





By President
Thomas S. Monson

FOUR GIFTS

That Endure

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reflect on the contrasts of Christmas. The extravagant gifts, expensively packaged and professionally wrapped, reach their zenith in the famed commercial catalogs carrying the headline “For the person who has everything.” In one such reading I observed a 4,000-square-foot home wrapped with a gigantic ribbon and comparable greeting card which said, “Merry Christmas.” Other items included diamond-studded clubs for the golfer, a Caribbean cruise for the traveler, and a luxury trip to the Swiss Alps for the adventurer. Such seemed to fit the theme of a Christmas cartoon which showed the three Wise Men traveling to Bethlehem with gift boxes on their camels. One says, “Mark my words, Balthazar, we’re starting something with these gifts that’s going to get way out of hand!”

For a few moments, may we set aside the catalogs of Christmas, with their gifts of exotic description. Let’s even turn from the gifts we ourselves receive and direct our thoughts to those God-given gifts that endure. I have chosen from a long list just four:

1. The gift of birth.
2. The gift of peace.
3. The gift of love.
4. The gift of life eternal.



First, the gift of birth.

It has been universally bestowed on each of us. Ours was the divine privilege to depart our heavenly home to tabernacle in the flesh and to demonstrate by our lives our worthiness and qualifications to one day return to Him, precious loved ones, and a kingdom called *celestial*. Our mothers and our fathers bestowed this marvelous gift on us. Ours is the responsibility to show our gratitude by the actions of our lives.

Second, the gift of peace.

In the raucous world in which we live, the din of traffic, the blaring commercials of the media, and the sheer demands placed on our time—to say nothing of the problems of the world—cause headache, inflict pain, and sap our strength to cope. The burden of sickness or the grief of mourning a loved one departed brings us to our knees seeking heavenly help. With the ancients we may wonder, “Is there no balm in Gilead?” (Jeremiah 8:22).

He who was burdened with sorrow and acquainted with grief speaks to every troubled heart and bestows the gift of peace. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

He sends forth His word through the missionaries serving far and wide proclaiming His gospel of good tidings and salutation of peace. Vexing questions such as “From whence did I come?” “What is the purpose of my being?” “Whence go I after death?” are answered by His special servants. Frustration flees, doubt disappears, and wonder wanes when truth is taught in boldness, yet in a spirit of humility, by those who have been called to serve the Prince of Peace—even the Lord Jesus Christ. His gift is bestowed individually: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him” (Revelation 3:20).

The passport to peace is the practice of prayer. The feelings of the heart, humbly expressed rather than a mere recitation of words, provide the peace we seek.

Third, the gift of love.

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” queried the lawyer who spoke to Jesus. Came the prompt reply: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:36–39).

On another occasion, the Lord taught, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me” (John 14:21). The scriptures are filled with the importance of love and its relevance in our lives. The Book of Mormon teaches that charity is the pure love of Christ (see Moroni 7:47). The Master Himself provided an ideal pattern for us to follow. Of Him it was said that He “went about doing good . . . ; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38).

Fourth, the gift of life—even immortality.

Our Heavenly Father’s plan contains the ultimate expressions of true love. All that we hold dear, even our families, our friends, our joy, our knowledge, our testimonies, would vanish were it not for our Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Among the most cherished thoughts and writings in this world is the divine statement of truth: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

This precious Son, our Lord and Savior, atoned for our sins and the sins of all. That memorable night in Gethsemane His suffering was so great, His anguish so consuming that He pleaded, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). Later, on the cruel cross, He died that we might live, and live everlastingly. Resurrection morning was preceded by pain, by suffering in accordance with the divine plan of God. Before Easter there had to be a cross. The world has witnessed no greater gift, nor has it known more lasting love.

Nephi gives to us our charge: “Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. . . . If ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

“And now, behold, . . . this is the way; and there is none

other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Nephi 31:20–21).

I conclude with the words of a revered prophet, even President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973): “Life is God’s gift to man. What we do with our life is our gift to God.”

May we give generously to Him, as He has so abundantly given to us, by living and loving as He and His Son have so patiently taught. **NE**

From an April 1993 general conference address.

