



“THE GIFT  
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# CELEBRATING Jesus Christ THIS CHRISTMAS



At this time of year we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. His life was the greatest life ever lived.

## Focus on His Teachings

Our Savior's mission was to save us from death, to save us from sin, and to save us from ignorance. What did He teach us? And even more importantly, what have we learned? We live in peace and prosperity when we follow His teachings. In contrast, virtually every unhappiness and sorrow in the world is traceable to failures to follow His teachings.

Christmas is a time to celebrate the birth of the Son of God and also to remember His teachings.

What did Jesus teach the people of His day? The people He taught were in slavery to Rome. Yet he did not teach them the military arts or activities they could

use to free themselves from the yoke of Rome. He did not even teach them the principles of civil government. He said, "Render . . . unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

Infant mortality was high in the society in which He lived, and life expectancy was low because of a multitude of diseases. Did He teach them the principles of health? There was much hunger at that time. Did He teach them ways to improve agriculture or nutrition? The whole world needed His message, but He said He was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And what He taught them was how to live their personal lives.

He taught them to be meek and humble and to hunger and thirst after righteousness (see Matthew 5:5–6; 23:12).



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He taught them to love their enemies and bless them that cursed them, do good to them that hated them, and pray for them that despitefully used them and persecuted them (see Matthew 5:44).

He taught them that “inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

He taught:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34).

Finally, He declared, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me



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the education and other activities that will allow us to do so. But we must never neglect our overriding priority on the things of eternity—the bread of life—that the Savior and His Church provide us. We must not forget our worshipping and witnessing of the Savior of all mankind.

The gift that Christ gives is the greatest gift ever given, and it is available to each of us. That is the gift we should celebrate at this and every Christmas. Here I recall the words of our beloved Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In a Christmas message, he said:

“God’s gifts, unlike seasonal gifts, are eternal and unperishable, constituting a continuing Christmas which is never over! These infinite gifts are made possible by the ‘infinite atonement’ (2 Nephi 9:7; Alma 34:10–12). Without the ‘infinite atonement’ there would be no universal immortality,

ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

He taught people how to perfect their personal lives. “Be ye therefore perfect,” He taught, “even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

#### Share the Gift Christ Gives

In this life we must choose between Jesus’s way and the world’s way. Of course we know that we must meet the requirements of the world in many ways, including the need to earn our daily bread and pursue

nor could there be given the greatest gift which even God can give—eternal life! (D&C 6:13; 14:7).<sup>1</sup>

Latter-day Saints are uniquely qualified to celebrate the mission of Jesus Christ throughout the year. We have the gift of the Holy Ghost, whose mission is to testify of the Father and the Son (see 3 Nephi 16:6). For that reason, we have a duty to testify like the shepherds, who, “when they had seen [what the angels described], they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child” (Luke 2:17).

### The Real Spirit of Christmas

We know whom we seek and we know why. We are children of a Father in Heaven who declared, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). And our Savior—the Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Lord God of Israel—is fundamental to that work.

A few years ago, President Monson spoke these words:

“As we undertake our personal search for Jesus, aided and guided by the principle of prayer, it is fundamental that we have a clear concept of him whom we seek. The shepherds of old sought Jesus the child. But we seek Jesus the Christ, our Older Brother, our Mediator with the Father, our Redeemer, the Author of our salvation; he who was in the beginning with the Father; he who took upon himself the sins of the world and so willingly died that we might forever live. This is the Jesus whom we seek.”<sup>2</sup>

As President Howard W. Hunter (1907–1995) taught us in his humble way:

“The real Christmas comes to him who has taken Christ into his life as a moving, dynamic, vitalizing force. The real spirit of Christmas lies in the life and mission of the Master.”<sup>3</sup>

I pray that we will all emulate that life and celebrate that mission at this Christmastime. **NE**

*From a Christmas address to the BYU Management Society, given on December 9, 2015.*

#### NOTES

1. Neal A. Maxwell, *The Christmas Scene* (1994), 4.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “[The Search for Jesus](#),” *Ensign*, Dec. 1990, 5.
3. Howard W. Hunter, “[The Real Christmas](#),” *Ensign*, Dec. 2005, 24.

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