

God's Unspeakable Gift

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving Day in Canada. It wasn't always celebrated on the second Monday in October, but it was the original celebration of thanks to Almighty God in the new world. It first happened in the year 1578 when the English explorer Martin Frobisher gave thanks to God for surviving the long journey to what is now Newfoundland (Frobisher Bay is named after him). This was 43 years before the pilgrims landed in Plymouth, Massachusetts and began the American tradition of Thanksgiving. Our thanksgiving is earlier simply because we have an earlier harvest season due to the fact that Canada is further north. In 1957, our Parliament announced that the second Monday in October would be "a day of general thanksgiving to almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed." Somebody say "Amen!"

The word "thanksgiving" occurs 27 times in the Bible, and probably this reference is the best known:

Psalms 100:4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

There is a lot for Christians to be thankful for – and sometimes we hardly know how to express it! Three times in the Bible, the apostles use the word "unspeakable" (unutterable, untellable, unimaginable, unbelievable, indescribable, inexpressible, indefinable, inconceivable, incredible) ...

WHEN PAUL HAD A VISION OF HEAVEN ...

2 Corinthians 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

WHEN PETER ANTICIPATED SEEING JESUS IN HEAVEN ...

1 Peter 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

WHEN PAUL SPEAKS OF GOD'S GIFT OF SALVATION ...

2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

The Bible is divided into two sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The first half (actually about 2/3) of the Bible is the story of God's dealings with an earthly nation called Israel; He wanted them to be His chosen people, but when He came to earth as their Messiah they rejected Him. That's when God turned His attention to the Gentiles!

John 1:11-13 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Throughout the Old Testament period, God was trying to teach mankind something – that no matter how hard we try, as human beings we cannot measure up to God's standard of perfection. Even the most religious among us fall severely short of the mark!

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

The whole Old Testament system was designed to make mankind feel their inadequacy. Even when the poorest person in the kingdom appeared before a king, they were required to bring a gift to add to his treasury. Gift giving played such an important part in the social life of the East that the Hebrew language contains no less than fifteen different expressions for the one idea! That's why there are Scriptures like these:

Proverbs 17:8 A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.

Proverbs 17:23 A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

Proverbs 18:16 A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

Proverbs 19:6 Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.

This wasn't just the way it was in politics – the poorest person in the kingdom was also required to bring a gift (a sacrifice) when they appeared before the presence of God at His tabernacle.

LEVITICUS 5

- (1) And if a soul sin ...
- (6) he shall bring ... a lamb ... for a sin offering ...
- (7) and if he be not able to bring a lamb ...
then he shall bring ... two turtledoves ...
- (11) But if he be not able to bring two turtledoves ...
then he that sinned shall bring ... fine flour for a sin offering ...
- (13) And the priest shall make an atonement for him ... and it shall be forgiven him ...

Here's the crucial principle to grasp: Some gifts were given voluntarily in the way we would give a "present" today, but other gifts were required at the penalty of your life! (tribute money, gift to kings, sacrifice to God) It was a high insult and indignity to refuse a present – and it could be fatal!

Someone asked one of our members this question the other day: “If the Bible calls the Holy Spirit a ‘gift,’ then what’s the big deal if I choose not to receive it?” They have entirely missed the point!

Lord Beaverbrook “gave” many fine institutions to the city of Fredericton, and you can live here for many years and never participate in any of them. But if someone offers you “the gift of life” – a kidney transplant – you have to participate in that kind of gift or it’s fatal!

In the New Testament, the sense of the word “gift” is basically still the same as the Old Testament – it’s a “sacrifice” that we choose to reject at our eternal peril, not an option. The sudden and surprising difference in the New Testament is that the gift now comes from the opposite direction – the King of Kings gives gifts to the poorest among us!

Psalm 68:18-19 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: **thou hast received gifts for men**; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.

It wasn’t that God didn’t give anything back in the Old Testament (in fact, He loaded His people with benefits!). It’s just that the focus was on the fact that you had to bring a gift (sacrifice) – then and only then would God receive you. God was teaching us something – that no matter how much we bring, it’s never enough! Now look at the New Testament ...

Ephesians 4:7-10 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of **the gift of Christ**. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, **and gave gifts unto men**. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

WHO ASCENDED FROM THE GRAVE? JESUS!

WHO OPENED THE GRAVES OF OTHERS? JESUS!

Ezekiel 37:13 And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,

WHO WALKED ON THE WATER? JESUS!

Job 9:8 Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.

WHO HEALED THE BLIND, THE DEAF, AND THE LAME? JESUS!

Isaiah 35:4-6 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

The God in the Old Testament who RECEIVED gifts FROM men is Jesus Christ in the New Testament who GIVES gifts TO men!

JESUS IS HERE ... ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN!

The church world talks about giving your life to Jesus, and that’s good ... but it’s not complete! In the New Testament, God is the giver ... and He has a gift for you. You don’t have to be a Christian under your own power or through your own efforts, because God wants to give you His Spirit!

Luke 11:13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good **gifts** unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father **give** the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

John 4:10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the **gift** of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have **given** thee living water.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the **gift** of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 8:20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the **gift** of God may be purchased with money.

Acts 10:45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the **gift** of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 11:17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like **gift** as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

Hebrews 2:3-4 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and **gifts** of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

INDESCRIBABLE (by Laura Story)

From the highest of heights to the depths of the sea
Creation's revealing Your majesty
From the colors of fall to the fragrance of spring
Every creature unique in the song that it sings
All exclaiming

Indescribable, uncontainable,
You placed the stars in the sky and You know them by name.
You are amazing God
All powerful, untameable,
Awestruck we fall to our knees as we humbly proclaim
You are amazing God

Who has told every lightning bolt where it should go
Or seen heavenly storehouses laden with snow
Who imagined the sun and gives source to it's light
Yet conceals it to bring us the coolness of night
None can fathom

Indescribable, uncontainable,
You placed the stars in the sky and You know them by name
You are amazing God
All powerful, untameable,
Awestruck we fall to our knees as we humbly proclaim
You are amazing God

Incomparable, unchangeable
You see the depths of my heart and You love me the same
You are amazing God