

The Gift

This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. John 10:6-18 KJV

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16 KJV

It was not a gift as we know it, wrapped up in beautiful paper with a bow on top. It was not put under a tree festooned with beautiful ornaments and full of lights. In fact, it was a gift which many did not know they needed, did not want, and discarded. However, to those who recognized it, accepted it, and lived by it, it became the best thing that happened to them in life. *He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: John 1:11-12 KJV*

As I sit here pondering that gift today, I wonder where I would have been during that time when that gift was given. Would I have been on the hillside with the shepherds? Would I have been one of those whose heads wagged in the crowd? Or would I have been like Zacchaeus and climbed a tree to get a better look? Would I have stood around the fire with Peter and heard with satisfaction when he denied that he knew Jesus or would I have been with those women that rose early on the morn to take spices to anoint his body, only to find the tomb empty?

Would I have been like Saul, later Paul, who had a zeal to eradicate this new movement that discarded the practice of the old law, for true salvation? Would I have been one of those who was with him when he saw the bright light and fell to the ground? Or would I have been with Ananias whom the Lord sent to this dangerous man to restore his vision?

Would I have listened in awe on the day of Pentecost to the many languages, and would I have seen and experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit when it descended upon those there like tongues of fire?

I would like to think I would have been one who saw this gift, and accepted it as the Son of God, who had come to redeem man back to God. However, the odds are pretty good that I would not have. You see, I am a born sceptic. I like to see something work before I believe it to be true. I want to see it proven, before I trust it.

Today the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ has been around for over two thousand years. You would think that it would be long enough for everyone to know about it and accept it as the only true way; but how wrong that is. Many have denied that there was a Jesus, going as far to say there is no God, and we just evolved. Others know of the gift, but they are unwilling to be associated with it or bear its mark upon them. The truth

be known, they do not know what they are missing or how vision changes when they accept it and allow it to work the miracle of transformation in their lives.

Because of the arch enemy Satan, the truth is hidden from many. He seeks not only to hide it but to destroy what it can do. Yet he knows that hands down, he is a loser. Once someone accepts that gift into their heart and life, Satan is powerless over them; he is a defeated foe, powerless against the truth. For that reason, he seeks to hide the truth and give people counterfeits or other things to occupy their minds to hide the truth. Evolution is one of his tools designed to hide the truth that God created the world and everything in it. Satan knows that when people accept the gift, they will see that this belief is a lie, so he seeks to destroy the power of the gift by humanistic thinking. He makes humankind think they are wise and invincible. He causes them to revel in their own creations, much like the people did at the Tower of Babel. Yet, despite all that we have created, humans have no control over being born into the world or when their time comes to leave it in death. Those things are reserved for God alone.

Satan thought he had really done it; he had destroyed the Son of God. Little did he know that the only power he had to do what he did, was because God allowed him that power. After he had Christ put to death, he was no more a winner than before. On top of that, he had no power to keep Jesus from rising from the dead and breaking the chains he had on all people since the fall in the Garden of Eden. Jesus simply broke those bonds and now Satan is a defeated foe.

The power of the gift has not diminished since it was given. Many continue to experience it throughout the world, changing them from unhappy downcast people, into joyful happy individuals who have purpose in life. It is not reserved for a select few, but it is free for anyone, anywhere, who accepts its life-changing power. The proof of that change manifests itself the same wherever it is allowed in the human heart. The love of Christ, which is the essence of that gift, works a work of transformation and becomes evident to those around them. A person who was once angry, becomes peaceful, and a selfish person becomes unselfish.

This gift, though thousands of years old, has not lost its luster; in fact, it shines brighter as the world becomes darker. It is the hope of all men and women everywhere. It is the answer to all problems; personal, in families, in relationships, and countries. It can take what seems impossible and transform it into something lovely. It can take the broken and turn it into something beautifully exquisitely whole. It can take pain and turn it into joy. It can take a life of lies and turn it into truth. Best of all it is free! If people reach out by faith and let it work its work, it will transform their lives.

It is free, yet it cost one everything and Satan seeks to exploit that. However, when one surrenders to the gift, the returns far outweigh anything they have given up. It is like paying all your money to the bank and receiving an endless supply of money in return. It is like giving your last drink of water to someone and receiving a well of pure sparkling water in return. It is like giving up your idea of a dream life, only to receive a real life.

It is true that life will not always be easy; there will be difficulties and setbacks, and you may wonder at times if the way is worth it. Yet on this journey one is never alone! The challenges of life may come, but they only cause us to lean into that gift more and more. Satan may come seeking to discourage us, but this only causes us to desire more of that gift. When we turn to God, Satan knows that he is a powerless defeated foe.

May we choose this gift and let it transform us into whatever the giver of the gift wants us to be.

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