

Family Service

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[0 : 00] I wonder if you know what we did yesterday in our house.

I'm not giving you any clues, so it's a pretty difficult question. But does anybody want to have a wild guess what we did in our house yesterday? Okay, what do you think, Yoshi?

We saw Santa. Nope, there are no mirrors in our house. Ah, that's an inside joke there. Anyway, not very inside.

Sophie, what do you think we did in our house yesterday? You saw Santa, yes. Any ideas? What was that? You made toast.

I made toast as well, yesterday and today. So I do that every single day. I'm very predictable. I make toast every day. Well, I'll tell you what we did yesterday.

[1 : 08] Well, I say we. It's a rather loose use of the word we, because I wasn't actually involved. I got home and found it had been done. And it was that the tree was put up, the Christmas tree.

We put up the Christmas tree. And I came home and there it was in the corner of the big lounge, this big tree. And it had lights and it had decorations, all kinds of decorations.

It was very exciting. But there was one thing missing. Exactly. Exactly.

At the bottom of the tree, had this lovely kind of Christmassy, oh, I don't know what you'd call it. Sort of blanket. It's not really a blanket. But anyway. And that's where the presents go.

And there were no presents. Empty. Nothing at all. That's not very good, is it? Well, hopefully, eventually, there'll be some presents. I was hearing something on the radio this week.

[2 : 11] Some of you may have heard about this. About a lady who took a picture of her Christmas tree. And she posted it online. I think on Instagram or I don't know these things. But anyway, she posted it online.

And lots of people saw it. And they reposted it. And it went viral. And thousands and thousands of people have seen it. And the reason why people were so interested in it is because of the number of presents around her tree.

Have some of you heard about that? Any nods? No? Oh, yes. One or two people heard about it. Do you know how many presents there were at the bottom of this lady's tree? Any guesses? Tegan, do you want to guess?

A hundred. That's a guess. Any other guesses? Seven hundred, Noah. Let's say it's somewhere in between. Okay? Seven hundred meters tall.

That would be a big tree. But no. Well, I'll tell you. Okay? I'll tell you how many presents there were. This is true. I'm not making this up. There were three hundred presents. How crazy is that?

[3 : 15] I know. It's just crazy. Anyway, let's move on. The point is that today I want to talk about presents. There's a bit of a theme here. Not that we've organized this, but a bit of a theme.

And I want to think about presents that there are in the Christmas story. I want to think about three presents. Okay? Three presents in the Christmas story. And present number one is God's present to us.

And I want to read something that the angels said to the shepherds when they announced the birth of Jesus. And they said something to the shepherds that we read and we've heard so many times. But it's a little bit strange when we think about it. And I'm going to read. It's in Luke's Gospel in chapter 2. And this is the angel. And the angel is speaking to the shepherds.

And this is what the angel said. Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you.

[4 : 16] He is Christ the Lord. And the bit I think sounds a little bit strange is that the angel would say to the shepherds, A Savior has been born to you.

What's that about? Surely what the angel should have said is, A Savior has been born to Mary. Mary was the mother. But no.

The angel said, A Savior has been born to you. And the reason I think the angel said that is that the angel wanted them to understand. That this baby was a present.

It was a gift to them from God. A baby has been born to you. A baby has been born for you. And who is he? What is the present?

He's Jesus. And he's the Savior. Our Savior. This is God's great present to us. We know what Jesus himself said about that.

[5 : 13] Jesus knew that that was true. He told his disciples when he was teaching them one time, These words. And you'll recognize these words. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, That whoever believes in him shall not die, but have eternal life.

So Jesus was saying, when he grew up into a man, he said, That's what I am. I am God's present to you. To be your Savior. That you can believe in me and know eternal life.

What a present. What a wonderful present God has given us. A precious present. A beautiful present. An everlasting present. That we never get bored of.

Or it never gets old and tired. And oh, we want something new. And when I was thinking about that, Who needs 300 presents? Even though that sounds pretty exciting.

When you have one that is so special. God's present to us. The other thing about God's present to us That is good to think about is that God's present to us is just right for everybody.

[6 : 25] You know what it's like with presents? It's so difficult to find just the right present for somebody. And imagine if you got your presents and you mixed them up And they went to the wrong people. And they opened up, they say, What's this?

This is no use to me. Because you need to get the right present for everybody. Well, Jesus is just the right present for all of us. Because he's a Savior. And we all need a Savior.

There's nobody who can say, Well, I don't need a Savior. Some people might say that. They might think that. But it's not true. We all need a Savior. So God's present to us is just the right present.

Well, that's present number one. Three presents I want to talk about. The second present is the presence of the wise men to Jesus. And we know about that. We read that in the Bible.

About the wise men who came from the east. And they found Jesus. And they bowed down before him. And they opened up their treasures. And handed over to Jesus. These presents.

[7 : 24] Gold and frankincense and myrrh. And the Bible calls these things their treasures. The very best that they had.

They brought for Jesus. Very precious presents. We all know about gold being very precious. But also very useful. We read about how, as part of what happened after Jesus was born, how Jesus and his family needed to escape.

You know that part of the story, don't you? Where Herod wanted to kill Jesus. Because he's heard a king had been born. And he thought, well, I'm the king. And they had to escape. And they escaped to another country.

They escaped to Egypt. Now, we don't know. But some people think that maybe those presents that they got, they were able to sell. And with the money to pay for this trip to Egypt.

We don't know if that's what happened. But that's maybe what happened. So they were very precious. But also very useful presents that the wise men gave to Jesus. But do you know that there was another present that the wise men gave to Jesus that was even more precious?

[8 : 36] You might think more precious than gold. That's pretty difficult. Well, there was. Well, I'll tell you what it was. It was their worship. We read in the Bible that the wise men saw Jesus, and they bowed down, and they worshiped him.

And that was worth more even than the gold or the frankincense or the myrrh. So that's present number two. But I want to finish with present number three, a Christmas present that I want you to think about.

And it's our present. You're a present to Jesus. Now, that's difficult, isn't it? If you had to choose a present for Jesus, what could it be?

What do you think? To worship him? Yeah. Any other ideas of present for Jesus, Hannah? Your love for him? They're very good answers. And you're right.

You see, if we thought, well, what could I give to Jesus? Remember, Jesus created everything, and Jesus owns everything. Sometimes we hear about on the TV, they're advertising some present, and

it says, for the man who has everything, or for the woman who has everything.

[9 : 47] Well, what do you give to the Lord who has everything? And you're quite right. There's nothing we can buy that we can give him, but we can give him our worship. We can give him our love.

Yes, Hannah, what else do you think? Your thankfulness. That's a good present. Oh, I was just thinking of one, and we've got lots. But they're all kind of connected, aren't they? Our love, our thankfulness, our worship, they all kind of go together in one present that we can give to Jesus, and really, our present is our way of saying thank you to God for his present.

And we give ourselves in service to God, in worship to God, praising him and living for him. And that's a present to think about as well.

As we receive so much from God, very especially the gift of his son, but also the families that we're part of and the presents that we receive, remember that we can give our present, our thank you back, which is our life, our service, our love, and our worship to him.

So let's just bow our heads, and let's pray for a moment. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your great gift of your son, your one and only son.

[11 : 01] We thank you that you so loved the world. You so loved us that you gave your son, Jesus, to be our Savior. We thank you for his birth. We thank you for his life.

And we thank you for his death in our place. And we thank you that having died for us in our place, he rose again victorious over death and the grave on the third day.

And so today we gather to worship you and to worship your risen living son. And we pray all of these things in his name. Amen. Now we're going to sing again.

We're going to sing Psalm 23.