

Gifts for God and from God

Dec. 18, 2011

Do you remember any of the gifts you received for Christmas last year? How long did those gifts last? Was it forever and ever? If you're like me it's hard to remember. I think I got some socks, some books, ... I think I some clothes but I'd don't remember which ones. I know I got some money but I don't know where it is at.

In today's Old Testament lesson King David wants to give God a gift. King David wanted to build a "house" for God. David had settled in his palace in Jerusalem but he notices that God's house is still a tent, the tabernacle that had served as a worship center since the days of Exodus. David wanted to give God the gift of a new house.

The first thing that we need to say about our giving to God is that it is good. Giving gifts to God should be on the minds of God's people. We give gifts to those we love, those with whom we have relationships, so it only makes sense that we would frequently think about what gifts we can give to God. Is God on your gift list this Christmas? Will you give Him gifts that honor Him and express your thanks and love? How much thought have you given to the gifts you give to God?

I ask that question because our giving to God is often neglected. Instead of giving first fruits we will give to God if we have anything left. It was not until they had rest from all of their enemies and David lived in his palace that he noticed that God had only a tent. How often can we truly say that God is first in our lives and not an afterthought?

Our giving to God is good, often neglected and temporary. Any earthly thing you give God is temporary. This congregation has had three different houses or worship. Those are gifts to him. But buildings do not last forever. The point is this, our giving is not the center of our faith, and our giving is not the focus of Christmas. What you do for God is not nearly as important as what God does for you.

God through Nathan tells David that he doesn't want David to build a house for God rather God says, I want to build a house for you.

All of us have a hard receiving. We insist on doing it ourselves. You don't get much praise for receiving.

David could have asked the same question as Mary, "How will this be?" It wasn't going to happen through David's efforts or Mary's. It was going to happen by the Holy Spirit, by God's action. With us it is impossible. If Christmas is to happen we need to be receivers not givers.

God's giving starts with a place to meet. The Old Testament tabernacle was called the tent of meeting. God comes to us to meet or to dwell with us, to forgive us, to feed us, to strengthen us etc. What a gift that is, our God wants to meet with us He gives us eternal gifts.

God tells David that He is going to make him a house. House here does not mean a structure of stone or wood but a dynasty. God promises that He would make David's kingdom last forever. God says, one of your family, David, is going to be the Messiah, the promised Savior. Gabriel says to Mary, "the Lord will give Him (that is Mary's baby) the throne of his father David and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, His kingdom will never end."

In the promised Savior, the descendant of David, the Son of Mary God does what is humanly impossible God gives you what is forever. God gives you a forever family. He gives you a house, a line, a lineage, a household, a heritage, a kingdom that lasts.

When you have rest from all of your enemies you can feast forever. God gives you a feast that is forever and ever. When God spreads His feast at the Lord's Table, it's called a foretaste of the feast to come. There is plenty of feasting around Christmas and our Christmas feasts will fade into the leftovers and diets of the New Year but the gift of this heavenly feast will last forever.

Christmas is about God's forever gifts, a forever family, a forever feast and a future that is forever. How long will your Christmas gifts last? God's gift of a Savior is the same yesterday today and forever means you'll always have a future in Christ.

A forever family, a forever feast and forever future are realities because we've been forgiven forever and ever. That's what it's all about forgiveness. We're family because we share Jesus forgiveness. We will enjoy eternal feasting at the

heavenly banquet table because we've been forgiven. We have a future, a bold, certain, sure and glorious future no matter what the present because we've been forgiven forever and ever in David's Son and Mary's baby.

I'll recite part of the Hallelujah Chorus and then add some thoughts from today's text and when I point at you, I want you to say, "Forever and ever."

"The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ and he shall reign (forever and ever) King of Kings (forever and ever) Hallelujah, hallelujah and Lord of Lord's (forever and ever) Hallelujah, hallelujah.

Jesus is coming and that means we are family (forever and ever)

Jesus is coming and we will feast (forever and ever)

Jesus is coming to suffer, to die and to rise so that we have a future that lasts (forever and ever)

Jesus is coming and in Him we have a future with family and feasting because in Jesus we are forgiven (forever and ever).

16And your house and your kingdom shall be made **sure forever** before me. Your throne shall be established **forever**.
Amen.