

The Other Kind of Gifts
Christmas Eve Meditation 2016
Colebrook Congregational Church

In the morning, we will find our families gathered and the gifts we give to one another. Gifts that we have thoughtfully chosen and prepared for our loved ones. And we get to see the joy on their faces when they open them. But there are many types of gifts that we can give, and not just during Christmastime, but all year-round.

We should remember those other types of gifts we can give. We can give gifts that help those in need. When we see someone who is cold, we can give a coat or a hat or mittens; when we see someone who is hungry, we can give food; or if we see someone who is homeless, we can provide shelter. They do not need to be grand or profound offerings, they can be small, and yet still, they can bring great love or joy or peace to someone's life.

And then there is the gift of ourselves. Our time and our energy, used and given to support others. And likewise, it doesn't have to be grand and profound, like singlehandedly righting a wrong or running a program, but can be given by volunteering an hour or two here and there or at our Food Pantry, or by designing or distributing posters for programs, or by knitting gloves and mittens for kids without any.

Now, all those kinds of gifts, are the kind that meet material and emotional needs, they see to our happiness and our comfort. But as we have seen and heard during the Advent season, God has given us gifts in Jesus that meet our spiritual needs.

First, we heard about how God gives us a gift of Hope. A Hope that no matter what happens, if we have faith and follow Jesus, we will be alright. Like the story we heard of Ruth Gruber providing hope to the thousand refugees in World War II, escorting them safely to upstate New York.

Then God gives us a Gift of Peace. Jesus gives us peace of mind, that we need not worry if we follow God's Word. With all the chaos that has come with preparing for the Christmas season, we need to remember to take

moments to find peacefulness, be it in a place special to us, or through a calming activity, so that we not become overwhelmed.

And then God gives us a Gift of Joy. Jesus reminds us to take joy in this world, to make a joyful noise, and to help others find joy as well. Like those Norman Rockwell paintings we saw showing the joys of family homecomings and gatherings. It is with our loved ones that we find the great joy of Christmas.

Lastly, God gives us the Gift of Love. Jesus is the embodiment of God's Love for us and we should remember to cherish the love that we feel from friends and family during our holiday gatherings and celebrations. Like the story we heard about those kids at the Metro Atlanta Boys & Girls Club, when given the choice of having any gift they wanted or giving their parents any gift, they chose to show love for their parents.

So, as we return to our homes, to our families and loved ones, we should remember the gifts that are not under the tree. The gifts that help others, the gifts of ourselves, and also to remember the four spiritual gifts from God that we receive in Jesus.

Please join me in the Spirit of Prayer:

O God, as we celebrate again the festival of Christmas, we offer to You the prayers of our hearts, [especially for:] and we ask Your assistance and guidance, remembering your gifts to us, that we always hold Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love in our hearts. We pray that You to make us humble and loving like Jesus, who did not come to be served, but to serve; and who said that it is better to give than to receive; so that, in His name, we may devote ourselves to the care and service of all those who are in need. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Savior, Amen.

Benediction

May God's light guide you and keep you safe in all your travels; and may it inspire you to use your gifts and God's gifts every day, Amen.