

JJ<sup>1</sup>

So, what did you find under the Christmas tree this morning? Beautifully wrapped presents? When you opened those presents, did you find wonderful and thoughtful things? Or, did you open your gifts to find each one was a lump of coal?

I'm sure that if any of you got a lump of coal it was meant as a joke. Yet, if we're honest with ourselves, we should expect nothing more to be **given to us**. In fact, we should expect far less especially when we consider the reality of our sin.

Just think for a moment of how many times you sinned against the people who gave you those gifts. If they kept a record of your sins throughout the year when they went shopping for you, do you think they'd feel much like buying you anything but a lump of coal? It's scary, isn't it? To think of how much hurt we've caused our loved ones and friends! To think how much more hurt would be inflicted if those closest to us knew everything we thought, said and did over the last year!

Just think of what should be given **to us**. And I'm not just talking about getting nothing but coal for the rest of our lives. You see, before God, there isn't a naughty and nice list, just naughty. In fact, the list

doesn't say "naughty" but "sinner"—"enemy"—"object of wrath."

This is how the list reads because by nature each one of us is a person "walking in darkness" and "living in the land of the shadow of death." This is what was given **to us** by our first parents, Adam and Eve because when they sinned, they plunged the world for all time into the darkness of sin. And this darkness is deeper and dirtier than the blackest, filthiest coal. Coal is very useful, and with some scrubbing can be cleaned out of clothes and off of skin. But not sin. That's why Isaiah describes this as our constant condition. We're walking in it and living in it, and there's nothing we can do about it.

Sin is not useful in any way. It only always destroys. Sin is a filth we cannot remove from our hearts, no matter how hard we try. That's why what should be given **to us** is death—eternal death in hell. And that's exactly what God says he will give to those who cherish darkness.

But friends, that's not God's greatest desire. Just like our loved ones don't give us Christmas gifts according to how we've treated them, God's great desire is to give every person the greatest Christmas gift in the world, even with the way we've treated him! So God sent a Light into this world, and not just into

<sup>1</sup> JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

this world, but even into our hearts! THE Christmas gift is God's own Son, and he is given **To Us!**

"For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given...!" Friends, this is the true Christmas miracle. It is what makes Christmas, Christmas. It's the miracle that even though we should be sent into the blackest darkness of hell for all eternity, God has given us his Son so that we would live in the brilliant light of his glory forever in heaven! And it's in the names Isaiah gives for the Son that shows us how and why he is the greatest, best and only Christmas gift we need.

He is the "Wonderful Counselor." This Gift given **to us** is filled with perfect wisdom. He knew the plan the Father had for him and carried it out to perfect completion! He did not miss one step or leave one person behind. And since he endured every temptation and suffered all things, he knows how to counsel us in the best way possible—through his Word.

He is the "Mighty God." In chapter 42, Isaiah says, "The LORD will march out like a mighty man, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies." (Is. 42:13) This Gift given **to us** fights the battle against sin, death and the

Devil. He is the Mighty God and is always victorious in battle.

Our Savior marches on like a mighty warrior whose zeal is blazing like the sun! His battle cry is the gospel that triumphs over all our darkness. He has and does, on a daily basis, triumph over his enemies. For us the most vivid image of this is his holy sacrifice upon the cross. The sacrifice that crushed the serpent's head and demolished the guilt of our sin. He has conquered death for himself, but it is not yet destroyed. We must still face

death, but on the Last Day the last enemy will be destroyed forever when he raises all the dead from their graves.



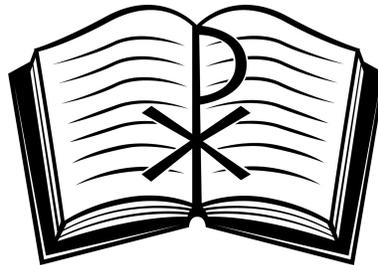
He is the "Everlasting Father." This Gift given **to us** is our everlasting God. For Christ there is no beginning or end. Now to hear him described as

"Father" might seem like Isaiah is confusing the persons of the Trinity. Remember, this is God's inspired Word. The Holy Spirit doesn't get confused. Like all these names, they describe what Jesus is like. He is like a father because he has great care and concern for his children. In fact, he displays greater love for his children than any father ever has been able to display. Many fathers have given their lives for their children, but Christ gave his life for all people. Not only has he given his life for us all, he also works to protect us every day from

also works to protect us every day from our enemies.

And finally, he is the “Prince of Peace.” This Gift given **to us** brings us perfect peace. Peace in knowing that our sins have been washed away. Peace in knowing that the darkness of original sin has been rendered powerless. Peace in knowing that the Devil can no longer lay claim to us. Peace in knowing that even though we die, we will live forever with our Lord.

Dear friends, God the Son has been given **TO US!!!** In our baptisms, God conquered the darkness of our sin and gave his Light to live in our hearts through faith. Our bodies are his temple where he lives and shines his love. And to keep that Light shining in our hearts, God gives us his Son again and again in the Lord’s Supper. In a way, with God every day is Christmas because every day he gives us his Son. Every day he shows us new ways that he loves us. Every day he works to chase away the darkness of sin and temptation through the Light of his Word.



Friends, rejoice this day and always that our God does not give us gifts according to what we have done! Otherwise we’d find something far worse than coal. This Christmas Day and every day, we get to open the gift of his love given **TO US!!!** His Son, our Savior—Jesus. Amen.

SDG<sup>2</sup>

The following is a quote from one of Luther’s sermons on this text:

“...it is the greatest art and an indescribable skill that we are supposed to believe that the God who created the heavens and the earth was born of a woman and that this fact is the height of wisdom...God has sent his Son into the world to become man, born of an ordinary woman. Let people laugh if they want. This is our knowledge, skill, and wisdom, and we say that no greater wisdom has come into the world and no finer gospel has arisen that this, that the god who created the heavens and the earth was conceived and born of a virgin so that he had the exact same members—eyes and ears, hands and feet, skin and bones, hair and flesh, body and soul—just like any other baby boy. It sounds ridiculous, but that’s why we celebrate this festival; we want to get this article firmly into our heads and hearts so that we do not doubt it.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for “To God Alone Be The Glory”. This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn’t about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther at the Manger*, Trans. Nathaniel Biebert, NPH 2017, p. 2-3.

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