of Jesus that was and, upon deeper reflection, is beyond imagination. It is the gift of forgiveness through Jesus.

The Gift of Jesus is Unbelievable (1 Cor 2:6-9) – There is no way to be prepared for what God has prepared for you. There was no way for the world to be prepared for what God had prepared for the world. Christmas is the celebration of God sending His Son to pay for your sins and provide for you full and complete forgiveness from God (Acts 13:38). The analogies go on and on. You were in darkness with no hope of light, and the Morning Star now shines in your heart, your room, your life. You were dead and He made you alive. You were lost and He found you. You were sick and exiled and He brought you back into His home, His family, cleaned you up, healed you, dressed you in the finest and put on a party to celebrate your return. You were debt-ridden beyond hope and He paid it all.

Not Just an Opportunity – What is wrongly proclaimed is that Christ was sent to provide an opportunity of forgiveness for people, as though He posted a bail-bond for us to get out of jail and try again to be better. Too many Christians live as though they've been given a chance to clean up their act before the great and final Judgment – the Trial. But an opportunity to be forgiven was not given. Forgiveness was given. In this gift is an ongoing promise: every aspect of your life, past, present, future, was taken care of by Christ. All was forgiven and all that is occurring is being used by Him for your good and His glory.

The Gift of Jesus is Deeply Personal (Heb 10:15-18) – A New Covenant has been brought forth in the coming of Jesus and now God's law, which is His character, His ways, His love, is written into our hearts. This is done through the union and communion of the Word Himself in you – God's Son, Jesus. This Person became flesh, and Hebrews teaches that He was tempted in all ways like us, yet without sin (Heb 4:15-16)). We have this personal, human, empathetic, High Priest who knows what it is to be tempted, knows how to gladly walk away from the temptations, and knows how to work in us through His forgiving Spirit to transform us, our desires and abilities (Phil 2:13).

Personal but without Permission – Another thing that is wrongly proclaimed is that God is a gentleman and would never impose Himself upon anyone. But that is exactly what He did for you and for the world in sending His Son. He didn't wait for your permission; you wouldn't have asked for it or believed you needed it. You would have been offended that He said you did. And when you are finally convicted of your sin, you also were tempted to believe that a holy God would never forgive your sins.

"Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" – What does God's forgiveness look like? This doesn't mean that God can't recall events (and He would have to forget the stories of the Scriptures) as though His hard-drive had been wiped clean. It means that as far as His relationship with you goes, nothing that you have done affects what He thinks of you in relation to Him. He is much more like the father of the prodigal son. *"There is no longer an offering for sin."* There is no need for any additional sacrifice or penance to be done to complete your status as adopted, purchased, redeemed, restored, child of God.

Deep Forgiveness – God's forgiveness means that there are no consequences of punishment from His holy, righteous, eternal wrath. There are often consequences from our sin, but they are all forms of discipline from a perfect, loving, heavenly Father who is perfectly sanctifying you in every circumstance of your life. Nothing is outside of His providential care and every trial is hand-picked for you. He is using it all to work an even greater weight of glory in you, to bring glory to His name, and to share that glory which He gladly bestows upon you, His child (2 Cor 4:17-18).

The Name of the Savior Says it All (Matt 1:21) – Joseph was told to name the baby Jesus, Y'shua, which means Yahweh saves. From the beginning scenes, from His conception, from the manger and on, the whole point was that God sent His Son to save His people from their sins (John 3:16), to save the world from its sins (John 3:17). He didn't come to try to save people, to offer salvation to people, to make a way for people if they would just cooperate. He came and saved people. He came and saved the world.

For God So Loved... - He didn't do this for you while holding His nose. He did it with the full knowledge of how sinful you were, full knowledge that it meant He would have to be in fellowship with you forever. He is not surprised or disappointed that you have come. Jesus did this "for the joy set before Him." God did this because He delights in mercy. He couldn't wait to give this present.

You Aren't Going to Believe What I Got You for Christmas – We are not required to celebrate Christmas, but we are invited to celebrate the gift of Jesus, the gift of God's forgiveness, to us and to the world. Go open the gift. Believe. Believers – go open it again. Unbelievers – hear the unbelievable, believe and open the gift. Now go figure out how to celebrate this gift for the next couple weeks...