

**Gifts: Rejected And Exchanged,
Accepted And Shared**

1 Samuel 2:12-26

Christmas gifts

- So, what have you been doing since Christmas Day?
- If you are like most people in the community, you have been spending countless hours in shopping malls, looking for bargains and exchanging gifts.
- Retailers tell us that their busiest times are the days immediately after Thanksgiving and the days directly following Christmas.
- After Thanksgiving we begin gift buying in earnest.
- After Christmas, we begin the exchanging and bargain hunting frenzy.
- What happened with the gifts you chose to give? How were they received?



GIFTS OPENED WITH EXCITEMENT

- What did that feel like for you?
- What happened to the gifts you received?
- How did you react?
- What did that feel like?
- The Christmas season is all about giving and receiving gifts.
- It's easy to allow ourselves to become so caught up in the choosing and wrapping, the unwrapping and exchanging that we miss one crucial fact.
- Each gift represents the identity of the giver and its connection to the identity of the receiver

Where is God in all this?

- . Each gift is an "integration of identities," an offering of oneself to another, a receiving of oneself by another.
- Each gift can represent a relationship between giver and receiver.
- Each gift can represent a relationship given, a relationship accepted, and a relationship shared.
- Where is God in all this?

Where is God in all this?



Relationship between giver and receiver.



OUR GOD IS A GIVING GOD

- The story of Samuel's birth and dedication to the Lord is a fine example of this relationship (1 Samuel 1 and 2).
- Remember that Samuel's mother, Hannah, had been barren for many years.
- In spite of being the object of ridicule and scorn (1:6) and suffering from deep sadness (1:16),
- Hannah remained in faithful relationship to the Lord.
- Hoping against all hope, she continued in prayer to God. And the gift was given.

God is the first GIVER

- A son was born.
- A relationship was offered, accepted, and shared.
- Hannah dedicated the young child to the Lord.
- After Samuel was weaned, Hannah and her husband, Elkanah, presented him to Eli, the priest of the Lord, at Shiloh.
- Samuel, bearing the "name of God," began his training as a priest of God.
- A relationship was given by the Lord to Hannah.

A gift given; a gift shared

- A relationship was shared by Hannah with the Lord.
- Here is where our text begins.
- Each year Hannah used to make a linen robe (ephod) for Samuel and bring it along with them when she and her husband made their yearly sacrifice to the Lord at Shiloh.
- A gift given; a gift shared.
- As they approached, Hannah and Elkanah saw their young son wearing the ceremonial priestly linen apron, ministering before the Lord (2:18-19).

THE JOY OF GIVING

- What joy must have filled their hearts!
- A relationship was given; a relationship was accepted; a relationship was shared with the Lord.
- Doesn't this put our own Christmas gift giving and receiving in a different perspective?
- The size and colour may not matter so much anymore.
- The price wars and labels may take on less meaning.
- The number of "batteries-not-included" and "some-assembly-required" notations may not be so intimidating.

JESUS SAID THIS WORDS

Acts 20:35

It is more blessed to give



than to receive.

GIFT SHARING CREATES RELATIONSHIP

- Gifts are offerings of relationships, to be rejected and exchanged, or accepted and shared.
- Of course, practical issues must also be considered.
- Exchanges do happen.
- Nevertheless, the gift of relationship remains central.
- The offering of an even deeper relationship is beneath the ribbons and wrappings.
- So, what have you been doing since Christmas Day?
- How have you encountered the offering of relationship?

Deeper relationships are experienced

- Has your response been one of rejecting or accepting?
- Refusing or sharing?
- Continuing with our text, we see that the accepted relationship continues to grow.
- More gifts are given. More gifts are shared.
- Deeper relationships are experienced.
- During their annual visit to Shiloh, Eli, the priest, would bless Elkanah and his wife.
- He would say to Elkanah, "May the Lord give you children by this woman for the petition she asked of the Lord" (v. 20).

MORE BLESSINGS FROM GOD

- Then the proud parents would return to their home.
- The section missing from our text (vv. 21-25) provides more insight into the contrasting manner in which gifts are received and shared.
- On the one hand, during the ensuing years, Hannah and Elkanah did indeed receive more gifts.
- "And the Lord visited Hannah, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters.

GIVING MEANS SURRENDERING EVERRYTING TO GOD

- Though Hannah's joy in giving her heart to God took off the edge of self-denial, yet Eli could not but be deeply impressed with the unusual self-sacrifice of both husband and wife.
- The true religious spirit of a man comes out in spontaneous offerings to the efficiency of the services of the sanctuary and the advancement of Christ's kingdom.
- Character expressed in free, unconstrained surrender of money, or time, or sons for religious purposes cannot but be appreciated.

ARE THERE NO OTHER HANNAHS?

- It is in the power of all to perform some acts of self-denial for God, and apart from such acts, no professions will establish a reputation in the true Church of God.
- *The intrinsic value of self-denial lies much in its freeness, its timeliness, its form.*
- *The* surrender of a Samuel at such a time, in such a spirit, is an example to all ages.
- Are there no other Hannah's?

SAMUEL VS ELI'S SONS

- And the boy Samuel [also] grew in the presence of the Lord" (v. 21).
- The text later states, again, that "the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favour with the Lord and with all persons" (v. 26).
- On the other hand, the following three verses (vv. 22-25) describe how Eli's sons received the gift of relationship with the Lord.
- These children of the priest, who were raised in a holy place, in the midst of holy things, were unreformable.

GIFT REJECTED

- Instead of accepting and sharing their gift, these young men had become so corrupt and immoral that no one, not even their father, could intercede for them.
- Their fate was sealed. They had brought it upon themselves.
- A gift given. A gift rejected. A relationship offered. A relationship refused.
- So, what have you been doing since Christmas Day?
- How did you accept the greatest gift ever given, the baby Jesus? How are you sharing that gift?
- What's happening with the other Christmas relationships that were offered around the Christmas tree at your house?



GIFT RECEIVED

- A gift given. A relationship offered. A relationship accepted.
- What relationships have been offered to you this Christmas season?
- What relationships have you accepted?



STORY OF A DESERT WANDERER

- There is a Middle Eastern legend that tells the story of a desert wanderer who happened upon a spring of clear, sweet water.
- It was so refreshing that he decided to bring his king a sample.
- Filling his leather canteen, the traveller began a lengthy journey in the hot sun to the palace.
- Unknown to the traveller, when he finally reached his destination, the water had become stale within its leather container.

KING ACCEPTED THE WATER

- However, the king graciously accepted the gift of his faithful subject.
- He drank deeply, with an expression of gratitude and fulfilment.
- The traveller departed with joy in his heart.
- After he had gone, other members of the king's court tasted the stale water and asked why the king had pretended to enjoy it.
- "It was not the water I tasted," replied the king. "
- I tasted the spirit in which it was given."

OFFERING OF RELATIONSHIP

- Underneath the traveller's gift was an offering of relationship to be refused and rejected, or accepted and shared.
- This Christmas season many gifts have been given.
- Many relationships have been offered.
- Underneath the wrappings and ribbons are relationship opportunities that can be shared and multiplied in the name of Christ.
- A wondrous gift is indeed given, to you and to all people. A child is born to you and all people

CONCLUSION

- Let this gift, like the boy, Samuel, grow both in stature and in favour with all people.
- Let this marvellous gift of loving relationship bloom and grow in your hearts so that others, too, might see the gift above all gifts, and the king above all kings, Jesus Christ our Lord."