

December 23, 2018

1 John 4:9-19 (esp vs. 10 & 18)

Christmas Giving, Christmas Receiving

Main Point: 1 John 1:9 “...God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.” We must receive before we can give. This receiving is not via the hard work of earning or performing, but it is hard. It is hard to receive because of the war upon grace. But grace wins because of the gift of Jesus given.

Intro: So Christmas is almost here...

Consider through this passage what an assault upon cynicism, negativity, fear Christmas is. How it overcomes the “perform or else” nature of worldly competitiveness and social media postings perfectionism.

The joy of Christmas is the ridiculousness of it, the escape from the world-ness of it, the ‘how can this be true?’ nature of it.

Let’s look first at what is given to be received, then at what receiving does for our giving

If you can receive love, then you will give love.

The world says, ‘work hard at giving’

The gospel says, ‘faith is the anti-work of receiving.’

1 As The Gift is Received,

Focus on the Gift, and focus on the receiving

Vs 9 > 9 and 16 talk about the gift... the God who is Love sent the gift... so that we might live through Him – enabling us to live, moving us out of sure and certain death into sure and certain life... if only you can receive...

Vs. 10 > In this/inside this/look at this, is love, not that we have loved God /

wake up: none of us has loved God so that we deserve His love or deserve this gift!

Even though this is what He has clearly told us and taught us from the beginning, that we must love Him. So John says, ‘let God show you how He removes punishment, removes what we all fear – coal in our stocking- getting what we deserve for our sins.’

Explain ‘**propitiation**’ – b/c of the sacrifice of Christ, God moves from being angry with us, to being for us. Jesus came to absorb the penalty we deserve, and this is a very hard thing to receive. It is the one way out, but we are really good at trying all the other ways. All the other ways sound so convincing, seem so right, and are, therefore, so alluring.

ILLUS... I love hearing these stories of parents being brought to wits end over trying to control their kids behavior with stunts and schemes like a magical watching Elf who gives reports and his position has to be changed every night to play along.

‘Ah, for a month the kids will have someone else controlling their behavior...’ and it utterly fails...Kids know the truth... behavior modification techniques don’t really work, b/c they don’t change the root motivator.

Now, sure some precocious children will play along with the caregivers and ‘be good’ and ‘behave’ but they know there is something wonderful, delightful, thrilling about Christmas, and it’s not their good behavior! Ha! It is the perfect love that drives out all fear...

Christmas really is for children... children, and those with child-like hearts, know this! Kids “from one to 92,” right? The lights, the dazzle, the parties, the fun, the anticipation all points to receiving the undeserved gift.

Receiving is hard – it is a battle for your heart. Will you receive well? How you receive determines how you will give.

*So remember that the Bible’s Christmas story emphasizes the supernatural nature of the Gift (vs. 13-14)> to overwhelm us, to blow us away with our expectations, to make sure that we could not turn Christmas into a human-centered, human accomplished, performance driven, gifts deserved, cultural phenomenon that our whole commercial economy depends upon...

Vs. 17-18 > Children know this verse, and those whom God gives child-like hearts know this! Perfect love drives out all fear

The world doubles down at Christmas time with being good enough to earn gifts. But children know that this is nuts. Why else would they run up to a stranger dressed in a magical costume and ask for, what do they ask for, they ask for gifts! Gifts that are given and far above any deserving.

Children teach us, the child becomes the teacher of hardened and hurting and performance fatigued adults... there is no way that you are good enough or could be good enough and you have misbehaved, and so you accept the love you receive on Christmas Day and tear into it with all out abandon... looks like fearless, reckless delight to me!

Do they get up on Christmas morning and think, was I good enough? Will I get coal in my stocking? No! B/c the story of grace is what everyone wants, and at Christmas, so

many get it, receive it, literally tear into it. How? B/c the Gift was sent. Jesus came. And Jesus was torn.

For all the children who will receive Him. This is gift. For some of you, God knows that you deeply resist receiving. You just feel better when you feel like you have it all together. God is breaking you open through your circumstances so that you can receive, so that you “might live” – can live, breathe, receive.

And be perfected, completed, fulfilled by His fear-abolishing love. (Trans to 2) > which overflows into giving... it has to...

2 Then The Gift will Overflow

Now we can talk about what receiving does.

It overflows into love...

The test of love – what is this love?

Self sacrificial

Confident

V. 11-12 – it is **self-sacrificial** love.

v. 13 Love expressed from confident boldness in God’s given-ness –

15-17

: Enabling power to overflow love, to give as you have been given > The Triune God worked and works so you can respond, rest, and live. The Spirit lives in you by your confession, acknowledgement, assent, allegiance (v. 15). So God gives you experiential knowledge... have you ever done something only out of love without regard to yourself?... (v. 16). And this experiential knowledge is the Triune God showing you, giving you, pouring out, injecting you with courageous confidence b/c you need it.

Why do you need it? B/c there is so much cynicism. B/c you are strangers/foreigners here, as He was... “because as He is so also are we in this world.” (v. 17)

Beloved by the Father, just as Jesus is (our standing, value, position, acceptance)

In the world but not of the world, just as Jesus was (uncomfortable)

App. To Christmas celebrating... we know we are different, but why are we different, and what difference does it make to the world. ... less isolation from the world, more interaction with the world... accepting your ‘sent-ness’ / receiving your ‘sent-ness.’

Confidence – v. 16 & 17 – it is supernatural, not natural... not only acknowledge and figured out in the theological mind (v.15) and stop there... It is received into the heart – V. 16!!

We love b/c He first loved us

Ways we give this love:

Corporately as the Church: The gift that Christmas is to the culture... a culture longing for grace but doubling down on performance

Individually and within families:

ILLUS of being an initiator > Why do I have to be first in reaching out to them? Why does it seem like I am always the one to initiate? Well, this is what love does. It loves first, it takes the risk, first.

APP: Because you are secure in the love of Christ, because you have come to know and to believe the love that God has for you, is there a risk you can take to love someone?

(Love defined as self-sacrifice.) Whether they reject or accept is not in the equation b/c you are secure in God's love. Your love demonstrates the love of God for them – love first b/c you are loved.

Conc: Keep receiving. Keep wondering. Fight for wonder, awe, overwhelming.

So that grace would be grace... if it were through works, then grace would not be grace.

The story of Christmas is the message of grace. Undeserved, unearned gifts given and received. Let that be your boast, your joy, your assurance, and may every gift you give and receive this Christmas be an overflow of such grace to you from God, the giver of all fullness and joy unfathomable.

To Him Who Is Able -