

On The Frontier

“For the glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel”

The Greatest

by Linus A. Mathis III

A gift is something that's voluntarily transferred from one party to another, without any obligation to compensate. Most of us never consider this, as evidenced by the various "gift exchanges" we've been party to. When given a gift, we often feel obliged to reciprocate with an item of equal value. In fact, it's common practice to measure the love of the giver by the cost of the gift, i.e., I give you a diamond, I love you very much. I give you a box of candy, I love you, but not so much since a box of candy is much less expensive than a diamond (albeit more affordable and tasty). But don't feel bad if you've been wont to feel this way because we've all been indoctrinated to do so. An especially easy task as the nature we inherited from Adam has a penchant for self-gratification. The carnal mind wouldn't dream of giving a gift to someone who didn't "deserve" it. But, then it wouldn't be a gift, would it? After all, if you "deserve" something you've earned it, you warrant it, you rate it by merit. A gift, well that's undeserved. Carnality then, doesn't give gifts.

A number of years ago I was given the following:

*For God - the greatest lover
so loved - to the greatest degree
the world, - the greatest number
that he gave - the greatest act
his only begotten son, - the greatest gift
that whosoever - the greatest invitation
believeth - the greatest simplicity*

*in him - the greatest person
should not perish - the greatest deliverance
but - the greatest difference
have - the greatest certainty
everlasting life - the greatest possession*
John 3:16

Isn't that spectacular? Our God is so magnificent, so wonderful, so awesome! He truly is the Greatest of the great. To think that He didn't even withhold His Son. Why? Because He is the greatest lover and He has loved and does love to the greatest degree. None of us could ever love Him more than He loves us. His act of giving is out of all proportion to any other. The greatest of all acts ever executed even unto eternity. His gift! Jesus Christ!!! If added together, all the riches of all the ages would not even rise to the level of pallid in the face of our Lord's brilliance. He, Jesus Christ, is the unblemished Lamb of God. The one with the precious, sinless blood. No wealth nor gain is even remotely comparable. And to think that this invitation, surely the greatest of all invitations, is extended to - whosoever. My mind reels with the majesty of His grace. What did any of us deserve? Yet, He extends His hand to all, whosoever will may come. With such great simplicity as believing, we may receive the greatest person who has ever lived. With Jesus as our Lord we obtain the greatest deliverance that has ever been wrought. As for a great difference, there's none greater than life or death, heaven or hell. Yet, with the greatest certainty we have the greatest possession - eternal life. We can know that we know, He never lies.

I John 2:25

And this is the promise that he hath promised us, *even* eternal life.

Titus 1:2

In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

God gave us the greatest thing He could. His Son. Jesus Christ gave the greatest thing he could, his life. On the day of Pentecost God's gift, holy spirit, was poured out. Why?

John 3:16b

... that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Did He do this because we deserved it? No, no, a thousand times no. If we had deserved it, He wouldn't be justified in calling it a gift.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Could it be any plainer? A wage (in this case death) is payment for work (in this case sin). Whereas, a gift (in this case eternal life) is freely given without any obligation to compensate (it's by grace and grace alone). God is the absolute greatest! When we deserved death we received everlasting life. Which, incidently, we could never have worked for anyway. The scientists will someday find this to be true. You can't put everlasting life in a test tube. It can't be manufactured or bought. It's free

because God paid for it with the life of His Son.

Ephesians 2:1-10

And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

As familiar to me as the above passage is, I just can't read it enough. How about you? This Word of God is so fantastic, so fabulous, you simply just cannot over do it. The truths contained in Ephesians 2:1-10 are breathtaking, stunning and without question, life changing. Our God is the greatest!

The New English Bible:

Romans 5:15-17

But God's act of grace is out of all proportion to Adam's wrongdoing. For if the wrongdoing of that one man brought death upon so many, its effect is vastly exceeded by the grace of God and the gift that came to so many by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ.

And again, the gift of God is not to be compared in its effect with that one man's sin; for the judicial action, following upon the one offence, issued in a verdict of condemnation, but the act of grace, following upon so many misdeeds, issued in a verdict of acquittal.

For if by the wrongdoing of that one man death established its reign, through a single sinner, much more shall those who receive in far greater measure God's grace, and his gift of righteousness, live and reign through the one man, Jesus Christ.

WOW!!! What a great God we have. He took us from the dregs, a position worthy of death, to the heights of reigning with Christ. Do you know who reigns? Kings reign. Queens reign. Princes and princesses reign. From beggars awaiting execution to

eternal life with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. God is the greatest!

Consider the words of this great song:

How Great Thou Art

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the worlds Thy hands have made, I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, Thy pow'r thruout the universe displayed!

When thru the woods and forest glades I wander and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees, when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur and hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze.

And when I think that God His Son not sparing, sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in - That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing, He bled and died to take away my sin!

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart! Then I shall bow in humble adoration and there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!

REFRAIN: Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee, how great Thou art, how great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee; how great Thou art, how great Thou art!

Psalms 145:2,3

Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.

Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness *is*

unsearchable.

I know, as perhaps you do, that December 25 is not the accurate birthday of our Lord and Saviour. And it isn't that I'm not concerned about accuracy, I am. But, I'm more interested in THAT he was born than WHEN. When is important, but THAT is beyond all comprehension of importance. O God our God, how great Thou art, you O God are the greatest.

How those shepherds must have thrilled to hear the heavenly birth announcement. God's greatest gift to the world was being born.

Luke 2:8-14

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and

on earth peace, good will toward men.

Truly, our God, His Son, His Word and His gift to us of holy spirit are the greatest! All far exceed the highest expectations of our human reasoning.

II Corinthians 9:15

Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.

The Counselor's Corner

With Rev. Linus A. Mathis III

Always Give The Best

Why is it that little ones prefer to play with the box the toy came in rather than the toy itself? Haven't we all been disappointed by the things we have given our children around the holidays? It's a rare gift indeed that meets the expectations of the giver. Speaking for myself, I've lost count of all of the meaningless gifts I've given to kids. Of course that's never been my intention, but it seems things have a way of failing to rise up and deliver. I'm talking about all the miscellaneous fad toys that our children have begged us for as a direct result of commercial brainwashing. Lest we forget the glaring impact "merchandizing" has on us, consider the man willing to pay hundreds of dollars for an item barely worth ten, e.g., Cabbage Patch Kids, Tickle Me Elmo, Furbies and last but not least Pokémon. (How do you say nauseous in Japanese?) This holiday related behavior has become a sort of phenomenon. Why, there have even been movies made on the subject, humorous ones thank God. I suppose it's better to laugh

than cry.

So there you are, the big day has come and you got up at the crack of dawn. You had to, your kids couldn't sleep at all and you thought it best not to have your five year old wandering about the living room at 3 a.m. in the dark. None of the others will go back to bed. What else can you do but get up yourself? Hours pass into moments and after some furious "paperletting" (not to be confused with bloodletting, though terrifyingly familiar) it's all over. A wisp of smoke hovers above the mountainous refuse as you realize your bills will last a whole lot longer than the gifts you gave. Your lips break into a sardonic smile and you opt not to cry for that would only spoil this "magic" moment. Next year, you tell yourself, things will be different. The air is shattered by the sharp crack of the first plastic toy to meet the doom of Mr. Shoe. Soon after, your dog destroys another and your oldest informs you that the instructions are not in the 3,000,000 piece 3D puzzle of the Eiffel Tower you gave them. To make matters worse, none of the electronic gadgets you gave your wife work at all. Can you say ARRGGG?

Without question the greatest gift that you can give anyone (especially your children) is God's Word. This is a gift that will not only work but will last throughout eternity. The cost? Free! Man, what a deal!!! How can you go wrong? Do your children a favor and teach them the Word of God. I'm not talking about you bringing them to somebody else, I mean YOU do it. Besides, it's a parent's obligation.

Deuteronomy 6:6,7

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Ephesians 6:4

And, ye fathers [read parents], provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Simply put, you cannot bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord without teaching them His Word. Why not make a commitment to personally teach your children from the Bible in the coming year? Give them the gift that has withstood the test of time, one which will far exceed your highest expectations.

I'd like to suggest you start with Proverbs. The word proverb means words to rule or govern life by. The proverbs are ethical maxims, sentences of equity and moral wisdom. Furthermore, the book of Proverbs was designed by God to be especially suited to young people. How remarkable that there are as many chapters as there are days in most months. Why not begin by reading your child one chapter a day? Doesn't this sound like a good way to kick off the new millennium?

Since giving will still be on everyone's mind the following verses might also be of interest:

Proverbs 3:9, 10, 27, 28

Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do *it*.

Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

Proverbs 11:24,25

There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and *there is* that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* to poverty.

The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

Proverbs 19:17

He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

Proverbs 22:9

He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

Proverbs 28:27

He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

Give the gift of gifts, the Word of God. When the Father gave His best, He gave His Son. His Son is THE Word in the flesh, the ultimate gift!

John 1:14

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

*Happy Holidays
from our household
to yours!*

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