

We all just celebrated Thanksgiving a few days ago, but I want us to move forward time-wise in our thinking toward Christmas, and specifically to the idea of gifts.

Ask any kid under 10 (and maybe many over 10) about Christmas, and one of the first things they'll connect it to is "presents". So let's consider the idea of presents, what they are for and what the giving and receiving of a present is saying.

In Jesus's day, here's how gift-giving was thought of. Gifts were given with a great deal of care and thought. They weren't given to an undeserving or unfitting recipient. This is because of the purpose behind gift giving:

"Gifts were intending to create relationships, and it was expected that the one receiving the gift would give something in return: a counter gift, gratitude, honor, etc.

Because the gift creates or develops a relationship, it was given carefully and selectively. Getting or giving a gift therefore is a really big deal, because of what it says about the one giving and the one getting the gift.

When I think about who gives and gets gifts, my mind immediately races to worth. Who is worthy to get a gift? There's a lot in our world that gets used as a way to measure a person's worth:

Social status	ethnicity or ancestry
Education	gender
Age	others

These kinds of things are referred to as cultural capital: they are what give you importance and esteem in the world.

Do you know that Paul used the word "gift" to refer to Christ's redeeming sacrifice on the cross 7x in Romans, 6 in chapter 5 alone?

Read Romans 5:15-18, Romans 6:23

And he uses the word gift once Ephesians, again in describing what Christ did to save us.

Read Eph. 2:8

Look at what God thru Christ has done. He gave us a gift as a means of creating a relationship with us. He gives this gift as a way to initiate the relationship. He doesn't wait for us to give Him a gift first.

And look at the mismatch between the gift we've been given and the our worth to receive it. Look what this gift says about God: He gave the gift without regard to how worthy we might be to receive it. He didn't give this gift based on our social status our

education, our ethnicity or ancestry, our gender, or our age, or based on anything that we've done.

He gave the gift of Christ on the cross to us because He loves us, because He knew we couldn't do it on our own, because He knew we needed it to have a restored relationship with Him.

Paul uses the word gift once in 2 Corinthians to not only describe what Christ did to save us, but also the reaction of every believer who has had their life changed because of this sacrificial gift:

Read 2 Cor. 9:15: Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Let's pray.

Father God, thank you for giving us the gift of Jesus and His death on the cross, which paid the price for our sins. Thank you that You gave us this gift even though there is nothing in us that makes us worthy of it. Help us to receive this gift with gratefulness, and to respond to this gift with obedient hearts. In Jesus' name, Amen.