



GIFTS FROM GOD:

Christmas Day 2014: The Gift Of God's Care

Merry Christmas everyone! Let us rejoice and be glad! Since this is the season when we think most about giving, over the course of the next eighteen days of Christmas I will be presenting to you a total of **four amazing gifts from God**. These gifts are designed especially with you in mind and are capable of affecting tremendous positive change in your life. If you would like to experience a greater satisfaction in your life these four gifts could well be what you've been looking for.

The first gift from God which is the one that we will be looking at this evening is the **gift of God's care**. God really cares about you and I mean really cares about you. I can see how caring of this kind may be difficult to accept because of less than caring experiences you may have had with other people. You're skeptical because you've been burned. I understand that. Truth be known we've all been underappreciated, neglected or even betrayed at times but this evening I want to invite you to let down your guard at least long enough to unwrap this beautiful gift to you from God and consider accepting it.

Where do we begin? Let's start by looking at how we can know that God really, really cares about you?

First, God really cares about you because it's his nature. For God, caring is not a fleeting feeling or a passing thought. **Rather, it is his very essence and core. It is who God is at his deepest level of being.** I like how St. Peter put it. "Cast all your anxieties on God because he cares for you." There's also the assuring words spoken by God through the prophet Isaiah? "Even though others may forget you I will not forget you."

Second, God really cares about you because he chooses to identify with you. *Caring* is a verb which implies action. What act of caring towards you could be so profound that we are told that even the angels shake their heads in disbelief? In a nutshell, it is that the God of the universe left all the comforts of heaven in order to identify with you, in other words, to meet you where we are, warts and all. Just look in Bethlehem. God identified with Mary and Joseph who were homeless at the time. Jesus' baby bed was a feed trough. Announcement of Jesus' arrival was made to the lowly shepherds. Do you realize the implications of this association? It means that God cares about you in spite of your questions, struggles, mistakes or failures.

Third, God really cares about you because he eagerly desires to make your life better. Let this soak in. God wants only the best for you. He desires to bring healing and prosperity to those areas in your lives that are poverty stricken. That's the definition of caring. Listen to these different passages out of the Bible. "While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him...The Lord has been mindful of us... He will bless us... Who are we that you care for us?.. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

Do you want to believe that such extreme wealth exists for you as well as for others? Is it just possible that God's caring never fails, gives up or runs out. If so, open your hearts now and consider what I have to say.

First, receive Jesus into your life and grow in your relationship with him. This evening it's in the manger where you'll find what you're looking for. By coming into the world Jesus opens an entirely new dimension of life. He invites you to a meaningful relationship with God. ***Jesus is God's biggest 'yes' to you.*** All the angels and heavenly hosts recognized it when they appeared to the shepherds. "Do not be afraid." they said. "Today in the town of David a **Savior** has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to all on whom his favor rests."

Second, increase your caring for others.

Caring for others will bring out the very best in you and here's why. If it is God's nature to care and you were created in God's image, the more you care the more you are going to be at peace with who you are. Here's a prime example. Thanks to your caring spirit over the past few weeks, hundreds of people will have food on the table and presents under the tree for Christmas. Doesn't that act of caring make you feel good? Doesn't it warm your heart? Well of course it does. Never allow life's circumstances to rob you of your God given identity. Be who you were made to be. **Be caring.**

I would like to leave you with two thoughts for reflection:

1. Make this the best Christmas ever by making a commitment right now to grow in your relationship with Jesus in 2015.
2. Would you describe yourself as a caring person? Would other people describe you as a caring person? Remember that there's always room to increase your capacity to care.