

## “This Christmas Freely Give”

It is embarrassing when we receive a gift or card from someone leading up to Christmas and we have not given either in return. It makes us want to get a gift or send a card—quickly!

This December whenever we receive unexpectedly, I want to encourage us to think about a related and very important truth.

When Jesus sent his twelve disciples out on their first mission into Galilee (Matthew 10:5-6), He instructed them, “Freely you received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8).

This is none other than a reminder we are to give with the same kind of generous, radically-loving spirit with which Jesus gave to us. This is at the heart of Christmas, the time we celebrate the incarnation and birth of our Savior. Consider the following New Testament statements which prove the point:

- (1) 2 Cor. 8:9: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”
- (2) Philip. 2:4-8: “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. [5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, [8] he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”
- (3) Ephes. 5:2: “And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”
- (4) Ephes. 5:2: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,
- (5) 1 John 3:16: “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.”

We could list other examples, but the point is sufficiently made. Our call to love, give, serve, forgive, be generous, all are to be modeled on and motivated by the gift given to us in Jesus Christ

Here is what that implies. First, we love others whether we receive anything back from them or not. Additionally, we should love and serve sacrificially. What is more, we should aggressively seek to love and do good to others (1 Thes. 5:15). Finally, those who are in vocational ministry should love and serve for greater purposes and rewards than only the pay (cf. 1 Peter 5:2). It is probably a good idea also that vocational ministers do some things for no pay whatsoever.

During this month we celebrate in a special way that “God so loved the world He gave His only Son...” If we have received that gift, we should also gladly and freely give of ourselves for the benefit of others and for God’s glory!

Joyfully giving to you and with you,

Pastor Tom