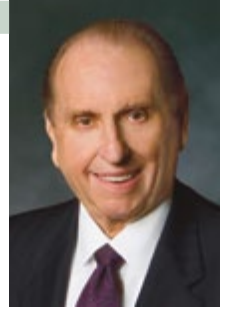


By President
Thomas S. Monson



REDISCOVERING the Christmas Spirit

Years ago as a young elder, I was called with others to a hospital in Salt Lake City to provide blessings for sick children. Upon entering, we noted a Christmas tree with its bright and friendly lights and saw carefully wrapped packages beneath its outstretched limbs. We then went through corridors where small boys and girls—some with plaster casts upon an arm or leg, others with ailments that perhaps could not be cured so readily—greeted us with smiling faces.

A young, desperately ill small boy called out to me, “What is your name?”

I told him my name, and he inquired, “Will you give me a blessing?”

The blessing was provided, and as we turned to leave his bedside, he said, “Thank you very much.”

We walked a few steps, and then I heard him call, “Oh, Brother Monson, merry Christmas to you.” Then a great smile flashed across his countenance.

That boy had the spirit of Christmas. The spirit of Christmas is something I hope all of us would have in our hearts and lives—not only at this particular season but also throughout the year.

When we have the spirit of Christmas, we remember Him whose birth we commemorate at this season of the year: “For unto you is born this day in the city of

David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

In our day the spirit of giving gifts plays a large role in commemorating the Christmas season. I wonder if we might profit by asking ourselves, What gifts would the Lord have *me* give to Him or to others at this precious season of the year?

May I suggest that our Heavenly Father would want each of us to render to Him and to His Son the gift of obedience. I also feel that He would ask us to give of ourselves and not be selfish or greedy or quarrelsome, as His precious Son suggests in the Book of Mormon:

“Verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who . . . stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

“Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away” (3 Nephi 11:29–30).

In this marvelous dispensation of the fulness of times, our opportunities to love and give of ourselves are indeed limitless, but they are also perishable. Today there are hearts to gladden, kind words to say, deeds to be done, and souls to be saved.

One who had keen insight into the Christmas spirit wrote:



*I am the Christmas Spirit—
I enter the home of poverty, causing pale-
faced children to open their eyes wide,
in pleased wonder.
I cause the miser's clutched hand to relax
and thus paint a bright spot on his soul.
I cause the aged to renew their youth and
to laugh in the old glad way.
I keep romance alive in the heart of child-
hood, and brighten sleep with dreams
woven of magic.
I cause eager feet to climb dark stairways
with filled baskets, leaving behind
hearts amazed at the goodness of the
world.
I cause the prodigal to pause a moment
on his wild, wasteful way and send
to anxious love some little token that
releases glad tears—tears which wash*

*away the hard lines of sorrow.
I enter dark prison cells, reminding
scarred manhood of what might have
been and pointing forward to good
days yet to be.
I come softly into the still, white home
of pain, and lips that are too weak to
speak just tremble in silent, eloquent
gratitude.
In a thousand ways, I cause the weary
world to look up into the face of God,
and for a little moment forget the
things that are small and wretched.
I am the Christmas Spirit.¹*

May we each discover anew the Christmas spirit—even the Spirit of Christ. ■

NOTE

1. E. C. Baird, "Christmas Spirit," in James S. Hewitt, ed., *Illustrations Unlimited* (1988), 81.

**TEACHING FROM
THIS MESSAGE**

As you share President Monson's message with the family, consider emphasizing the question he posed about what gifts the Lord would have us give to Him or to others this season. Encourage family members to record their thoughts and ideas (or, for young children, to draw a picture) about how to "discover anew the Christmas spirit—even the Spirit of Christ."

The Perfect Christmas Eve

By Jerie S. Jacobs

When I was growing up, one of the highlights of every year was Christmas Eve. My family and I made pizza, went caroling, and then gathered for a Christmas devotional. We sang hymns in shaky four-part harmony and blasted out carols on our odd assortment of musical instruments. Dad always ended the evening with a Christmas thought that left us in happy tears. Life didn't get any better than Christmas Eve.

When I was a little older, my mom began taking care of a young neighbor, Kelly. Kelly came over to our house every day after school while her mom, Patty, worked. Kelly followed me around like a puppy—loud and needy. It was always a relief when Patty collected her daughter and left my home and family in peace.

One December, I was horrified when mom invited Patty and Kelly to join us for Christmas Eve. *My Christmas Eve.* Mom smiled and assured me, "It won't change a thing." But I knew better. They would eat all our pizza. Kelly would make fun of our singing. I resigned myself to the worst Christmas Eve ever.

When the evening came, Patty and Kelly joined us, and we talked and laughed and sang. My mother was right. It was perfect. At midnight they thanked us and reluctantly parted. I went to bed with a full heart. I discovered that the truly precious gifts of Christmas are not diminished when shared. Instead they sweeten and multiply when we give them away.

CHILDREN

Five Christmas Gifts

President Monson said that we might want to think about which gifts the Lord would want us to give to Him or to others.

Circle the five children in the picture who are serving others. How are their actions gifts to Jesus?

