

Freely Ye Have Received, Freely Give

Erik and Kyra Wuollet

The Christmas season is a time of advent when we await the birth of Jesus Christ, the greatest gift, who redeemed us of all sin. We remember and celebrate this time of year by attending services, spending time with family, and giving and receiving gifts. Apostle Paul's words in Acts 20:35 tell us, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Jesus also instructs, "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8).

We visited with elders Roy and Mary Skoog and Eva Wuollet from our home congregation of Cokato, Minnesota. They reflected on gifts they have received in their lives. They grew up in the time of the Great Depression. Their parents were not able to provide substantial gifts. Yet they remember feeling blessed.

Eva Wuollet remembers receiving an orange, peanuts, or an apple for Christmas. "We never expected much. People were satisfied and never felt like they missed out," she says. Even when the family had little themselves, they would notice others in need, and it was nice to be able to help however they could. Often help was given in the form of a meal. After Eva married Donald and they had a large family of their own, Eva was able to enjoy giving gifts to their kids, although she felt there was not much to give. Eva says, "It was always nice to be able to bring the kids to church services."

Roy and Mary Skoog also remember receiving few material gifts at Christmas when they were children. Mary reflects that they never had a Christmas tree, and she rarely received gifts from her parents but was overjoyed to receive a package from her aunts and uncles. Although Mary's parents were unable to give presents, Mary said, "I am thankful my parents thought about my undying soul." They brought her to services and preached the gospel in their home.

The message then and now is that Jesus' birth is the true reason we celebrate Christmas. Through believing sins forgiven in Jesus' name and blood we will be able to make it to heaven one day.

When we think of a gift, often the first image that comes to mind is a package nicely wrapped in festive paper with an object inside. It is important to remember that the gifts Jesus spoke of are not of this kind. We possess the most precious gift, the gift of faith. As believers, we can also freely offer this gift to anyone who is searching for peace for their undying soul. We pray that we would be given strength to speak of the joy that is in us, and thus be able to offer this gift to our unbelieving neighbors in our Christmas giving.

The gifts we receive are blessings from God. Likewise, the gifts we give are also His blessings.

Discussion questions:

1. “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). What does this mean to you?
2. When have you realized it was a greater blessing to give rather than receive? What were the circumstances?
3. What does instruction in Acts 20:35 teach us especially about helping the less fortunate? How might we do this today?
4. How can we teach children about the blessing of giving, rather than receiving? How can parents model this?
5. When you think back to Christmases past, which is easier to remember: gifts you’ve given or gifts you’ve received? Why is this so?