



***Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.***

***December 2014***

***"The Gifts God Gives"***

Dear Friend of Mary Craig Ministries,

Each of us approaches Christmas differently, and each Christmas we may hold to family traditions but still carry different feelings throughout the season. We have years where we may come to Christmas with joy; years where we enjoy renewed friendships, peaceful days, and well, not so peaceful days. Grief, misery, sorrow, loneliness, poverty, helplessness, guilt, our hidden hells...dampen our joy and make it difficult to see all the lights and sparkle, to put on a happy face; yet somehow there is hope in the continuity of Christmas.

And then there's the gifts: check the list, search for something the person might like, buy it or make it, wrap it or let Amazon take care of everything, deliver it or hand it over to UPS or the post office. We may be in an "I just love Christmas" year, or we may be in a year where we don't want to do anything. We want to mope or we want to ignore Christmas; we want Christmas to go away and come again another day. Whatever we are experiencing, however, Christmas comes. Reminders are all around us.

And then there's God. God approaches boldly and surely, the One who Gives, the One who Loves, the One who will not keep silent; for He has a message and a Messenger. God is there; God is near. He's a face-to-face God who persists.

For some reason, it all got me thinking about the gifts God gives.

*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. (James 1:17, NIV)*

We know it. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son... (John 3:16) God gave Jesus Christ, Jesus the Anointed One, Jesus the Messiah, as a gift. God chose to send His Son into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. Here before Mary and Joseph, before shepherds and animals in a stable, all bundled up, the eternal Word of God had assumed human flesh and lay in a manger.

The government rests upon His shoulders (Isaiah 9:6). A new born child is given, the Son of God, who will bear the guilt and sin of His people and bear the wrath of the Father against all that is contrary to His nature and ways. This holy child Jesus comes in weakness and humility to carry the humble and the lowly, sinners, to the Father; for all salvation is about getting back to the Father. (Luke 1:51, 52)

With the sending of Jesus comes other gifts:

1. Christ Himself: living water. Jesus said it, "...If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me to drink; you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water." (John 4:10)

2. The Holy Spirit: "And when Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money...But Peter said unto him, Your money perish with you because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." (Acts 8:18-20) See also Matthew 7:11, Luke 11:13.

3. Eternal life: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

4. Personal and proper/fitting gifts of God to individuals: "But every man has his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that." (1 Corinthians 7:7)

5. Salvation through Faith by Grace. "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8)

6. Confident love. "Wherefore... stir up the gift of God, which is in you by the laying on of my hands... For God has not given us the spirit of fear [cowardice], but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:6, 7)

7. Peace. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27)

8. Forgiveness. "Woman, where are those your accusers? Has no man condemned you?...Neither do I condemn you: go, and sin no more." John 8:10, 11 (See also 1 John 1:9.)

9. Wonder. "...And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

10. His Love. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3:16)

There are more, of course. I can hear you thinking, "What about ... and ...?"

God as Creator gave light upon the earth (Genesis 1:3, 15) and as Redeemer, came in the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. (John 1:4; John 8:12; 1 John 1:5; 1 John 2:8; Revelation 22:5)

Our man-made lights stand in stark contrast to the darkness at Christmastime. But while we look around at our attempts to shine and sparkle and light up the darkest days of the calendar, we need to pause and to wonder at the marvelous gifts of God. Jesus is the true light (John 1:9). The shepherds saw the glory shining (Luke 2:9), something at which to wonder because shepherds were way down there on the social standing list. And yet here is baby Jesus, weak in a manger, vulnerable, but protected under His Father's watchful eye. Jesus' life will go as planned, as prophesied, no one stopping it; for He came to give life, eternal life, and that more abundantly.

The gifts of God are eternal, giving us hope, giving us life, giving us love, giving us peace, giving us joy, giving what no one else can. Unwrap these gifts, for there are many beyond what I have mentioned.

In return, giving God our best means giving graciously, gladly, generously, and as He guides. We appreciate your donations and gifts to MCM. They enable us to take the gospel of Jesus Christ around the world and across backyard fences, to help forgotten peoples, to teach and train and make disciples, and to minister both spiritually and tangibly. Thank you for your God-given gifts, prayers, and financial support as MCM reaches out globally, locally, online, and as the Holy Spirit leads.

Wishing you a Christmas filled with wonder at the gifts of God,

*Mary Craig*

Mary Craig, D. Min.

*You shall see greater things than these. Jesus to Nathanael*

*John 1:50b*

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