**2 Unusual Gifts**

**John 1:14, 16, 17**

# Gifts for Christmas

When God gives us something – it tells us something about what we need! The Incarnation reveals to us every human’s 2 most basic needs.

How's the Christmas shopping, gift preparation? Home made gifts? What are you giving?

Is it something they really need?

Maslow describes basic needs as **physiological** - food, water, shelter, sex, sleep, other things not worth mentioning here!

If you could choose 2 gifts – the last thing you would receive for the rest of your life, what would it be?

**For Christmas, God has given us 2 gifts -** our most basic needs: **Grace and Truth**. - Unusual idea, isn't it? Doesn’t feature for Maslow. ***Not Christmas as Usual***. This Christmas we must consider the unusual gifts of Grace and Truth.

They are our most basic needs because if we receive them, we receive God! What more do we need!!

# Examining the Gifts

**This morning we ought to examine these gifts**,

really think hard about what He has offered us (what is Grace and what is Truth?),

and then work out: what are we supposed to DO with them (**not ornamental** gifts!)

## Firstly, Grace and Truth are gifts, *Divine,* *Gifts*

* (? without God we could not have these - Undeserving as we are, and limited as we are without His Revelation )
* When we talk about things like Grace and Truth, we must remember that the source of these is God Himself:
	+ “*The* ***God of all Grace”,*** (1 Pet 5:10);
	+ *Let God be true though every one were a liar* (Rom 3:4)
* We may imitate these, implement these, show some representation of these, but these are attributes of God Himself that He has communicated to us as bearers of His Image. These are **spiritual** things! Animals function by instinct, and have no facility of grace, and truth!
* **Therefore**, We should treat these gifts with the appreciation they are worth - when we talk about Grace and Truth, we are talking about Divine Things which have been "communicated"/passed on to to mankind.
* Christmas is not the first time that they have been communicated this strongly! Before this event, I think Adam and Eve enjoyed the highest concentration of Grace and Truth known to man! This point, just to say that **Jesus came not only to show Grace and Truth in its fullness, but to restore these divine images IN US – they are gifts, Divine Gifts!**

## Grace - what is this, And why is it our basic need?

* Grace is about relationship. And it’s about Someone Giving to another… and apart from any merit that deserves it. “*Why did Christ die for us?*” The only reason must be, love – specifically, **grace**.
* (this doesn’t only happen from God to us – we can see grace in human relationships too – but, again, whenever it happens it is ‘residual image of God’ in man)
* Jesus uses a human example, which is possible, though unusual, to illustrate the Grace of God.

**Illus: Prodigal Son (R Culver)**

“*A prodigal insulted his father’s generosity and concerns by demanding his inheritance. After the granting of the wicked request and turning a deaf ear to the father’s importunate pleading, he left home. In the city he squandered his money on ‘wine and revelry’ – devouring (as his brother said) his father’s living with prostitutes – till at length he found himself penniless, hungry, sick and alone. In misery he repented and returned to his father’s house. Upon his approach the gracious father ran down the road to meet him, kissed him, and restored him to a position of respect in the home*”

* But when you do a word study of how the word Grace is used in the Bible, we can develop quite a few characteristics: Here’s a list, but you can read it like a sentence, which describes what Grace is. This is what Jesus is full of, and what He came to give.

Grace is

* + **volitional** (instigated by the giver, first)
	+ **giving**
	+ **even more than required** (a meal when I only needed a slice of bread, an embrace when I only needed a nod)
	+ **favour, blessing** (always for the good – that’s grace)
	+ **to the delight of the recipient** (grace – a word used for thanksgiving and joy – the effect is great delight in the receiver)
	+ **without regard to worthiness** (searches to give, based on the giver, not the recipient)
	+ **which, in a sinful world, costs the giver** (scratching your car – forgiving them means you have to bear the scratched car! Receiving the offence and not returning it)
	+ **Parents can be very gracious to their kids, sometimes. They’re predisposed to loving them. But God is gracious to His enemies – us! He adopts us and pours favour on us. And bears the offence without retaliation. For the sake of our delight, to the degree of our delight**

( That’s not normal! It’s unusual isn’t it! )

* It's **our most basic need because** there is no other way to receive from God except by His Grace. **God does Nothing for us apart from Grace**. [Particularly because we don't **deserve** any of this.] Some verses referring to God’s Grace
	+ Life is God’s Grace. (God is **gracious to the good and the wicked**, Matt 5:45, sends rain on the just and unjust).
	+ His Title: The **God of all Grace** (1 Pet 5:10), his seat is “The **throne of Grace**” (Heb 4:16)
	+ This is a **TIME** of grace (Tit 2:11)
	+ Everything of Our Salvation is by His Grace (various scriptures)
	+ our election
	+ our calling
	+ our justification
	+ our faith
	+ our forgiveness
	+ our consolation
	+ our hope
	+ our sanctification
	+ spiritual gifts are called God’s grace to us
	+ "*This Grace in Which we* ***Stand***" Rom 5:2 – literally. There is no way to receive ‘favour’ from God, but by grace. God is the initiator, blesser, - while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
* Do you **appreciate** the nature of Grace – If you’re not attracted to God, you don’t understand His Grace! **V16**, “*Grace upon Grace*”. It’s our basic need because we would never desire to, and never could, come to God, were it not for **His**, **Grace**.
* **Now just think of this – if God is inherently a Gracious God, and He made you, He made you to be Gracious to you. He intends to fulfil that in your life**!
	+ **And God became flesh; Jesus came, FULL of grace, for you!**

## Truth - what is this, And why is it our basic need?

* A philosophical question! Even Pilate asked it, like some thoughtful philosopher.
* **Dictionary**: “*in accordance with … reality*”
* I've spent a lot of time too, morning hours, thinking about it. **What is Truth**? We must understand, or we won't understand let alone appreciate what God has given us in Jesus Christ!
* what should be obvious - but for our sake - let's consider: (*the opposite of truth*)
	+ **Q: What is life without truth? What is a relationship without Truth worth? False life. False relationship.**
	+ When someone lies, they are creating a false reality - putting others at the disadvantage of living in an untrue situation.
	+ **Illus: "I'm fine"** creates a perception of peace, when in reality there is great conflict. But you've completely misled the offender and removed the opportunity for them to make right.
	+ **Illus: lives of lies**, and avoiding the truth - lying to self, lying to others, believing your own lies, wrecking havoc. ... **What hope is there is falsity**! Cf a husband lies about why he came home late. If you think about it, there can be nothing worse than living a lie. It isn't sustainable - it has to crumble (why lawyers will ask and ask and ask questions).
	+ **Now you may get away with avoiding reality before others, but can you avoid the reality of God, forever? If the reality of God and His will is avoided in your life, you’re living a lie - you've created a false reality, but in truth, you’re travelling at 120kph in the darkness towards a brick wall!** Cf “Revealed”, “Revelation” etc
	+ (PS.the most horrible film ever: *the invention of lying.* Christianity is a lie for the purpose of controlling people)
	+ Actually, I don’t think we have to **create** that false reality, Satan has already suggested it in the garden of Eden. We just have to believe the lie.
	+ **Contrast** Jesus – “*Full of Truth”* and Satan, “*A liar and the Father of Lies*” (John 8:44), 'the *deceiver of the whole world'* (Rev 12:9). Satan has created a false reality and gotten mankind to live in it - believing that everything is better without God’s rule. A**s long as man lives in this false reality - he will never see the need to change**. …
	**Enter: Jesus Christ – “Full of TRUTH” – v18: He has fully revealed God! – the fundamental reality!**
	+ **CAN YOU SEE WHY TRUTH IS OUR BASIC NEED? The best Christmas present you could ever receive?**
* **John 18:37,** Jesus says “*To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth*”
	+ [p.s. when we speak and live in truth, we are doing a spiritual thing! Truth is **spiritual** – without it, the spirit cannot attain to what it was created for. **Let's be clear on what we are doing when we lie to ourselves, and to others ]**
* ***TRUTH is so primal.*** Can you see you can’t get anywhere without facing reality. **Truth is... the gateway to Life.** ..There is no Life without Truth, there is no Liberty without truth **John 8:31-32**, “*If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*”
* **See it as a *doorway***. And do you know what's on the other side?
* **Grace**! It’s a doorway out of hopelessness and into Grace!
* **John 14:6** - 3 words describing this door, Jesus! Jesus says, "*I AM the Way the Truth the Life...no one comes to the Father, except THROUGH Me*". **Just amazing how our 2 most essential needs, are met in Jesus. (Jhn 1:14)**

# What are we supposed to do with these gifts?

The same thing you’re supposed to do with any gift!

* **Receive them**. Meaning enter through the gate called Truth. Facing the Truth is horrible. But there’s Grace on the other side! Put away the lies you've been living and come into True Life. Come to the “throne of Grace” to receive His forgiveness and abundant love, delight, favour.
* **Receive them**. Meaning let Grace and Truth be **restored** in **your character**. Cf John 1:14,17 "became flesh". Grace and Truth ‘become’ possible in ourselves when we have Jesus. Glorious Flesh is Flesh that is Full of Grace and Truth! God has done this so that we will imitate Him (Gal 5:1) God requires that our actions and our speech and our thoughts are saturated with Grace and Truth. As God has loved us, so we ought to love one another.
* **The greatest gifts you can gift one another, Christmas and beyond for the rest of your life – is the gift of Grace and Truth**.