

The Perfect Gift: Sonship in Christ

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Christmas / Adoption; Gift / 1 Kings 3:4–15; Psalm 119:97–104; Ephesians 1:3–14; Luke 2:40–52

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Newborn King. Amen.

Jesus says to Mary and Joseph when they find him in the temple: “Did you not know that I had to be about my Father’s business?” What can this mean? His Father? Well, God is His Father. Jesus is there because he is the eternal Son of God. But it’s also His father David’s house. King David’s son Solomon built the first temple. So this also reminds us that Jesus, because he is a man, a human being, is also the Son of David. But what’s the big deal about Jesus being God’s Son? Well at Christmastime, the Son of God is born. He is Mary’s Son. He is God’s Son. He is both by blood (through Mary) and adoption (by Joseph) the Son of David. And yes, this all matters... it all happens for this reason. That *you* will be adopted as God’s son or daughter, a child of God in Jesus Christ.

St. Paul lays this out for us in today’s Epistle from Ephesians. He tells us that **God’s Perfect, Glorious Gift Is salvation to be His Children in Christ.**

Since it is still Christmas, I want to take us through a three-part process that is used in getting someone a gift. And frankly, the gift of salvation follows along.

What’s the first thing you do to get a gift for someone? You have to find the perfect gift. You might spend quite a bit of time looking around online?. I know this year I kept looking at the lightning deals, the Black Friday Deal and Cyber Monday deals. You want to make sure that the gift you find, your recipient will like, enjoy and use.

So it was that your salvation was planned by God long before you were even born. In fact Paul says, “before the foundation of the world.” This is incredible. Just think about this for a moment. Before anything was ever made, God had chosen to call you in Jesus Christ to be His child. He wanted you! Jesus has

always been the Son of God. And it was always what God planned to do for you. Thus your salvation rests completely on Jesus, even before you were born or had ever sinned or done anything.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, before anything was made, the Father had the perfect gift in mind, it was the most perfect gift. It was and still is a gift that is more perfect than any gift that you can give to someone you care for:

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he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ

Jesus is about the Father's business because that was always the way it was going to be. He was about his Father's business because you can't be. You can't be perfect. You aren't perfect. I'm not perfect. You are sinners in what you think, say, and do.

The Second part of that Christmas gift-giving is the wrapping of the present. I grew up in a household where the same wrapping paper wasn't used for everything. There was always many different types of paper used to wrap what was under the tree. The wrapping of the present for many is important. I know when I was a kid my grandma spent much time to make sure the packages were wrapped with care. She would even match up the paper where it was taped. Just the right paper and bow to grab attention. A tag to show whom the gift is to and whom it is from. And then place it there under the tree until it's time to open the presents.

Just so, the gift was wrapped and put on, not under, the tree for you. Jesus, true God in the flesh, is born, wrapped in flesh and swaddling clothes and placed in a manger. He became man so that we can see God in him. In fact those swaddling clothes were stripped away from Him when He was nailed to the cross. He became man so that He could go to the tree of the cross and pay for all your sins. He became man so that He can be the price paid to redeem and ransom you from sin and death.

The price that He paid was not with gold or silver or even wrapping and bow. The ransom price is his holy, precious blood and and innocent suffering and death. And it is in Him, says Paul, that you have been chosen, literally favored,

just as Mary was “highly favored” when Gabriel spoke to her. God the Father through His Son Jesus, the one wrapped in swaddling clothes, the one who hung unwrapped on the tree and then was wrapped again and placed in a tomb and burst forth in glorious light on that first Easter.

Jesus stands in the temple as we hear in the Gospel, going about His Father’s business because of Good Friday and the gift given that day: His Blood to earn your forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Well then, of course, the gift is given. The person receives the gift, opens the wrapped box, and is happy to receive this great gift you put so much thought into. All the planning and wrapping does no good if the gift isn’t received. Isn’t that so true! There needs to be reception of the gift!

So Paul says, we have believed the Good News of Christ and been given the Spirit in Baptism. In other words, the gift God planned for you, that gift is wrapped and put on the tree of the cross for you, is now delivered to you! Jesus, His forgiveness, salvation, eternal life are yours! This gift that is delivered to you...always arrives right on time. You’ve heard that many gifts that were “promised” to be delivered by December 24 were not and many are still sitting on trucks waiting to still be delivered this year. Some gifts are still waiting to be wrapped and delivered. Yet, the gift of Jesus is never delayed. His gifts are always there for you. He continues to be delivered to you!

How do you know? You’ve received the down payment of that ransom. You’ve been given the Holy Spirit, given to you when you hear the Word read and proclaimed and are baptized by water and the Word at the font. You receive these gifts.

You continue to receive this perfect gift of sonship in Christ in Holy Absolution the forgiveness of your sins and in the Lord’s Supper - where you receive Christ’s Body and Blood for your salvation. All of God’s Saving Gifts are for you and you receive them and continue to receive them. You receive them more than just at Christmastime, you receive them year round!

God has been planning this since before he created everything. He has been accomplishing it and carrying it out in Jesus Christ. He has given it to you in His

Holy Church. His Son is born so that you will be born from above, a son and child of God. As Jesus is God's Son, so you have been adopted in Him to be God's Child. As Jesus was in the temple about the Father's business, so you are in church, in the Father's House, a child of God about His Father's Business—which is all about saving you! Forgiving you! Giving you eternal life! Don't for a moment doubt that everything God has been doing is for you in Christ. You, who are His beloved child, His beloved son or daughter with every possible blessing. Happy Tenth Day of Christmas!

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.