

Herod's Goofy Unwanted Gift or The Real Gift of Christmas

Matthew 2:1-12 Dec 15, 2019 Bob Szoke 121612

What is the goofiest gift I ever received for Christmas? Well rather than me tell you, let me share with you a few goofy gifts others have received.

Here are some of the responses I got from Facebook when I posted this same question.

GOOFY GIFTS FOR CHRISTMAS

Jacob Garcia One year my siblings and I all got huge wooden padels (for spanking) with each of our names engraved in them.

Patrick C. Heston A door . . . as a kid.

Keith Thomas Metal Tupperware Brooms to clean our bedrooms, but we turned them into long swords, had to explained how they got bent if we only swept the floor with them.

Steve Chapman, an assortment of hotel soaps.

Mike Sweeney, a cross made out of oyster shells.

Tim Baines: In 5th grade in our extended family gift exchange, whoever drew my name bought for me the dream of every 10 year old boy (!): a red white and blue bow tie with gold stars on it! I couldn't wait for Christmas break to be over so I could wear that to school and be the envy of all of my friends!! (I never wore it - EVER - I would've gotten beaten up for it - and that would've been fitting).

Steve Yeaton. One year, when I was about 10 or 11, a couple at church got each of my 3 older brothers and me (our dad was the preacher) our own Duraflame logs. Only as a 52 year old am I now starting to appreciate that gift for its practical value.



goofygifts



The whole idea of the goofy gift is the introduction to this message today. The story is about the visit of the Wise Men who come to see Jesus, but today our focus is going to be more upon Herod and Jesus, as God's Perfect gift. As far as Herod was concerned, the gift of a Savior was a goofy gift, an unwanted and unnecessary gift. Herod will go to no ends to make sure the gift is not received.

So, let's begin by looking at the text and doing some Bible study:

Matthew 2:1-12

'After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ²and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶ "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."

⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

(For our Bible study today, I want to go a bit more in depth. So many times we hear these stories about the birth of Christ that we don't always pay a lot of attention and miss some things that could help bring the story alive and strengthen our faith! I'm going to

break the text into workable segments so we can see some of the details that add perhaps some new insight into this text. No matter how many times we've read the story of the Wise Men visiting Jesus, there's always something more to learn.



Now, some Bible study:

Looking and Asking (Vs 1-2)

Illustration: Shaking the Present to see what's inside. We tend to shake our gifts, so as to maybe figure out what's inside...or at least make others think we know what's inside. The more we shake the gift, the more we think we know, or at least I try to bluff our way through it. Typically, the person who got that gift for us, the one we are shaking, is the biggest fan of "open it now."

That's kind of how this first text reads. The Wise Men show up in Jerusalem and they appear to know something that others don't, or at least if others in Jerusalem know they aren't letting on like they do.

1. As we read the text, let me encourage you to read this with the idea that the Wise Men know enough to know they are in the right place, they are where they need to be, and

they appear to have more information than the Jewish authorities with whom they dialogue.

2. **Matthew 2:1** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ²and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”

a. The question could be asked if the Jewish scholars in Jerusalem interpreted a passage from **Numbers 24:17** as prophetic regarding the star which the Wise Men said they were following? If so, why didn't the Jewish scholars interpret this? The verse reads: **Numbers 24:17** "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the sons of Sheth.

b. Did the Jewish scholars interpret the appearance of the star which the Wise men followed with the star that came from Balaam? It's really hard to tell, but if one is looking for a text which talks about a star appearing, this would most likely be the text referenced. We don't know if the Jewish scholars agreed with the Wise Men or not.



I
DON'T
KNOW

c. **Jesus has been born.** Time sequencing when the Wise Men actually showed up has been a dialogue for years among Bible Scholars. The only thing which can be said with any certainty about when all this took place is that later in chapter 2 of Matthew will be the reference to Herod's edict about **killing all baby boys under the age of 2.** That year can be pegged as 2 AD.

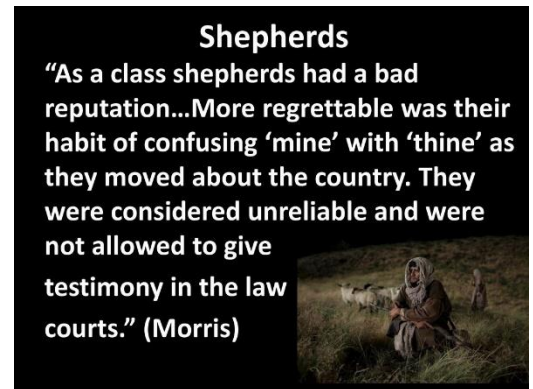
- i. Let me add a note here for those of you who may be doing other studies. For many of us, when we were in world history class, the terms used were **BC, which meant before Christ** and **AD, which meant Anno Domini**, which referred to the year of our Lord. However a new term has been added, **BCE, which is used to defuse the Christian nature of these terms. The initials BCE mean Before the Common Era, and after the Common Era, it is just CE.**
- ii. The reason for the change from BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini) is really the avoidance of naming Christ as Lord. It's that simple. Major historical research made this switch to referring to time as BC (Before Common Era) and CE (Common Era). The concept is not to "presuppose" that anyone has faith. Some historians will concede that if Christians want to call CE the Christian Era, they can do so, but that's not its true meaning.
- iii. It was about the 17th Century in Germany and the 18th Century in England when these transitions first became well known and used accordingly.

B.C. A.D.
or
CE. B.C.E.
SOLVED.

- iv. But, as far as history is concerned, no matter what system is used, the birth of Christ is still the date from which time is measured historically both before and after.
- d. **Herod hears about the birth through the Magi.** When thinking about all the things which took place that night in which Christ was born, one could wonder how it was that no one knew, and that included Herod.
 - i. Think back about the events of the night on which Jesus was born. Perhaps because the testimony of what took place was uttered by shepherds that no one paid any attention to it.
 - i. We know that a shepherd's testimony in court was invalid, and that most considered them unreliable, and even a form of outcast among the Jewish people. Culture just didn't value them at all.

Shepherds were mostly uneducated and unskilled. They were viewed as dishonest, unreliable and because of that, they were not allowed to testify in court. It didn't matter if you were the only witness to a crime – if you were a shepherd, your testimony was inadmissible – because you were a shepherd. And well, they didn't bathe very often either. Sheep required care 24/7/365. There were no days off or vacations. And, because of the constant care, they couldn't keep all the rites and rituals required by the Law – at least the “man-made” portion of the Law, therefore, they were viewed as being constantly ritually unclean.

<https://prayerlogue.wordpress.com/2011/12/17/why-shepherds/>
 - ii. What the shepherds witnessed must have been too incredible for people to believe, or at least remember. I'm thinking most just blew it off and disregarded the whole thing, simply because of the shepherds doing the talking.
 - ii. Of all the things which Herod did know, **that a king of the Jews had been born is something of which he was unaware.** It is kind of ironic that evidently he knew enough about the Wise Men as dignitaries from foreign countries to treat them with respect, **but not about the birth of Jesus.** (We just don't know a lot about the wise men, how many, where they were from, although there is great speculation).
 - i. That's kind of a flip if we think about it. We know little about the Wise Men, who they were, where they were from, but Herod knows more



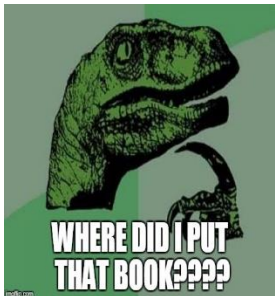
about them to treat them with respect. We know about the birth of Christ, but not the Wise Men. Just a bit of a paradox!

- iii. It is kind of humorous to see that the text literally says that the **Wise men kept asking and asking, as if they weren't being told**. The language leads me to believe that if anyone knew, they weren't going to say. But, this is unusual from the perspective of the Wise Men. Let me explain:
 - i. I said last week that typically when someone of royal lineage was born, the birth of that baby was considered to be a community event. Neighbors were invited in to watch and become the documentation that the baby born is legitimate, that no other babies were born, that the baby born had certain features, etc. These witnesses became the "birth certificates" establishing the authenticity of the child.
 - ii. This is what the Wise Men no doubt expected...witnesses to come forward and answer their questions. It's an easy assumption. A birth of a child of royalty must have been witnessed, observed, etc. Where were the witnesses? Why weren't they coming forward?
 - iii. There was logical reason that the Wise men approached the people of Jerusalem in this way. It was anticipated that many would have seen this birthing actually take place.
 - iv. The Wise men came to Jerusalem, not looking for anything but direction and to worship.



Obsessed with Looking (Vs 3,4)

Illustration: Have you ever misplaced a Christmas gift? Every year at our house, Lorraine is in charge of getting the gifts, and I get to wrap them. Every once in a while, a gift will get wrapped, and since we aren't going to see the recipients for a day or two, I'll put the gift somewhere where I think I can easily remember. I'm here to tell you that this has happened, I've misplaced gifts and we haven't found them till days, weeks or even months later. I think there was even one occasion where I neglected to put a name tag on the present, so when we discovered it months later, neither of us could remember what the gift was or who it was for. It happens!



³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

1. **Herod isn't a happy guy.** Herod is greatly threatened by anyone who would rise to the same level of power as he, and he is not going to tolerate that. Herod was extremely **jealous**, and so much so that he even had his sons killed, his wife and mother-in-law for fear that they might all turn against him.
2. *History adds these simple notes about Herod: Herod was a puppet king for Rome, but he was still called king of the Jews, despite having made enemies with so many Jewish people. What's more, he was terrified of being overthrown by rivals. When Herod feared that his wife, Mariamne, was trying to poison him, he had her killed—even though he once adored her and named one of his fortress towers after her. He also thought the two sons he had with Mariamne were plotting against him, so he had them killed too. No wonder the Roman emperor Augustus once joked, "It is better to be Herod's pig than his son." (The joke was that because Jews did not eat pork, their pigs were safer than Herod's sons.)*
<http://www.disappearingman.com/uncategorized/herod-great-not-great/>

- a. History also indicates that he most likely suffered from venereal disease and subsequent mental disorders. His body was ulcerated and swollen. He was not the picture of health.

3. **He is mad and obsessed!** The text says that Herod was disturbed at the news of a new king being born.

- a. The idea of being disturbed is a bit gentle to correctly understand how Herod felt. Better described is an adult man, paranoid with panic who trusts no one, who is his own worst enemy. Perhaps we read these verses and fail to picture the tremendous panic and anxiety with which he lived. He was a man to be pitied, but also feared.
- b. Herod had an uncontrolled rage, and Rome let him do it.
- c. Because the people of Jerusalem had learned that **if Herod isn't happy, no one is happy**. They recollect that Herod had come to power with a horrible sense of rage. When he first started reigning, he had **massacred the Jewish ruling body** of the Sanhedrin. Nothing was considered out of the possibility for him to do if he was full of rage and anger.

4. **Herod asks, asks, and asks again.** Literally, Herod didn't know if the answers he had been given were correct.

- a. Being suspicious of everyone, he needs to figure out if this is all some giant conspiracy theory (and we know those exist).

- b. Couple of things: On the one hand, Herod feared that if there was a new king, people would get behind him, backing the new king. On the other hand, most would be too afraid to say anything.



PARADOX

- c. **So Herod asks, and asks and asks.** Did Herod anticipate that anyone would be truthful with him? Referencing how that births were probably public events, it made him all that much more suspicious that no one was giving him a truthful answer... **and that he didn't know anything about it!**
 - He may have heard about something the shepherds said, but probably like most Jewish dignitaries, would have quickly disregarded it as myth.
- d. It is almost pathetic to look at this picture of Herod, but knowing him as we do from these brief passages of Scripture, perhaps nothing should be overlooked when it comes to the power of evil in one's life.

Scripture's Prophetic Picture (Vs 5,6)

⁵“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: ⁶“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.”

1. **Where, but not “if.”** As we read these verses, pay particular attention that the information given to Herod is a compilation of Messianic texts, and yet the general gist of prophecy.
 - a. Pause for a moment and think like Herod, the Wise Men, and the people of Jerusalem. The question is not “if” the Messiah has been born, but “where.” That creates a completely different mindset. Not “if” but “where” removes a lot of the questions as it creates a new set of questions.
 - b. It was wisely accepted that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, and from the seed of David, that is, in David's lineage.
 - c. But again, as we read these passages, there is little to think that the Jewish leaders actually thought that a Messiah had been born. If they had, they would certainly have acted differently. The lack of indifference among the Jewish leaders may be deliberate, or just out of sheer ignorance or fear. We really don't know.
 - d. They answer Herod in sort of a generic way of saying, **“Here is the information as we understand it.”** Nothing real formal, no big quoting of a lot of Scriptures. Remember that Herod had a Jewish background, so the reference to Scripture would be something he would consider. But, to what extent we don't know.
 - e. In fact, what you see here is a combination of 3 different texts: **Genesis 49:10; 2 Samuel 5:2 and Micah 5:2.** It's like all three of these passages are combined, and this is what you get, interpretation about the coming of the Messiah.

**NOT IF,
But where**

- i. **Illustration:** Paranoid interpretation is an actual category. One can study that at length, but that description fits Herod. Because of his paranoia he does what he does, fears what he fears, and acts the way he does. He is mad, venereal disease has taken over some of his rational thinking. It is important to consider what's driving Herod for in so doing, we grasp why he is so bizarre.

PARANOID Interpretation

Assembling the Information (Vs 7,8)

Illustration: Assembly required for this gift. Let me say one word, "Ikea." There is what's known as the Ikea effect when something needs assembled. In fact on the Ikea website it says that *"When labor leads to love, consumers value things more."* Ikea says, "When their own effort is required to build something, it's valued more!" And, while this is a great idea, General Motors responded to this concept by saying that having auto buyers assemble their own cars is just not a good idea. Assembly required?



⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

2. Herod's disguised motives are apparently well hidden from his guests. Did people trust Herod? Probably some wondered, but evidently no one took this as a serious investigation among the Jewish people. There appears no historical response to what Herod asks. *There appears to be no reactions to Herod's questioning. The lack of response could have been fear (that people will get behind the new king) or just another rumor being per perpetuated by some guys with no connection to Jewish history.*

- a. Herod assembles the pieces of the puzzle. From finding out the exact time the star had appeared from the wise men, and then information from the Jewish leaders, he is then able to ascertain where and then when this all occurred.

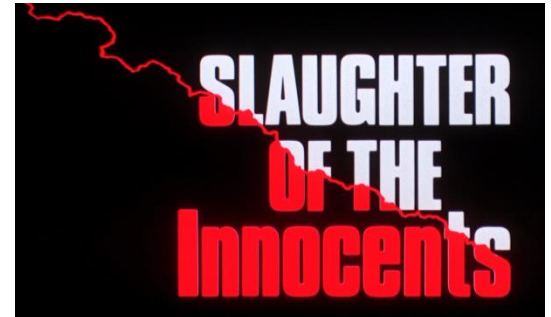
3. The believable lie. The *believable lie that Herod too wants to come and worship* would only have made sense to the wise men from another country, for the local Jewish people knew that Herod would never have any intentions of bowing down to anyone, let alone a baby.



- a. I continue painting the perspective that Herod was an evil man. He was.

4. The hidden part of this picture is in the orders Herod gave. Herod said, *"Report back to me..."* and in that simple statement we need to hear the demands of a mad man bent on destroying any threat to his own security.

- a. As I have already said, Herod would shortly after discovering that the wise men were not going to return, issues the order for **all baby boys under the age of 2 to be killed**.
- i. **Matthew 2:16** *When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.*
- b. History records it as the **Slaughter of the Innocents**. If you were to research this, you will find a variety of takes on this, some even doubting that it happened. However, as one archaeology magazine put it, **“since we haven’t yet dug up the Jerusalem Evening Post newspaper,”** it is very plausible, given the kind of man that Herod was. The other questions surrounding this indicate that the population of Bethlehem could have been anywhere from 300 people to 1000 people, (no one knows for sure) and the number of baby boys killed could have been as few as 3 or as many as 25, depending.
- c. Unfortunately archaeologists have yet to excavate the archives of the Jerusalem Post from the year 4 BC! Nor does the first century AD Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus record this event in any of his writings. Even though secular history is silent on this event it does not mean it did not occur. When the life of Herod the Great is examined, this event is very consistent with his character and actions so this is pointing to the fact that it did happen as recorded in Holy Scripture.
https://biblearchaeology.org/research/new-testament-era/2411-the-slaughter-of-the-innocents-historical-fact-or-legendary-fiction?gclid=CjwKCAiAxMLvBRBNEiwAKhr-nOq039hDg4U9WMPSydBR4sckSlzllGtOMEuwQ69Y-gNotPBt_DQ_eBoCzwwQAvD_BwE
- d. **And also as rebuttal to those who would doubt that this happened:** Not every killing became a matter of public record, only those that had some reason to be recorded, such as these. It is unreasonable to reject out-of-hand every source that is of Christian origin. The Christians are the ones who would have been more likely to keep a record of this event than any other group, and it is only bias that rejects the source just if that source is a New Testament document. That Herod followed through is hardly any guess at all. Again, history records that even 5 days before his own death, Herod executed his own son. It is not too much to consider that a mad man would do such a vile thing.
<http://www.rightreason.org/2014/slaughter-of-the-innocents/>



Amazing!! As far as Herod was concerned, the world didn't need a messiah, didn't need a child to be born, and did everything within his power to end it. **As far as Herod was concerned, the gift of a Messiah was a "goofy gift," he didn't need, want, or even consider.** Herod saw the gift of the Messiah as a "goofy gift," not needed. **Thus, the unwanted and perhaps from Herod's perspective, the goofy gift of a Savior to the world.**

Herod's perspective on the birth of the Messiah: it was unwanted: unneeded: a threat to him personally. He demonstrated his perspective with bitter, angry and jealous suspicion of everyone, even a baby.

APPLICATIONS

Some applications :

1. When it comes to gifts, Most want Something.

Illustration: The Christmas wish list. We

never did the wish list kind of stuff when I was a kid. Not sure why but it was probably because what we wanted didn't really matter all that much. My brother and sister and I were going to get what we were going to get and that pretty much settled it. The idea of the wish list is optimistic thinking at best.

**MOST
WANT
SOMETHING**

2. **Here's the issue: Most people want something.** **The Wise men wanted to see Jesus.** They assumed that everyone else would too, and that they already had. They enter into Jerusalem assuming that everyone is excited about the birth of the Messiah, only to find out that they act totally ignorant. No one seems to take them seriously.

a. That's a lot of "assuming," and in this case, we find out that what the Wise Men assumed was just wrong.




i. The Wise Men assumed people would know about the birth of the baby who was King of the Jews. People weren't forthcoming with that info.

ii. The Wise Men assumed Herod was interested and could point them in the right direction. This assumption also was wrong.

iii. The Wise Men assumed that the Jewish leaders would be cooperative in guiding them. This assumption was wrong. The Jewish leaders threw out some Scriptures, but how much they acted on what they said is only conjecture.

iv. The Wise Men assumed that everyone would be as excited as they were. They were wrong.

- v. The Wise Men assumed that Herod wasn't being deceitful, or dishonest. This too was wrong.
- 
- b. Perhaps here we get to see a good picture of people in Jerusalem. What the people of Jerusalem wanted was what people want today.
- i. We all have a wish list: better job, better health, nicer car, nicer house, to be safe, to have enough food, to take vacations when we want, to have time to relax, to be important enough that people notice us and encourage us. (Just a few things we want).
 - ii. How different were the people of Jerusalem? Better yet, how wrong was it for the Wise Men to assume that everyone wanted to see Jesus?
- c. Everyone wants something. (Let me spend just a moment here). **Don't we just assume that others want to see Jesus? Maybe they really don't!**
- i. It's that assumption that we think people want to see Jesus that drives us, because we know about the real wants of people than often times they will admit. We know for example:
 1. The human heart cries out for hope, peace, joy and meaningful life.
 2. The desire of the heart is to find satisfaction in life, purpose and meaning. We know that most people want something.
 3. What they may not know is if they want to see Jesus. Most people want something but do they want Jesus?
 4. An unknown author says: *"Most people don't really want the truth; they just want reassurance that what they already believe, is the truth."* <https://emilysquotes.com/most-people-dont-really-want-the-truth-they-just-want-reassurance-that-what-they-already-believe-is-the-truth/>
 5. C.S. Lewis says: *Most people, if they had really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promise. C. S. Lewis* <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/874506>
 6. And, this is why we are called to be salt and light, to influence a world that doesn't know it needs Jesus. It's much easier to believe a lie than it is the truth. We are called to be "disciples" and thereby change the world in which we live.
 7. Most people want something, it's up to us to give them Jesus!

3. **Herod wanted to have no one else compete for the throne.** Herod was paranoid. Again, from some studies I came across, it is thought that Herod suffered deeply from extreme bouts of depression. He would be depressed enough to do something drastic and then after he had done it, become even more depressed because that didn't really solve the issue.



a. **Herod wanted no one** to rival him for the throne, and would not stop until his threats were gone.

b. **In some respects, we aren't all that different from Herod.** We don't want anyone getting in our way to keep us from getting what we want. We claim not to be selfish, but a reference to the recent Black Friday, and Cyber Monday spending compared with Giving Tuesday only confirms that we really don't want someone else on the throne in our lives... do we?

4. **The people of Jerusalem wanted peace.** The people of Jerusalem wanted the gift of peace, a gift where life would be easier, and they could live without the threat of a mad man destroying them.

a. **History records that they had seen** a mad man wreck destruction. The people wanted something simple: to be left alone, to dwell in peace and security. Herod would not give them that gift.

b. We all want peace, but at what cost? Surely the Pax Romana was not what most were looking for.

c. The question is better yet, do we really want peace with God or will we settle for much less? We've got to answer this question.

5. **We want a lot of things.** It was **Abraham Maslow** who first put it on paper, and it's called the Hierarchy of Human Need. As we go through life, he said, there are basic things we all want:



a. **Food and health;** safety, at least out of danger; being loved and accepted; significance that I do matter; and self actualization, or as it is better understood, a sense of purpose.

b. **Everyone wants something.** At any given time, these things are competing for top rung in our lives, competing when we feel one of these things is diminishing or that we are losing something.

c. **Everyone wants something.** **And, when we can't have it, that's when we find ourselves perhaps in the same situation as Herod, wondering about what it is that might steal away what we have left.**

6. Everybody wants something. The one thing we know is people need Jesus. That's our job! Being salt and light, being disciples We live in a world that wants something, and what we can give them is Jesus.

When it comes to Gifts, All Need One

1. **Illustration:** The TV commercial for the newest product you currently didn't know that you need. The Vegamatic. I am sure we all remember those products shown on the infomercials whose primary task is to convince us that life has been impossible without their product. Note carefully how the language flips from what one wants to what one needs. Again, the impression is that life would be impossible without this product.



2. Perhaps it is here that we get a bit goofy, or maybe it's like asking the trick question, **“What is it that everyone**

needs? It like the gift no one wants to admit they need. Everyone needs certain gifts at Christmas time and that's how we usually think when we go out looking for gifts. We seldom do it otherwise. We say, “Oh, what does that person need that I can get as a gift.” We give out of what we think others need. And, yet, there is one thing all need: A Savior.

a. **This whole issue of what everyone needs is about the gift of the Savior.** We need a Savior.

i. Scripture tells us that **Romans 3:23, 24** **“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**

ii. All are sinners, lost without a Savior. There is no greater gift that any of us in this room need than Jesus.

b. Again, the text from Matthew says that God said we need a **Savior, A Messiah, a Shepherd.** Whether we admit it or not, that's God's perspective and I'm sure He's right! It's what we need.

c. **While it may not make for great Christmas talk around the table,** when it comes to the gift we all need, it's not more money, not a bigger house, not another set of toys, but Jesus. **WE NEED JESUS!!!**

3. When it comes to the Gift of the Savior, What are we Going to Do?

a. **Illustration:** The goofy gift that we won't have anything to do with. I've got gifts



like that. One gift in fact is what is known as a 3 piece chicken dinner. That goofy gift is kept on shelf in my office. You might be wondering “How can he keep a 3 piece chicken dinner on his shelf in his office, especially without it spoiling or rotting? Simple. The 3 piece chicken dinner is a small box in which there are 3 pieces of corn, thus the 3 piece chicken dinner. But basically, for me it's

something just to look at... a goofy gift.

4. **But what about Jesus?**

- a. **Is He the gift that you are going to put on a shelf and ignore?** Maybe bring it down to look at it once in a while and say how wonderful and meaningful it is, but then do nothing?
- b. **Here's the conundrum: (a word which means a difficult position in which one finds himself) Jesus is Lord.**

c. As Lord and Savior,

- i. Jesus **might be a goofy gift to you if you think His Lordship doesn't matter, his death on the cross doesn't matter, his life, his teachings, and his resurrection are all great things, but have nothing to say to you to change your life.**
- ii. Jesus might be a goofy gift if you think you are good enough based on what you do and don't do.
- iii. Jesus might be a goofy gift if you think God will make an exception for you. The exception: Everyone needs Jesus but you.
- iv. Jesus might be a goofy gift if you think all this spiritual stuff is too much.
- v. Jesus might be a goofy gift if you think that sin is not that big of an issue in your life.
- vi. Jesus might be a goofy gift if you think, **"I've got time and there's no need to worry about all this now."**
- vii. Jesus might be a goofy gift if you think Christmas is only about a baby being born.
- viii. Jesus might be a goofy gift if you think there are other pathways to heaven, and you're not sure which pathway appeals to you best..
- ix. As Lord and Savior, Jesus might be a goofy gift if all you can think about is the baby in a manger, and not the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ as our Savior.
- x. As Lord and Savior, Jesus might be a goofy gift if you think you don't need a Savior, you don't need the forgiveness and restoration that He alone can offer.
- xi. Jesus may be the goofy gift if he makes you feel humbled, and embarrassed, because it's obvious you need the forgiveness and life which only Jesus can gift. Goofy because you don't want to talk about it.



**BUT WHAT
ABOUT
JESUS**

5. But, Jesus is the greatest gift in your life, if He is your Lord and Savior. **Not a goofy gift.**

Conclusion:



Illustration: THE EMPTY GIFT "I was enjoying 1st grade to the fullest until one day in December when the little girl behind me set "it" on her desk. It was the tiniest Christmas present imaginable, less than an inch on each side with white glossy paper tied up with a sliver of red cellophane. Immediately I was captivated. I had never seen anything so exquisite. Day after day the tiny gift caught my eye, and my active imagination tried to guess what miniature treasure might be inside. It had to be something wondrous beyond description. I longed for that object with all the power a 5-year-old can muster. Finally, I

became convinced that it should be mine. I deserved it because I desired it. Since I rode an early bus to school, it was a simple matter to slip into the empty classroom one morning. My hands eagerly tore open the tiny present. Inside I found - nothing.

Staring at the destruction in my hand, anticipation dissolved into disappointment and confusion. Gradually my stunned mind grasped the fact that the little package had been nothing more than a hollow decoration. I sat at my desk with the empty paper and an empty feeling, sickened by the knowledge of my guilt.

Little did I know that morning that this scene would repeat itself many times in my life. As I grew up the world enticed me with all sorts of shiny, gaily wrapped "presents" that caught my eye and promised happiness. Too often, when I accepted what the world was offering and tore away the wrappings, my excited expectations were replaced by feelings of emptiness.

Over and over I found myself proving the old cliché: "You can't judge a gift by its wrapping." SOURCE: by Dianne Matthews. This article appeared in Focus on the Family magazine.

Copyright © 2000. <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon-illustrations/11087/christmas-by-sermoncentral?ref=TextIllustrationSerps> What appeared as a great gift was really nothing more than a "goofy gift" after all.

Questions:

1. What gift do you need today that only God can give?
2. Who are the people in your world that need to stop regarding Jesus as just another goofy gift? Will you begin praying how God can use you in that situation?
3. Will you be more concerned about what others (and maybe yourself) needs as opposed to wants?
4. What do you need to do because the greatest gift we all need is Jesus?

