



What about the "gift" God gave us at Christmas?

January's Question For Pastor column usually has a little "twist." This year is no exception. Instead of a question *for* pastor, you get a question *from* pastor.

Before we get to the BIG question, a couple little questions to point you in the right direction: Assuming you got some gifts for Christmas, could you tell what they were just by looking at the wrapping on the outside?

Maybe you could sometimes - if you already had an idea what you were getting. But chances are real good that most of the time you couldn't guess exactly what gift was waiting behind the wrapping. It's kind of like the old saying, "You can't tell a book by its cover." What's on the outside can really fool you when it comes to people or books or presents. Did you get fooled by some of the gifts that were on the inside of some packages? I know that happened a few times at our house. The gifts that people were expecting - like gift cards - we wrapped in big, odd-shaped boxes to keep 'em guessing.

The point is, appearances can be deceiving.

That's also true when it comes to the gift God gave us that first Christmas. Who would have guessed what was really wrapped up in the fragile flesh of an infant - especially one born in a cattle stall to a couple of "unknowns." The Christmas song "Mary Did You Know" says it well:

Mary, did you know That your baby boy Would someday walk on water? (How could she?)

Mary did you know That your baby boy Will save our sons and daughters? (Now, the angel *did* say that the baby would save His people from their sins. But the angel said that to Joseph, not Mary - and we all know how much husbands communicate with their wives. It's possible Joseph forgot to tell Mary the "save his people from their sins" part.)

Did you know that your baby boy Has walked where angels trod? When you kiss your little baby You've kissed the face of God. Mary did you know That your baby boy Is Lord of all creation? (Talk about not being able to tell a book by its cover: A powerless baby - ruler over all creation? Who could've guessed?)

This sleeping child you're holding Is the Great I Am
(God in the Flesh!)

Did Mary know that God had wrapped all those things up in the baby that she had wrapped in cloths and placed in a feed trough? Appearances can definitely be deceiving.

Chances are also good that if you are reading this you *do* know that the very presence of God was wrapped up in that manger gift. Chances are you *do* know that God was born... to die... so you could live...forever.... when you repent of your sin and trust in Him.

But chances are also real good that there's someone you know who has been fooled by the human packaging. Someone you know who hasn't "unwrapped" that gift in the manger and found that it really contains the One True God. Someone who looks at the packaging and says, "That's a cute story," but never bothered to find out who Jesus *really* is. Or there may be someone you know who "unwrapped" that gift at one time, but has since put it "on a shelf in the closet" of their life.

So, here's my BIG question for each of you: Who is it that needs your help "unwrapping" the gift God gave us at Christmas - the gift of Himself? Who is it that you can pray for each day this year to discover the gifts God sent wrapped up in His Son? Who is in your life that hasn't gotten to really know Jesus or who has put him "on the shelf"?

For some of you reading this, *you* may be the one who hasn't yet unwrapped the baby and found God. For some of you reading this, *you* may be the one who has put the gifts "on the shelf." If that's the case, here are some questions for you to ask yourself: "What can I do to get motivated to attend worship more often?" "Is there a Bible study group I can get involved in?" "Is there someone who can help me grow and keep me accountable?" "What time will I set aside for personal Bible reading and prayer?"

For most of you, there is *someone else* in your life who needs to get beyond what appears to be a just a cute baby and find God. Who is that person? Will you pray for them daily this year? Will you pray for God to give you opportunities to share the love of Jesus with them in practical ways?

God will bless your efforts to share the Gift of His Son,

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net