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CHRISTMAS

There came a gift 2000 years ago which changed the world.

It was a gift from God like no other. The gift came wrapped like so many do not in foil but in swaddling clothes. The gift to all mankind was a baby boy in a manger. The gift to us of Jesus made it clear that giving was one of the most important things in all life. Nothing has greater reward than a gift.

So much of Christmas is really all about giving. It is good to give anything, at anytime, to anyone. The gifts we give can be goods, services or perhaps more importantly ourselves. Giving time, work, effort and expertise can indeed be the greatest gifts of all. Giving is far more than mere money.

Year end giving, Christmas giving, is ridiculed by many. Buying and spending for gifts is viewed as American commercialism at work. We spend so much on gifts for family and friends. But that is a good thing, a very good thing. It shows kindness and love. It is a way of sharing the good things of this world with those we love.

I remember as a boy how excited I was at Christmas time. When Christmas Eve came, I knew the next day there would be 4 or 5 presents for me under the beautiful Christmas tree of my parents. It was something in a way I looked forward to all year. The day, the Christmas day was filled with so much excitement, fun, enjoyment, and love, lots of love. It was a day to remember, to cherish, so special and unique and the gifts lasting all year long were pungent reminders of the love and joy of that special day. Any good thing can be overdone, but giving from the heart is never excess, overly commercial or in any way inappropriate. It is loving, and it is fun and we should do it in abundance. Giving like that has lasting effect and value.

Wise men came 2000 years ago bearing gifts to the Christ child, expensive gifts. They did not bring toys, or clothing. They brought gold, these wise men did, and precious oils, frankincense, and perfumes, myrrh, the very best they had. Nothing was too good for the Christ child. Jesus undoubtedly remembered their generosity when, in the course of his ministry, a woman washed his feet, his feet mind you with incredibly expensive oils and perfumes. His hypocritical disciples lambasted him for what they perceived as the waste of this gift, which could have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor. Jesus so very rightly chastised them, reminding them that the poor would always be there, but the opportunity to do such a luxurious thing for Him in his short life would be limited indeed. It is interesting that Jesus could accept the very best, appreciate the finest qualities of this life, thoroughly enjoyed the gift, and fully commend the gift. So, to a child, or spouse, or dear friend, or relative, or Pastor, giving

the very best things in life is an act of real love. Giving is a loving experience for the one receiving, and an even more loving experience for the giver. Giving itself has its own rewards.

So, we should give and give generously, lovingly to any and all we wish. There should be no guilt or remorse. We should give gladly whatever we can afford. We give to Him all year long. We can and we should give to Him at Christmas in a special way. That is love at work, but the very same love is at work when we give to those we love.

A Christmas tree with piles of gifts is one of the special things about this very special Christmas day. The more the merrier, and the more with love the better. Even as God gave us this incredible, life changing gift 2000 years ago, no greater love than that, so we should give back to Him and give and love to anyone we wish. That is the spirit of Christmas. That is surely the spirit and the desire of that special gift wrapped in swaddling clothes.