



The Gift

by Donna Romer
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Thanksgiving Day was quickly approaching. Dodging loaded shopping carts, Chuck and I forged through the crowded aisles of Walmart with a holiday food scavenger hunt list in hand. Workers with toy-laden carts stocked mountains of toys around us, and then, unexpectedly, it happened. Out of nowhere, a wave of overwhelming sadness hit me as I looked at the stacks of toys.

Like most parents, I loved toy shopping for our kids at Christmastime, and the sight of the colorful boxes sent me back a few years. The anticipation of giving our kids their favorite Christmas gift brought joy to our hearts. It seemed that the steam from the Thanksgiving turkey had hardly evaporated when the long-awaited Target catalog arrived in the mail. It was a veritable tug of war to see who would be the first to pull out red markers to circle pictures of Christmas toys in hopes that Santa would make a clandestine Christmas Eve midnight drop.

Christmas day brought the culmination of weeks of waiting, and there was pure joy watching the broad smiles on little faces as they eagerly tore through the festive wrapping paper, searching for a gift long anticipated. Their glee, accompanied by laughter and

excitement, lasted for a few moments until they spotted the next present in front of them, and then it was on to another colorfully wrapped package. Christmas wrapping, tissue paper, and ribbon littered the living room floor as they feverishly ripped through the next surprise.

My Walmart experience led me through a replay of memories, taking me back to earlier days, and as quickly as the reminiscing began, my sadness turned to a smile. Those moments of reflection set me on a sentimental journey over the next few weeks, but it was more of a pilgrimage of thankfulness.

The Christmas gifts our children couldn't live without are long gone or carefully tucked away as keepsakes in their closets ... but largely forgotten. I no longer do the Lego dance as I walk across a bedroom floor, and dolls or Hot Wheels no longer clutter the hallways. Reflecting on Christmases past, I realized there is one sustaining truth that will never change ... the real story of Christmas remains ... the undeniable gift of Jesus.

Long after paper is faded, toys are broken, it is only Jesus who brings the deep abiding joy that no nicely wrapped package will ever deliver. This gift arrived without human fanfare, was swaddled in the simplest of

wrapping... and placed in a rustic manger. He isn't a mythical gift giver who children outgrow. He is the eternal life-giver. He was the baby born in a manger, as foretold by the prophet Isaiah 700 hundred years before. His arrival wasn't captured by a reel on Instagram or TikTok, but celebrated by the host of Heaven! The written story of His birth has survived generations, tested by time, confounding skeptics.

In the hustle and bustle of holiday sales, remember that those toys will eventually break or be forgotten, children will grow up... but the one truth of Christmas they will long remember is the reality of the birth of our Savior ... Jesus Christ.

This Christmas, I choose to embrace the gift whose value will never depreciate, whose life-changing ability will never wane, and to His Kingdom there is no end. Jesus, the Son of God, born to a world that desperately needed a Savior.

“ FOR UNTO YOU IS BORN THIS DAY
IN THE CITY OF DAVID A SAVIOR,
WHICH IS CHRIST THE LORD.
AND THIS SHALL BE A SIGN UNTO YOU;
YOU SHALL FIND THE BABE
WRAPPED IN SWADDLING CLOTHES,
LYING IN A MANGER.
AND SUDDENLY THERE WAS WITH THE ANGEL
A MULTITUDE OF THE HEAVENLY HOST
PRAISING GOD, AND SAYING,
GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST,
AND ON EARTH PEACE,
GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN.

LUKE 2:11-14

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