

“Never Judge A Gift By Its Wrapping!”

Luke 2:6–12

Back in the 30’s, a Lutheran pastor attended a clergy convention in Frankenmuth, Michigan. During this convention, the pastor was offered lodging in the home of his cousin, who was a farmer. During small talk, the farmer showed his cousin a family heirloom, an old Bible that had apparently come from Germany, since it was written in German. When the pastor saw the book, he knew it had to be centuries old. As he opened the cover and viewed the title page of the Bible, **he gasped**. In the lower right-hand corner, handwritten in ink, was the **date 1733**. Above the date was a signature: **“J. S. Bach.”** This Bible once belonged to the great Lutheran composer **Johann Sebastian Bach!**

For centuries, this book had been regarded by its owners as just an old dusty book. For almost 200 years, no one had recognized its value. It had been packed away in the attic and long forgotten. But not any more. Now this **“Bach Bible”** is housed in the rare book collection at a seminary in St. Louis and is valued as that library’s most prized possession.

There’s a huge lesson here—**never judge a book by its cover**. To the farmer, this was just another old, dusty, useless book. In reality, however, it was a priceless treasure.

Today, we view a different heirloom handed down to us by God contained in a promise through centuries of prophets. As we open the cover on this Christmas Day, we too **gasp with Mary & Joseph**, angels and Shepherds, because of the value of this gift from God. It doesn’t look like much – a 6-7-8# bundle wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. But as we pull back the swaddling clothes today, we discover the truth:

“Never Judge A Gift By Its Wrapping!”

1. A Son comes wrapped in humility from the cradle
2. Our salvation comes special delivery from the cross

1

What is Christmas? It’s the message that the greatest gift ever given—the gift of God’s own Son—arrived in a humble, modest, most inconspicuous wrapping. Jesus was born in a barn, wrapped in rags, and laid in a feed trough for **saliva slobbering, mouth drooling** animals.

The Gospel writer Luke describes this humble scene of Jesus’ birth: **“⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.** (Lk 2:6–7). Jesus was not born to rich parents or into royalty. There were no midwives, nurses, a team of OB specialists, and a sanitary, warming bin for him. There wasn’t a nursery for newborns nor any Nannies on standby to care for this child. There wasn’t a **“NIC Unit”** (*neo-natal intensive care unit*) in case this baby took a turn for the worse. No, this child was in a shack because there was a **“NO VACANCY”** sign at the Bethlehem Hilton. And **nobody**, besides Mary & Joseph, even knew this child had been born nor did anyone care because Mary & Joseph’s son **came wrapped in humility right from the cradle**.

Notice how the angel clarified the signs, which identified the baby’s location. Luke says shepherds were just sitting around out in the cold night air watching their sheep: **“⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.** (Lk 2:9-12) One would expect to find this person in a palace. One would expect to find this gift wrapped with garments of silk and lying in a cradle covered with gold.

Rather this child Jesus was in the city of David, the little town of Bethlehem Ephrathah, (little among the clans of Judah) not in the capital city of Jerusalem. He was lying in a manger of animals, not in a velvet-lined crib in a royal nursery. He was wrapped in common cloths, not in the onesie gowns of baby kings and princes. **Such a humble wrapping from the cradle!**

That’s pretty much how Jesus spent His years on this earth: **wrapped in humility**. In fact, though he was true God in every way, **yet he didn’t consider equality with God something to be used for his own advantage, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant; being made in human likeness; and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself.** {Paraphrase, Phil 2:6} From the cradle to the cross, he set his glory and power aside and came to serve, not to be served. You wouldn’t think this about a tiny child wrapped in swaddling clothes, but as they say: **NEVER JUDGE A GIFT BY ITS WRAPPING!**

How true that is as the angel makes it unmistakably clear who this child is. He is none other than the Christ—the Messiah promised of old. He is the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the Savior, the one anticipated since the time of Adam. He is God in human flesh, the greatest gift in all history! And He is the one who brings **OUR SALVATION SPECIAL DELIVERY FROM THE CROSS!**

The most significant of all the wrappings of this gift is that of human flesh. **“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”** (Jn 1:14). In human flesh he identifies with sinful human beings! He who is without sin identifies himself with us poor wretched sinners before a just and holy God. We deserve no gifts from God. We really deserve the curse of hell and God’s judgment for every one of our sins **in** our minds, **from** our mouths, or **through** our lives. Why should Jesus be born for us? There’s nothing we did to deserve that.

But what’s most amazing of all is that this human being who is true God wrapped Himself in human flesh so later in his life he could be wrapped in a crown of thorns and attached to a cross with nails. Jesus’ mission demanded that He be wrapped with our sins and iniquities. He had to be wrapped not in swaddling clothes, but in graveclothes and laid in a tomb. He had to be wrapped with our death on the cross to earn complete forgiveness from the curse of sin and sting of death.

You can’t judge a gift by its wrapping. But when you pull away this wrapping, there is the Christ, the Son of God! There is Jesus, who as the angel told Joseph in a dream, **WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS.** {Matt 1:21}

Last night or maybe today, you will gather together and see a lot of wrappings. They are important, but not **THE** most important. As with any gift, you go beyond the wrappings. You just tear off the paper and someone stuffs it into a big garbage bag. Then you focus on the gift that’s inside!

On this Christmas Day, let’s not **judge God’s gift by its humble wrappings.** Rather let’s join **the great company of heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.** Let’s join the shepherds as they hustle over to Bethlehem **to see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.** Let’s join Mary & Joseph at the cradle to behold the **“Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”** (Isaiah 9:6).

This newborn baby, wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a cradle, is none other than the almighty and eternal God who comes **to deliver His gift of salvation to us from the cross.** And one day, we will be wrapped in the garments of heaven’s glory to celebrate an eternal holiday with Jesus forever.

A young man was dating a woman for some time. At Christmas he gave her several gifts. All of these gifts except one were packaged in beautiful wrappings—with **red velvet bows.** His sweetheart opened all the pretty packages **ooing and aaahing** at each one. But she kinda hesitated over that one small package that was wrapped with newspaper and tied with twine. It looked so plain, so neutral, so ordinary compared to the other packages. But she took it and unwrapped it anyway, and when she opened it – **she gasped!** Inside was a **diamond engagement ring!** The humblest looking gift was the one that changed her life forever!

We **open God’s gift** to us this Christmas Day and gasp at the Savior born for you and me, the Savior who has changed our lives forever! **NEVER JUDGE A GIFT BY ITS WRAPPING.** This baby is Christ our LORD! **AMEN**