

Giving and Receiving

“What are you getting for Christmas?”

“What do you want for Christmas?”

How many times have you heard these questions lately? Christmas shopping is in full swing. For the next two weeks many gifts will be given and received. Which do you enjoy the most – giving or receiving? Unfortunately, for many people, the truthful answer to that question conflicts with the answer they know they should give. Honestly, receiving gifts, especially the one(s) we’ve always wanted, brings a lot of pleasure and happiness. But there’s no honor in receiving gifts (however, there can be dishonor in the way we act when we don’t get the gifts we’d hoped for).

Several years ago, Calvin Coolidge, our 30th president, said, “No person has ever been honored for what he received. Honor has been the reward for what he gave.” Can you think of an award or honor given to someone that received the greatest or most gifts? There may be, but nothing comes to my mind. On the other hand, there are numerous honors and rewards for those who excel at giving to an individual. Oscars and Emmys are given to the person who contributed the most to the music and entertainment industry. Athletics have their Most Valuable Player awards. Universities, governments, and even zoos have buildings named after major contributors.

This probably doesn’t surprise you at all. No doubt you have heard many times the statement of Jesus: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The best known verse in the Bible honors God for what He gave, not for what He received (John 3:16). What does surprise many people is that when God honors giving, it has nothing to do with the amount of the gift. Generation after generation honors the poor widow who, even though it wasn’t much, gave all she had (Luke 21:2). The Macedonians are also esteemed for their giving, even though poverty stricken themselves (2 Cor. 8:1-5). In contrast, very little is said about those receiving the gifts. What do you know about the poor saints in Jerusalem other than they were famine stricken and very poor? About the only thing we know about how to receive gifts is to do so with gratitude and in a way that glorifies God. Perhaps we need to work a little harder at becoming a generous giver, and spend less time hoping and dreaming about all the things we might receive. That’s hard to do, especially at this time of the year, but by doing so, we will become a little bit more like the God we love and serve. Givers truly are more blessed than receivers.

Joe Chesser, bulletindigest.com

Purchase not friends by gifts; when thou ceasest to give, such will cease to love. - Thomas Fuller (1608 - 1661)

News Notes

CONVERT’S CLASS: Each Thursday at 11:00 a.m. Open to everyone.

PANTRY: Spaghetti & sauce.

SICK & SHUT-IN: WPMC, Pittsburgh: John Sprout. **At Home:** Paula Clutrer, Twila Adamson, Randy Beagle, Sue Haught, Bob McMahan, Scharlotte Jones, Becky McKitrick, Dean Spencer, Harry Huff, Peggy Linger, Nancy Cox, Barbara DeLong, Gary & Marlene Evans, Cheryl Renfro Walker. **Fox-Chester:** Janice Hutchins, Mary Johnson. **Elsewhere:** Carolyn Carbone, 103 Orange Blossom Lane, Ranson, WV 25438. Herman McHan, 7401 Elmwood Dr., Lisbon, OH 44432.

Time

Benjamin Franklin, the statesman, once asked: “Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of.”

“Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.” Carl Sandburg (1878 - 1967).

“Time = Life, Therefore, waste your time and waste your life, or master your time and master your life.” Alan Lakein

With each movement of the hands on our watch we are reminded just how precious time truly is, and how quickly it passes. “Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (James 4:14).

Are you using your time wisely? That certainly is a biblical thought, for Paul admonishes: “Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16, ASV).

To “redeem the time” literally means, “to buy it back.” No, unfortunately life does not come with a rewind button. The thought conveyed is that opportunities can pass us by, and once they do they are gone forever. V.E. Howard once said it so well, “Buy while the buying is good.”

You have probably seen some of the postings about how many years of your life do you spend sleeping, eating, working, recreating, driving, walking etc. By the time you do some of the math, it is alarming to see how little of life is “left”.

Ben Hecht gave the colloquial comment, “Time is a circus, always packing up and moving away.” It sure seems that way. Granted, we all have 60 seconds in a minute, 60 minutes in an hour, 24 hours in a day, 168 hours in a week, 8,736 hours in a year, etc. But all of it seems to pass so quickly.

There are times when Scripture seems to cut deep. The reality is troubling. For instance, the words of the Psalmist, “The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psa. 90:10).

One can chuckle at the conversation between Tom Seaver and Yogi Berra as we are reminded at the swiftness of time. Tom asked, “Yogi, what time is it?” Yogi replied, “You mean now?”

- by Mark Aites, North End Church of Christ, Parkersburg, WV -