

### Are You Dreaming of the Right Christmas?

<u>Matthew 10:7-8</u>: (NASB) <sup>7</sup>And as you go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. <sup>8</sup>Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.



#### يراير زيار لرام رور المرجع اجمع ماجر جزاج والمرجو

"White Christmas," (Verse one) Bing Crosby

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas Just like the ones I used to know Where the treetops glisten and children listen To hear sleigh bells in the snow

Christmas has come - the hustle and the bustle, the lights, the music, the trees, the ornaments and the garland. Christmas has come - Santa and reindeer and elves and Frosty and movies and presents and gift wrap and cards. Christmas has come - whether you feel you can say "Merry

Christmas" or just "Happy Holidays," we are wishing well to those around us, for it is the season of good cheer and smiles. Christmas has come - family and dinner and cakes and pies and cookies and giving and receiving and football and dressing in new clothes. Yes, Christmas has come. It has certainly made its indelible mark on us yet again. You know Christ has come. The prophecies said that he would and God's plan said that it was time. Christ has come - he was born to live so that he could die and redeem all of humanity. Christ has come - his gift was simple, yet it was the greatest and most powerful gift that could ever, that would ever be given to this world. Christ has come, and thus, all the human race has the opportunity for eternal life. Christ has come - has he made his indelible mark on you?

This episode's story of Christmas will be a little different. Rather than simply telling the story of the birth of Jesus, we will instead focus on the simple concept of gifts. We will focus on the lives of some who surrounded his birth and see what gifts they received because of their experiences. We will then see how those gifts are given to us, and how we can take those gifts and "pay it forward." After all, that is what Jesus did! Each segment will bring another gift! But first, a verse of a carol to remind us of the "right" Christmas.



"Comfort and Joy," Simon and Garfunkel

God rest ye merry gentlemen Let nothing you dismay Remember Christ our Savior Was born on Christmas Day To save us all from Satan's power When we we're gone astray Oh, tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy Oh, tidings of comfort and joy

Christian Questions ©2016 all rights reserved



Our first gift is PROVIDENCE: Providence is the overruling power of God applying itself in the everyday life of those who serve Him. Sometimes God's providence comes to us and we do not see it. We do not recognize it because we are so used to seeing life the way we think it should be seen that we cannot wrap our heads around what God is telling us and what God is providing for us. For Zacharias and Elizabeth, this was the case.

Zacharias and Elizabeth were chosen to be the parents of John the Baptist. The two of them were very faithful, and the



Scriptures say that they were righteous in the sight of God. Zacharias served the people as a priest of God, and yet despite their faithfulness, his wife was ever childless. As they grew older, their hopes and prayers for children waned.

### Yet, they went on with their lives humbly serving their God, until one day the providence of God suddenly began to manifest itself while Zacharias was serving in the Temple:

<u>Luke 1:8-10</u>: (NASB) <sup>8</sup>Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, <sup>9</sup>according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup>And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.

Zacharias was doing the job God had providentially arranged for him to do. He was serving alone in the Temple, and the people were outside in prayer until he should emerge.

# Zacharias needed to hear what God was about to reveal. What better way to get his attention than for him to be in service alone and in a holy place:

Luke 1:11-13: (NASB) <sup>11</sup>And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup>Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him. <sup>13</sup>But the angel said to him, Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.

Next we listen to a dramatization performed by our friends, "The Skit Guys." Elizabeth, Zacharias' wife, is reacting to his story and to his silence the angel of God struck him with. Imagine, he goes home and his wife wants to know how his days of service went.

(1) Why can't you talk, Elizabeth and Zacharias, The Skit Guys

• What do you mean you can't speak? Will you put that down and talk to me? Zachariah, you went to the temple to burn incense and now you can't speak. Because you doubted. What does that even mean? You doubted what an angel told you. Now it's all making sense. (laugh) You feeling alright? Maybe you should sit down. Oh, I should sit down. Listen, whatever game you're playing I really want it to stop Zachariah, it isn't funny. This isn't funny, Zachariah.



Luke 1:14-17: (NASB) <sup>14</sup>You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. <sup>15</sup>For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. <sup>16</sup>And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup>It is he who will go as a forerunner before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

This was God's providence, revealed in a very heavy dose. How hard it would have been to absorb such news! How hard would it have been to believe such news, such providence was going to work through you? How hard would it have been to go home and tell your wife?

### (1)) The angel said, Elizabeth and Zacharias, The Skit Guys

• An angel told you this. The angel said that our prayers have been heard. That you, my love, will bear a son. That we will be filled with joy and gladness and that many will rejoice at his birth. He will be like Elijah. He will prepare our people for the Lord.

Sometimes God's providence changes us in an instant. In this case, the news was so overwhelming that Zacharias doubted and was struck mute, which

created an obvious communication challenge. But Zacharias' speechlessness also created a poignant reminder of God's providence and will.

# The following Scriptures exactly describe Zacharias' encounter with the angel and the aftermath:

Luke 1:18-23: (NASB) <sup>18</sup>Zacharias said to the angel, How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years. <sup>19</sup>The angel answered and said to him, I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. <sup>20</sup>And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time. <sup>21</sup>The people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. <sup>22</sup>But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute. <sup>23</sup>When the days of his priestly service were ended; he went back home.



When you think about it, God's providence in our lives is God's power in our lives. In the case of Elizabeth and Zacharias, this blessed power in their faithful lives was necessary for the good of the people and most importantly for the bringing of the Messiah. It is a humbling experience to see God's power manifest in your life.

(1) A little boy, Elizabeth and Zacharias, The Skit Guys

• What am I going to do? Oh, I'm too old to be a mother and you, you can't even speak. Oh, you can't even speak until he's born. That might not be the worst thing. I can't wait to tell my cousin Mary. A little boy. (crying)



Luke 1:24-25: (NASB) <sup>24</sup>After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, <sup>25</sup>This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men.

God's providence is a gift. It was a gift to Zacharias and Elizabeth after a 400-year period of silence from God to Israel. God's providence accomplished many things:

- It blessed Zacharias and Elizabeth.
- It reignited hope among the people.
- It gave Israel the opportunity to be properly prepared for their coming Messiah.



# We observe God's providence to them. What about the gift of His providence to us?

<u>Romans 8:28</u>: (NASB) And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

How often do we recognize and unwrap the providences of God in our lives? How often do we bask in the utter beauty of His care for us, even when life seems difficult or unjust? Remember, for Elizabeth there was a measure of disgrace she felt in her childlessness, but the providence of that barren state opened the door for the providence of blessing.

How do we accept the gift of God's providence and pay it forward to others? That is what Jesus did!



### God's providence is a powerful gift. What about the extraordinary and life changing gift of trust?

Our second gift is TRUST: Faith is the foundation for true trust. Faith puts us in a position to be able to see beyond our normal limits. Trust is the real, practical and sold-out changing of our lives to conform to those things which faith has revealed.

The power of providence can open unthinkable doors of blessing and in the case of Elizabeth and Zacharias, it did just that. This couple was beyond childbearing years and had faithfully served God in their barrenness without complaint and without hesitation. They accepted their disadvantaged state and moved on. The providence of John the Baptist being born to them was a door of blessing they thought to have been sealed shut. It was opened to them because God opened it in an unimagined and glorious way. Providence is a gift!

The providence surrounding the birth of Jesus would present itself again and again in different forms and to different people. Joseph would be tried sorely by God's providence, for what he was to face was not just merely the opening of a sealed door of opportunity that was believed to have passed by. No, Joseph would face a mountain of disgrace and doubt that only extreme trust in God could traverse.



<u>Matthew 1:18-20</u>: (NASB) <sup>18</sup>Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup>And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. <sup>20</sup>But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

Let us listen in to another dramatization by "The Skit Guys." This time portraying Joseph's dream.



 $(\neg, \eta)$  Take her as your wife, Joseph, The Skit Guys

- (Narrator) While many dreamed of the day this king would come, it began as a real-life nightmare for one man...a good man. God's lot cast upon him.
- (Mary) Joseph. Joseph. I promise you Joseph, I am telling you the truth.
- (Joseph) I'm not saying you don't believe it, I'm just saying I don't know if I do.
- (Mary) So, what are you saying?
- (Angel whispering) Take her as your wife. Take her as your wife.
- (Joseph) She's pregnant. I haven't been with her. The baby's not mine.
- (Angel whispering) Take Mary as your wife.
- (Joseph) I can't do this. I don't, I don't want to hurt her. But I can't.

The dilemma Joseph faced would have been untenable for a devout and upstanding Jewish man of that time, for the covenant of marriage was in those days truly sacred. To hear Mary's story of being miraculously pregnant seemed to be, to say the very least, a far-fetched tale spun in desperation by a young woman who was searching for a way out of some deep trouble. Every logical thought of Joseph was bent towards what he thought was the hard and inevitable solution.

### The angel in his dream continued:

<u>Matthew 1:21-23</u>: (NASB)<sup>21</sup>She will bear a son; and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. <sup>22</sup>Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: <sup>23</sup>Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which translated means, God with us.

Back to our dramatization of this dream. The angel is beginning to make sense!

(1) Emmanuel, Joseph, The Skit Guys

- (Joseph) I'll divorce her.
- (Angel) Joseph, you are a descendent of David. Your ancestors have taken great steps of faith and now it is time for you to step out. Take Mary as your wife.
- (Joseph) But the baby...!
- (Angel) What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. It is prophecy fulfilled. Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel.
- (Joseph) Emmanuel? http://www.fourwindsmaui.com/gallery
- (Angel) God with us.
- (Joseph) God with us.



God's providence can come to us, but to accept it, to work with it in our lives, requires us to step up to the opportunity and that is an exercise of faith. Joseph needed his faith to be engaged, and the angel did this through the quoting of prophecy. God's providence also requires us to step out of our comfortable and imperfect human thinking and the actions needed to apply it: this is trust. Once Joseph's faith was focused, he could now begin to see the tenuous pathway of trust laid before his feet. Trust is not only not easy; it feels dangerous and vulnerable. Trust then, sometimes comes to us disguised as foolishness and immaturity. For Joseph, these would have been consequences he would have had to absorb. Obedience and trusting in God are that way - on the outside there are unsettled circumstances and persecution, but on the inside there is blessing and peace.

<u>Matthew 1:24-25</u>: (NASB) <sup>24</sup>And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, <sup>25</sup>but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called his name Jesus.

(1)) Stressed to blessed, Joseph, The Skit Guys

- (Joseph dreaming) Emmanuel. Messiah!
- (Narrator) A dream. A heavenly visitation. What was distressing became a blessing, a blessing that would challenge Joseph's faith, demand every ounce of his character and forever alter the course of his life and yours.
- (Joseph) God with us.

This was but the beginning of Joseph's journey of trust in God's providence. He would be called upon three more times to protect Mary and the child Jesus by way of three more angelic visits in dreams that would direct him to act in specific ways. Joseph each time would trust these clear instructions and thereby preserve the lives of Mary and Jesus so the will of God for the salvation of the human race could be fulfilled. Joseph grew into a life of trust and was thereby blessed.

Remember, trust is an outgrowth of faith. When we allow our faith to flourish, then trust can be unleashed and our lives will never be the same. That is the way Joseph did it and we should do the same.

### ╒╻┍╻┍╻┍╻┙┍┙┍**╷╸**┍╻╹┙╻┙╻╻╻

"O Come All Ye Faithful," (Verse one) Martina McBride

O come all ye faithful Joyful and triumphant O come ye, o come ye To Bethlehem

Come and behold him Born the King of angels O come let us adore him O come let us adore him O come let us adore him Christ the Lord



Trust truly was a special gift to Joseph. We see how he accepted that gift and used it to bless those around him. Trust is a gift to us as well, and as such we should, all things being equal, be anxious to unwrap it and put it to use. The thing is, all things are *not* equal because we are attempting to apply unequivocal trust in God to our broken and sinful lives. The fact is, trust is hard. Sometimes when we are called upon to trust, we react with excuses, with what we think is rational thinking to direct us away from God's providence. How do we begin to live like Joseph and adopt trust in God's providence as our navigator?

### يرا يزيدا يغير أدرم اعرمما مغمدا مدمدا مرام



"O Come All Ye Faithful," (Verse two) Martina McBride

Sing, choirs of angels Sing in exaltation O sing, all ye citizens Of heaven above

Glory to God Glory in the highest O come let us adore him O come let us adore him O come let us adore him Christ the Lord



The Apostle Paul helps us to understand how to be trusting in God's will and how to pay that trust forward as well.

# First, Paul tells us that other people cannot overrun our personal trust in God's power:

<u>Romans 8:33-39</u>: (NASB) <sup>33</sup>Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; <sup>34</sup>who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is he who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

# Second, Paul tells us that outside circumstances cannot override our decision to trust in Jesus' sacrifice:

<sup>35</sup>Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup>Just as it is written, for your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered. <sup>37</sup>But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loved us.

# Third, Paul tells us that nothing, earthly or spiritual, can overcome our call to trust in God's plan through Jesus:

<sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

برايه المواجب والمعام ومعام والمراجع والمواجع

#### "O Come All Ye Faithful," (Verse three) Martina McBride

O come all ye faithful Joyful and triumphant O come ye, o come ye To Bethlehem





Come and behold him Born the King of angels O come let us adore him O come let us adore him O come let us adore him Christ the Lord O come let us adore him Christ the Lord

Let us come to adore Jesus and do as Joseph did. Trust in God's providence in such a way that those around us can truly see "God with us!" After all, that is what Jesus did!

### With providence and trust in place, what role will Mary's gift play, and how can we "pay it forward"?



Our third gift is PRIVILEGE: When we can recognize the providence of God in our lives and when we can truly trust in that providence, God can give us privilege. To have privilege is to be chosen to play a role in the unfolding of God's plan. There are many roles to be played, ranging from the mighty roles of authority given to the Apostles all the way down to the quiet prayer warriors who support and encourage God's work. To have privilege is to be blessed!

Mary was given an extraordinarily unique privilege in the carrying out of God's plan, for Messiah needed to come into the world and therefore needed a mother. No other mother in the history of the human race would have her experiences and life. Mary truly was privileged.

In this next dramatization by "The Skit Guys" about Mary, listen to the sense of awe and privilege that is portrayed by the actress who plays Mary in this "interview."

### (*i)*) I'm just a girl, Mary, The Skit Guys

• (Mary) As long as I can remember we've been waiting for the Messiah to come for us. My family, our tribe, our whole nation. I always knew

that he'd come, but well let's be honest, it's not like I'm from Jerusalem or someplace special. I'm just a girl from Nazareth. Everybody knows not much good comes from Nazareth, never has. I thought for sure an angel had come to the wrong house with his announcement. But if that's what God wanted, who was I to tell Him He was wrong? And Joseph, God bless that wonderful man. He could've joined in with everybody else. He could've had me sent away. He could have even had me killed, but he just never broke the promise to marry me.





We do not know anything about Mary before her angelic visit except that she was a faithful God-fearing Jewish girl. We will see that the depth of her faith can be understood by her response to the angel's message. Mary certainly grew to understand the providence of God.

# Mary certainly grew to have full faith and trust in God, and she therefore was blessed with great privilege by God:

Luke 1:26-29: (NASB) <sup>26</sup>Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And coming in, he said to her, Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you. <sup>29</sup>But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.

Talk about an unexpected greeting! How do you process something like that?

Back to the awe and privilege of Mary...

(1))70-mile journey, Mary, The Skit Guys

(Mary) So, when he had to go to Bethlehem for the census, I was honored to ride by his side - even with heartburn and bloated "cankles" and nine months of pregnancy behind me. You know those women who try different things to induce labor, like going on frequent walks or eating spicy foods? What they should do is go on a bumpy 70-mile trip to Bethlehem. Because not long after I got there, and I've never done this myself, but even I



know I knew when it was time. And with every wave of pain, I tried to ignore the fact that my family wouldn't be there to help me and that I would be bringing this baby in the world without familiarity of home.

With privilege comes challenge, discomfort and even fear, for standing up as a chosen vessel of the will of God is never an easy task. When we are given privilege by God we can also expect experiences that provoke the growth of our spiritual minds.

# For Mary, this spiritual growth would come fast and furiously and would require all her dedication:

Luke 1:30-34: (NASB) <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great and will be called the son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; <sup>33</sup>and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end. <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, How can this be, since I am a virgin?

From unexpected greeting to impossibility! For Mary, great privilege came at great cost!



# $\prec$ ) There he was, Mary, The Skit Guys

(Mary) But when Jesus finally came, I forgot all of that though.
I just wrapped him in cloths and tried to make the most comfortable bed I could for him with the only thing I had, which was an animal's feeding trough.
Joseph said I should have been sleeping then, but I couldn't stop staring at him. There he was, the one the angel had told me about.
My heart was so full I couldn't even find words big enough to express it.



For Mary, the greatest privilege of her life began with the greatest challenge of her life, for she would be miraculously pregnant which was an entirely unexplainable and scandalous event since she was not yet married. This is how God's providence always manifests itself - through great faith and trust - so that great privilege will always be understood to be a great personal blessing.

Luke 1:35-38: (NASB) <sup>35</sup>The angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy child shall be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup>And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God. <sup>38</sup>And Mary said, Behold, the bondslave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her.

Privilege changed Mary, for it showed her how to see and believe the impossible. Privilege gave her life a laser focus and made her an unmistakable part of the greatest story ever told!

(I))He would change everything, Mary, The Skit Guys

• (Mary) I know I'm not the first young mother to bring a child into this world. It's always been that way, but as I looked down at my son, my redeemer, I knew that he would change everything because he'd already changed me.

God's gift of privilege will elevate a life from average and ordinary to usable and pliable in God's hands. Mary accepted being pliable in the hands of God and fulfilled her role with humility and faithfulness. What can we learn from Mary's acceptance of her privilege? How can we recognize the privilege of our lives, accept and absorb it and then pay that privilege forward?





# آرار الرار الراري (مارم) (مارم) (مارم) (مارم) (مارم) (مارم) (A Hallelujah Christmas," (Verse one) Cloverton

I've heard about this baby boy Who's come to earth to bring us joy And I just want to sing this song to you It goes like this, the fourth, the fifth The minor fall, the major lift With every breath I'm singing Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah

### Let us look at what Mary did soon after being given such honor:

Luke 1:39-45: (NASB) <sup>39</sup>Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, <sup>40</sup>and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup>And she cried out with a loud voice and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup>And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? <sup>44</sup>For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. <sup>45</sup>And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord.

Thinking about the incredible events that happened in the life of Elizabeth, here we have this old woman who was beyond child-bearing years suddenly pregnant. We think of the joy she had when she went into seclusion for five months. Then on the other end of the spectrum, a very young woman was pregnant and no one knew how except Mary herself. The two of them were related and came together, able to have a FELLOWSHIP OF MIRACLES. One of them carried the forerunner, John the Baptist, and the other carried the Messiah! We cannot think of a situation where two women talking about their pregnancies could be more joyous and hopeful - not only for them, but for what it meant for everyone, everywhere for all time.

Mary sought out Elizabeth, who was another honored servant of God and the two strengthened each other. This is truly an example for us to follow. We also should seek out others who are called according to God's purpose and privilege and seek to fellowship, encourage and strengthen one another for the trials of privilege require all of our strength for all of our days.

### بالرول وراير مرماي (مرما مرموا مرموا مرموا مرموا مرموا "Breath of Heaven," (Verse one) Amy Grant

I have traveled many moonless nights Cold and weary with a babe inside And I wonder what I've done Holy Father you have come And chosen me now to carry your son

We all wonder at the privilege given us. As we wonder we also ought to heed and help the brotherhood, for as Jesus showed us, by serving them we are honoring God and lifting our mutual privilege up before Him in gratitude.

#### يواوووا ولولما وموما عومما ملم لمام ومواموم

#### "Breath of Heaven," (Verse two) Amy Grant

Do you wonder as you watch my face If a wiser one should have had my place But I offer all I am For the mercy of your plan Help me be strong Help me be Help me

# Finally, our privilege should keep us separate from the world so the world can see it and eventually come to glorify God through Jesus:

<u>1 Peter 2:12</u>: (NASB) Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Appreciation is the highest form of prayer, for it acknowledges the presence of good wherever you shine the light of your thankful thoughts. - Alan Cohen

### يوارو ولارفر فارم وماعر ممام فمفاعه ما مرفا والمربع

#### "A Hallelujah Christmas," (Verse two) Cloverton

A couple came to Bethlehem Expecting child, they searched the inn To find a place for you were coming soon There was no room for them to stay So in a manger filled with hay God's only Son was born, oh Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah

From providence, to trust, to privilege. These gifts all work together for the purposes of not only fulfilling God's word and will, but also for the fulfilling of the lives of those whom He has chosen - those several individuals whom He has positioned for extraordinary blessing. As we have been looking at the Christmas story, we begin to realize that we ourselves are in the position to receive these precious gifts. And what are we to do with such gifts? Pay them forward. Share their value and power that God might be praised.



### Now we introduce the familiar context of our next gift:

Luke 2:1,3-7: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.... <sup>3</sup>And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, <sup>5</sup>in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Our next gift is the gift of HOPE, divine hope. Hope is the breath that brings us through today and helps us to embrace tomorrow, for without hope we merely exist. Without hope the mundane activities of today are merely fillers of time and fulfillers of



responsibility. With hope, our mundane activities become a pathway towards something bigger, something greater.

Such hope was bestowed in a most uncanny fashion upon a group of shepherds the night Jesus was born. As we examine the gift of their hope, let us first understand who they were and what their rank was in society.

The shepherd's Savior is born, *Moments with the Savior*, *Ken Gire* 

• The shepherds live in a gypsy encampment outside Bethlehem. They are a shunned minority. Because of their profession, they are unable to observe the orthodox ritual of washings. Consequently, they are considered unclean. Because they are untutored in the law, they are considered ignorant. Because they are without roots in the community, they are considered suspect. This knot of shepherds on the fringe of Jewish society spends the night atop a stone tower, a couple of them watching the flocks while the others huddle around the fire, catching what sleep they can. Eusebius writes that this watchtower stood about a thousand paces from Bethlehem. Jewish tradition adds that the tower overlooked a special flock of sheep. Sheep set aside for sacrifices.

# These lowly men were doing their seemingly mundane jobs as they always did:

Luke 2:8: (NASB) In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

Hope was about to come. The psychology of hope can on the surface appear confusing, for hope seems to more easily take root in the hearts of those who quietly live and work without much by way of advantage rather than those whose lives are built around comfort and ease. The shepherds who were given the longed-for hope of the Messiah's birth were this hard-working type and therefore well positioned to receive such hope. These particular shepherds also had special responsibilities with their particular flocks.

(1) The sheep and the night the Savior is born, *Moments with the Savior*, *Ken Gire* 

To qualify as temple sacrifices, the animals had to be perfect, without spot or blemish. They could have no broken bones and no scarred skin. One fall into a ravine, one encounter with a predator, rendered the sheep unfit for the altar, dropping its premium as a sacrifice to the price of mere commodities - the going rate for wool, leather and meat. To ensure a profit, the sheep had to be



protected. That meant watching them day and night. This night, as the temperature drops, the men take refuge in the warmth of their sheepskin coats. Above them, the night is clear. The moon, full and bright. The sky is studded with stars. And the air, pungent with the scent of sheep. Except for a few faraway bleats, the hillside is quiet. The fire is also quiet, the popping yellow blaze now whispering orangely among the embers. On top of the tower all that can be heard is an occasional crackle of conversation.



Luke 2:9-15: (NASB) <sup>9</sup>And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; <sup>11</sup>for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the



heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased. <sup>15</sup>When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.

These shepherds simply and joyfully responded to the message, as the hope they saw was powerful, divine and sure. This is a good lesson for us in managing hope when it seems bigger than our lives can fit.

The Skit Guys capture the "doubt" element in this next humorous dramatization. Two shepherds heard the angel and are arguing about going to see the Christ child.

(I)) Rock/parchment/shears, The Shepherds, The Skit Guys

- (Shepherd 1) Look, okay? The angels are there, okay? That's what they do. That's why we call them "guarding angels."
- (Shepherd 2) No, no, no, it's "guardian" angel. Guard-i-an.
- (Shepherd 1) Tomato, tomato. Who cares! Why are we still standing here?
- (Shepherd 2) Someone needs to watch the sheep! You know it, I know it and the sheep know it.
- (Shepherd 2) Sheep don't feel.
- (Shepherd 1) You can't prove that.
- (Shepherd 2) Fine. There's only one way to solve this.
- (Shepherd 1) Rock, parchment, shears? Loser stays with the sheep.
- (Both) Rock, parchment, shears, shoot! Rock, parchment, shears, shoot! Rock, parchment, shears, shoot!

Sometimes when we are overwhelmed by such hope we can begin to doubt and wonder and second guess ourselves. For hope to truly take effect in our lives, we must remember providence, trust and privilege; for hope stacked upon *these* things has a sure foundation.

Back to the Skit Guys trying to work out their dilemma...

 $\dashv$  The angel said, The Shepherds, The Skit Guys

- (Shepherd 1) Today, today in the town of David a Savior will be born unto you.
- (Shepherd 2) Right.
- (Shepherd 1) Why did the angel say that? Why did the angel tell a bunch of lowly shepherds about the coming of the Messiah? I mean, why us?



- (Shepherd 1) I don't know why us, but they did. So, maybe this Messiah didn't just come for people that matter. Maybe he came for people like us, which is all the more reason why we need to go.
- (Shepherd 1) I know, and I want to. It's just a lot to take in, it's been a crazy night.

Luke 2:16-20: (NASB) <sup>16</sup>So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as he lay in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this child. <sup>18</sup>And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.



The shepherds courageously delivered hope, but it is not always that easily done. Did you ever notice how hope always seems to be shadowed by fear? Wherever true godly hope arises, fear lurks in the background looking to derail it.

### (1)) I cannot not go, The Shepherds, The Skit Guys

- (Shepherd 1) I, for one, cannot not go see this Messiah, okay? So, if what you're saying is that I, instead of seeing the man who's going to change everything, have to stay here and sheep sit, well, that just won't work for me.
- (Shepherd 2) You're right, you're right. But before we go, I'm not trying to nitpick but you said "cannot not," and that's a double negative. It is. Promise me when we go meet the Messiah you cannot not "not" talk like that. Promise me you won't talk like that to the Messiah. Promise me... promise me.
- (Shepherd 1) He's a baby. He's in swaddling clothes. I don't think he's going to care how we...(growl) okay, fine. Me talk pretty. Let's go.

Even with our quirks, our fears and our shortcomings, God can still use us as vessels of hope. We carry the message of the Gospel - the very same message that those shepherds were given that very night - and we carry it with the advantage of having seen the record of God's plan moving forward for thousands of years. Pay that hope forward! Be a "shepherd of hope!"

#### والبابي والمواجع المحاج والمحاج والمحا

#### "A Hallelujah Christmas," (Verse three) Cloverton

The shepherds left their flocks by night To see this baby wrapped in light A host of angels led them all to you It was just as the angels said You'll find him in a manger bed Immanuel and Savior, Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah



<u>Romans 5:1-5</u>: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; <sup>4</sup>and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; <sup>5</sup>and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

In our work to be shepherds of hope, this passage in Romans takes the gift given to the shepherds and explains how it can work in our lives. *Having been justified by faith* - we have been "made right" by this faith. Because of this faith, we rejoice in the hope in the glory of God. There is great faith in that justification because it comes from Jesus.

Then it goes into the process of tribulation. So far, every individual we have talked about on this program had tribulation. They were tested. They were pressed. They were challenged in ways they had never been before.



Tribulation brings perseverance. Perseverance brings proven character, and proven character brings hope. We have to go through the process to get to the hope. Once we do, the Scripture tells us it does not disappoint or let us down. It gives us something greater. We can be true shepherds of hope! That is what our lives are supposed to be all about, in the service of God through Jesus.

### What can be added to hope to make it even MORE powerful?

The gifts we have received so far can only be described by looking at the divine grace of God and accepting the fact He loves His human creation without measure. He has proven it through His plan for restoration. As we have seen, the path to that restoration runs through the lives of many specific people who were blessed with God's providence, blessed with opportunity to trust Him,



blessed with unspeakable privilege to be a part of His plan and blessed with the unique hope of the Gospel message. We, like these chosen ones, have been freely given these gifts. We, like these chosen ones, are charged with not only opening these gifts but spreading their value to the world.

الولولولولولولولولي (مارم الموام الموام الموام الموامي) "A Hallelujah Christmas," (Verse four) Cloverton

A star shown bright up in the east To Bethlehem, the wise men three Came many miles and journeyed long for you And to the place at which you were Their frankincense and gold and myrrh They gave to you and cried out, Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah



There is such wisdom in spreading the value of God's gifts to the world.

The next gift is REVEALED TRUTH. This gift of revealed truth is unique, as it is rarely ever given to any who have not been in a long and diligent search for God's revealed will. Revealed truth is usually given to those whose lives will be spent in the furthering of that truth and it is generally not given to those who would merely appreciate and cherish it.

Simeon was such a man. In the book of Luke, the very next event recorded after the birth of Jesus is the context of Simeon receiving revealed truth.

Jesus was born...now what? How are you supposed to act towards and care for him as



a helpless infant? Joseph and Mary knew he was the Messiah but had not been given any special dispensation as to specifics to care for him, so they cared for him the only way they knew how.



### They followed the rites of the Jewish Law:

Luke 2:21-24: (NASB) <sup>21</sup>And when eight days had passed, before his circumcision, his name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. <sup>22</sup>And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord), <sup>24</sup>and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

Our first lesson in understanding revealed truth:

To realize divine truth is usually more fully understood while seeking or doing other things divine will has designed.

Being in the Temple and following the Law were sure signs of putting God first. The opportunity for revealed truth was now present.

#### يرايز زيار فرغا رمزما فرمما مغملا منعرا مزمز

#### "Now That I've Held Him in My Arms," (Verse one) Michael Card

That old man in the temple Waiting in the court Waiting for the answer to a promise And all at once he sees them In the morning sunshine A couple come and carry in a baby

[Chorus] Now that I've held him in my arms My life can now come to an end Let Your servant now depart in peace Cause I've seen Your salvation He's the light of the Gentiles And the glory of his people Israel

Luke 2:25-27: (NASB) <sup>25</sup>And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup>And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup>And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for him the custom of the Law.

Simeon was righteous and devout.

Our second lesson in understanding revealed truth:

Truth is not only apt to be revealed where God's will is being followed, but truth is apt to be revealed by those whose character has already been shaped and proven so they are capable of bearing the burden of revealed truth with maturity and grace.



### Simeon was ready for such a burden:

Luke 2:28-32: (NASB) <sup>28</sup>Then he took him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, <sup>29</sup>Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; <sup>30</sup>For my eyes have seen Your salvation, <sup>31</sup>which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup>a light of revelation to the gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.

Simeon's humility and passion are made plain.

Our third lesson in understanding revealed truth:

All revealed truth is built upon the foundation of God's previously revealed truth.



Simeon gently cradles the newborn Messiah in

his arms, immediately praises God and boldly proves the truth he is about to speak by the power of the prophetic word.

يها يديدا ولما وموما عوم ام لم ما مرام وام وم

"Now That I've Held Him in My Arms," (Verse two) Michael Card



Mary and the baby come And in her hand five shekels The price to redeem her baby boy The baby softly cooing Nestled in her arms Simeon takes the boy and starts to sing

[Chorus] Now that I've held him in my arms My life can now come to an end Let Your servant now depart in peace Cause I've seen Your salvation He's the Light of the Gentiles And the glory of his people Israel

Think of the joy, passion and fulfillment Simeon would have experienced!

### These emotions spilled over into the lives of Joseph and Mary:

Luke 2:33-35: (NASB) <sup>33</sup>And his father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about him. <sup>34</sup>And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed <sup>35</sup>and a sword will pierce even your own soul to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.

Joseph and Mary are enlightened and perhaps cautioned.

This brings us to our fourth lesson in understanding revealed truth:

Revealed truth expands the understanding of those around you.



While Jesus' parents knew he was the Messiah, they had not been able to begin to understand the scope of what that meant. Simeon broadened their prophetic and spiritual thinking.

#### يرارز لمار لمراجع والمرجع والمحمد المرجع المرجع المرجع

"Now That I've Held Him in My Arms," (Verse three) Michael Card

Now's the time to take him in your arms Your life will never come to an end He's the only way that you'll find peace He'll give you salvation cause He's the light of the Gentiles And the glory of his people Israel

The gift of truth revealed is for us as well. We just need to decide to be in the godly places to be able to see it coming. We need to develop our characters enough towards Christlikeness to be able to bear its weight.

# While Simeon was privileged to reveal truth, Anna was privileged to expand it:

Luke 2:36-38: (NASB) <sup>36</sup>And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup>and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. <sup>38</sup>At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Anna was a blessed vessel of revealed truth as well, for she was cut from the same cloth as Simeon.

Our final lesson in revealed truth is simple:

There is always just enough revealed truth provided by God for whatever the time and circumstances require.

God uses revealed truth to build great power into our hope.

The world does not want or appreciate these gifts. It would rather replace them with the constant clamor of holidays and glitter. We must choose to protect our precious gifts.

الإربال المربع المربع المربع المربع المربع المربع المربع المربع (Verse one) Amy Grant "I Need a Silent Night," (Verse one)

I've made the same mistake before Too many malls, too many stores December traffic, Christmas rush It breaks me 'til I push and shove

Children are crying while mothers are trying To photograph Santa and sleigh The shopping and buying and standing forever in line What can I say?



I need a silent night, a holy night To hear an angel voice through the chaos and the noise I need a midnight clear, a little peace right here To end this crazy day with a silent night

God, in His wisdom, has given us the sacred history of His plan to always go back to, so we can be reminded of the beauty, simplicity and clarity of the gifts He has given to us. This has been illustrated through so many of his faithful ones. This represents another gift - the gift of legacy - the gift of a powerful pathway laid out before us that has been trodden by so many!

"I Need a Silent Night," (Verse three) Amy Grant

What was it like back there in Bethlehem With peace on earth, good will toward men? Every shepherd's out in the field Keeping watch over their flock by night And the glory of the Lord shone around them And they were so afraid

And the angels said fear not for behold I bring you good news of a great joy that shall be for all people For unto you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Prince of Peace

I need a silent night, a holy night To hear an angel voice through the chaos and the noise I need a midnight clear, a little peace right here To end this crazy day with a silent night To end this crazy day with a silent night



It is quite humbling to take a moment and look back over the gifts we have received tonight. We began with providence:

- **PROVIDENCE** The overruling power of God applying itself in the everyday lives of those who serve Him.
  - The real, practical and sold-out changing of our lives to conform to those things which faith has revealed.
- **PRIVILEGE** To be chosen to play a role in the unfolding of God's plan.
  - **HOPE** Divine hope is the breath that brings us through today and helps us to embrace tomorrow, for without hope we merely exist.

## REVEALED • TRUTH

• Usually given to those whose lives will be spent in the *furthering* of that truth. It is generally not given to those who would merely appreciate and cherish it. This leads to a gift of LEGACY.

We have seen how these gifts build upon one another to produce a structure that is solid, sound and true. Now what happens? What do we receive or give based on this solid structure?



# With so many gifts that are so freely given, what can we possibly give in return?

Our final gift is RESPONSIBILITY. Spiritual responsibility is not only being accountable for each and every gift received, it is being dependable enough to produce results with each and every gift.

Responsibility cannot be better represented than by Jesus himself. First, the previous gifts were all given to others to support his coming as the Messiah, so he is responsible for them being given. Second, Jesus himself received these gifts and with them he accomplished the greatest and most important mission the human race has ever or will ever see!



### يوالولولا ولمارم والمومم المعمل المعاد المومية

#### "Adore Him," (Verse one) Kari Jobe

Countless days on a journey that led so far Endless nights they traveled to follow the star They did not find a palace just a humble village home And searching for a king but finding a child no crown no throne Still they bowed down Come let us adore him O come let us adore him O come let us adore him

We start with Jesus as a child.

# Jesus showed us early in his life he had recognition of his responsibility gift:

Luke 2:42-43: (NASB) <sup>42</sup>And when he became twelve, they went up according to the custom of the Feast; <sup>43</sup>and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But his parents were unaware of it.

### To recognize responsibility is to act on it, and Jesus acted as fully as a 12-year-old boy could act:

Luke 2:49-50,52: (NASB) <sup>49</sup>And he said to them, Why is it that you were looking for me? Did you not know that I had to be in my Father's house? <sup>50</sup>But they did not understand the statement which he had made to them... and his mother treasured all these things in her heart. <sup>52</sup>And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.



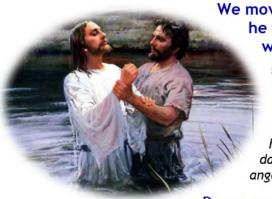


Do *we* recognize the gift of responsibility we are given in our privilege as Christians?

#### يرا رز زار فر أرم م ما موم المفع في المعاد المرم المعاد المرم ا

#### "Adore Him," (Verse two) Kari Jobe

Expectation turned to mystery For nothing was like anything they dreamed Anticipating the royal and those honored by this world Instead they gazed in the awestruck eyes of a lowly peasant girl Holding her child, Come let us adore him O come let us adore him O come let us adore him



### We move forward to age 30, and Jesus begins his ministry. When he is of age, Jesus applies himself to his gift of responsibility without reservation:

<u>Mark 1:9-13</u>: (NASB) <sup>9</sup>In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>Immediately coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him; <sup>11</sup>and a voice came out of the heavens: you are My beloved son, in you I am well-pleased. <sup>12</sup>Immediately the Spirit impelled him to go out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>And he was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to him.

Do we appreciate the gift of the responsibility we are blessed with? Do we fully and without reservation take the steps necessary to fully engage our awesome gift of Christian responsibility?

يراير زيار لمارم إيرام معامله المعام المراج الم

"Adore Him," (Verse three) Kari Jobe The brilliant gold, the fragrant myrrh, the costly frankincense Placed before him, Come let us adore him O Come let us adore him O Come let us adore him Christ the Lord

### For three-and-a-half years, Jesus walked the walk and fulfilled that which he had come here to do. He completed the work of his responsibility to the last detail:

<u>Matthew 27:27-32</u>: (NASB) <sup>27</sup>Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around him. <sup>28</sup>They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. <sup>29</sup>And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they knelt down before him and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! <sup>30</sup>They spat on him, and took the reed and began to beat him on the head. <sup>31</sup>After they had mocked him, they took the scarlet robe off him and put his





own garments back on him, and led him away to crucify him. <sup>32</sup>As they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear his cross.

True praise to God is to fully use that which He has given you.

How far along are we on our walk towards the completion of our own gift of responsibility? What is yet undone? What has yet to be attained?

#### 

"A Hallelujah Christmas," (Verse five) Cloverton

I know you came to rescue me This baby boy would grow to be A man and one day die for me and you My sins would drive the nails in you That rugged cross was my cross, too Still every breath you drew was Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah



# PROVIDENCEPRIVILEGETRUTH REVEALEDTRUSTHOPERESPONSIBILITY

These are the gifts the lives of those surrounding the birth of Jesus gave to us. These are the gifts we are now to use to praise and honor our Father through Jesus!

Psalm 116:12-14: (NASB) <sup>12</sup>What shall I render to the LORD for all His benefits toward me? <sup>13</sup>I shall lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the LORD. <sup>14</sup>I shall pay my vows to the LORD, oh may it be in the presence of all His people.

#### المراجع "Hark the Herald Angels Sing," (Verse one) Chris Tomlin

Hark! The herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King Peace on earth and mercy mild God and sinners reconciled Joyful, all ye nations rise Join the triumph of the skies With angelic host proclaim Christ is born in Bethlehem Hark! The herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King



Let us look upon this Christmas season with true joy. Let us dream of the *right* Christmas and all that it means. Let us take the inspiration of these gifts with thanksgiving, open and apply them to fulfill our lives and bless those around us!



يوالي والمرجبان مرجا فأم مرما محموا مرجوا والمع

"Hark the Herald Angels Sing," (Verse three) Chris Tomlin

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace Hail the Son of Righteousness Light and life to all he brings Risen with healing in his wings Mild he lays his glory by Born that man no more may die Born to raise the sons of earth Born to give them second birth Hark! The herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King

These gifts are gifts for us as well. Stop and look at what we have been given. Our lives are better because of Jesus. Pay it forward! That is what Jesus did.

> So, are you dreaming of the right Christmas? For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions... Think about it...!

