

“Gift ideas for Jesus ~ To be Holy” 12.6.09

This morning we transition from the season of Thanksgiving to preparing our hearts for the birth of our blessed LORD & SAVIOR!

My prayer is for us to re-capture an element of that 1st Christmas that appears to have been lost somewhere in the annals of history.

I'll cut to the chase & reveal that piece which has either been lost or forgotten.

Ever noticed how Jesus' 1st birthday was celebrated? GIFTS were brought to Him.

Somewhere along the lines, we lost this idea & made it about us, consuming more stuff instead of celebrating His miraculous birth almost 2009 years ago.

Isn't it about time to reverse this pattern & change our approach to Christmas; let's consider giving Him GIFTS that are worthy of a King!

It's hard to give a GIFT to someone WHO has it all!

Bible says, “The earth is the Lord's & everything in it. The world & all the people belong to Him.”

As I reflect upon Jesus, His favorite gifts will not cost you a lot of money, but instead will cost you a lot of your heart & attention.

Next six weeks are dedicated to gift ideas that only you can give Jesus for His beloved birthday! Mary offers a beautiful glimpse of this...

- I. 1st gift idea = To be HOLY
 - A. (R) Luke 1: 26 – 28 or p. 779 in pew Bible
 - Under-line the phrase = “...greetings, favored woman!”
 - B. (R) Luke 1: 29 – 30
 - Under-line the phrase = “...for you have found favor with God!”
 - C. early years Mary was somewhat of a ‘mysterious person’
 - To my knowledge no one ever explained why this young teenager had found favor with the God of the universe; what made her special-unique?
 - Little did I know, but in this familiar Christmas passage was laden with controversy; this tiny portion of scripture was highly debated.
 - The misunderstanding & confusion focused in on...
 - D. The TRUE NATURE of Mary
 - Roman Catholics teach that from conception,
 - Mary was without original sin
 - Mary is the “Mother of God,” (Immaculate Conception)
 - Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus, when she gave birth, & remained a virgin throughout her life.
 - Protestants teach Jesus was conceived & born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - We believe Mary was a virgin both when she conceived & at the time she gave birth.
 - E. Controversy is easily resolved = Tradition vs. Holy Scripture

- This doctrine of Mary ever-virgin before + during + after the birth of Christ was not based on the Holy Bible, but stems from writings of the early church fathers in the 3rd century. This teaching helped validate the consecrating of virgins to become NUNS following Mary's supposed pattern.
- The Bible = Holy Scripture teaches a different account:
 - (R) Mark 3: 31 – 34 or 1 book to your left
 - You actually know one of Jesus' brothers = N.T. writer JAMES

Enough about differences...it's time to shelve those & unite. I've neglected this incredible woman ~ mother of Jesus who found favor w/God

WHY she was "highly favored by God" is not specified in scripture but the answer is there hidden in the very few & brief accounts of Mary recorded by the inspired writers.

II. It's a 2 part answer:

A. God chose Mary...

1. Because of what Mary already had!
2. Because of who God knew Mary would become!

B. Mary was very special - - Mary already had a distinct life:

1. (R) Luke 1: 46 – 50
Underline "...for He took notice of His lowly servant girl"
2. Mary's qualities brought on God's attention = recipient of God's grace b/c...
 - PURITY = Mary was pure - - disciplined - - & did not flirt with disaster; I believe she was a virgin in action & attitude = no mixed signals.
 - TRUST-FAITH = (R) Luke 1: 31 – 35 + 37
 - Don't neglect Mary is only 14) or 15 yrs old
 - Sexual promiscuity before marriage was punishable by death; @ the very least she would be ridiculed by community + synagogue.

Notice how Mary responds to God's = (R) Luke 1: 38

(A) 3. & God chose Mary for WHO she would become!

C. Mary the blessed mother of Jesus who would become...

1. The world's only hope!
2. Mary took the risk of faith = she didn't consult w/anyone else; she didn't take time to weigh the pros & cons; she only knew God was asking her to serve Him; & she willingly obeyed!

Still struck with the phrase, "God took notice"

Bible says, "The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him." II Chronicles 16: 9

Question

I wonder what God notices when He sees us = His church?

Question

Do we reflect the church Peter forecasted in I Peter 2: 5 + 9b
“...you are His HOLY priests” + “You are royal priests, a HOLY nation”

Question

Do we reflect these high standards or do we reflect a ‘Culture in Crisis?’

MY growing & changing conviction = the condition of our society – our community – our country is not deteriorating...

- because of Hollywood it not helping but it’s not the root cause!
- because of secular media it’s despicable but its not the root cause!
- because of politicians who control the House + Senate + Executive Branch; not helpful but that is not the root cause!
- I wish I could blame the ACLU for the deterioration of our society; but they are small players & are not the root cause!

- Root cause of the deterioration of our society is the modern church that allows Christians to be spectators & to be no different than secular society ☹

Promise in scripture that we have neglected; turn with to

(R) II Chronicles 7: 14 - 15 or p. 338 in pew Bible

“If my people + called by MY name will humble themselves & pray,
I WILL...forgive their sins & heal their land!”

You want to give a GIFT that is worth of our King this Christmas?
Repent + Sanctify your life = BE HOLY

III. My cleanest gift = my heart for Jesus BE HOLY

A. You are the only one that can do something that privately honors God!

D.L. Moody once penned, “A HOLY LIFE will make the deepest impression.
Lighthouses blow no horns, they just shine.”

B. Our 1st step is to recapturing how we were initially created in the ‘image of God,’ that we lost after the fall in the Garden of Eden; the nature of human beings became ‘unholy’ & ‘sinful’.

1. Sanctification (process of becoming like Jesus)

We believe the Bible teaches that this process begins by a person receiving God’s grace by putting faith in Christ, repenting of sin, confessing Christ, & being baptized by immersion.

2. The process of sanctification continues throughout the life of the believer thru the work of the Holy Spirit as we are transformed into the image of Christ!

3. Holiness is not a static state or position - - lifelong process!

(R) II Corinthians 3: 18 or p. 883 in pew Bible

4. The evidence of this ongoing process is two-fold.

- The internal evidence is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit = Rom 8:16
“For His Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children.”

- The external evidence is the fruit of the Spirit = Galatians 5: 22 - 23

C. Beware of Distractions very practical step

- Holiness does not evaporate because we are innately sinful & wicked creatures, holiness disappears because we are distracted; distracted by...
 - Keeping busy - - filling up every free moment
 - Prayerlessness = not focusing & worshipping God with our lives

Action Steps

Make time to be HOLY ~ keep the world from rushing in:

1. Start your day off w/out distractions
2. Prayer Journal
3. INSERT Stop wasting your life in front of TV