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FILL THE WORLD WITH CHRIST'S LOVE

When we think of Christmas, we often think of giving and of receiving gifts. Gifts can be part of a cherished tradition, but they can also detract from the simple dignity of the season and distract us from celebrating the birth of our Savior in a meaningful way.

I know from personal experience that the most memorable Christmases can be those that are the most humble. The presents of my childhood were certainly modest by today's standards. Sometimes I received a mended shirt or a pair of gloves or socks. I remember one special Christmas when my brother gave me a wooden knife he had carved.

It doesn't take expensive gifts to make Christmas meaningful. I am reminded of a story told by Elder Glen L. Rudd, who served as a member of the Seventy from 1987 to 1992. One day before Christmas a number of years ago, while he was managing a bishops' storehouse, he learned from an ecclesiastical leader about a needy family that had recently moved to the city. When he went to visit their small apartment, he discovered a young single mother with four children under age 10.

The family's needs were so great that the mother could not buy treats or presents for her children that Christmas—she couldn't even afford a tree. Brother Rudd talked with the family and learned that the three little girls would love a doll or a stuffed animal. When he asked the six-year-old son what he wanted, the hungry little boy replied, "I would like a bowl of oatmeal."

Brother Rudd promised the little boy oatmeal and maybe something else. Then he went to the bishops' storehouse and gathered food and other supplies to meet the immediate needs of the family.

That very morning a generous Latter-day Saint had given him 50 dollars "for someone in need." Using that donation, Brother Rudd bundled up three of his own children and went Christmas shopping—his children selecting toys for the needy children.

After loading up the car with food, clothing, gifts, a Christmas tree, and some ornaments, the Rudds drove to the family's apartment. There they helped the mother and her children set up the tree. Then they placed presents under it and presented the little boy with a large package of oatmeal.

The mother wept, the children rejoiced, and they all sang a Christmas song. That night as the Rudd family gathered for dinner, they gave thanks that they could bring some Christmas cheer to another family and help a little boy receive a bowl of oatmeal.¹

Christ and the Spirit of Giving

Think of the simple yet dignified way our Heavenly Father chose to honor the birth of His Son. On that holy night, angels appeared not to the rich but to shepherds. The Christ child was born not in a mansion but in a manger. He was wrapped not in silk but in swaddling clothes.



The simplicity of that first Christmas foreshadowed the life of the Savior. Though He had created the earth, walked in realms of majesty and glory, and stood at the right hand of the Father, He came to earth as a helpless child. His life was a model of modest nobility, and He walked among the poor, the sick, the downcast, and the heavy laden.

Though He was a king, He cared neither for the honors nor the riches of men. His life, His words, and His daily activities were monuments of simple yet profound dignity.

Jesus the Christ, who knew perfectly how to give, set for us the pattern for giving. To those whose hearts are heavy with loneliness and

sorrow, He brings compassion and comfort. To those whose bodies and minds are afflicted with illness and suffering, He brings love and healing.

To those whose souls are burdened with sin, He offers hope, forgiveness, and redemption.

If the Savior were among us today, we would find Him where He always was—ministering to the meek, the downcast, the humble, the distressed, and the poor in spirit. During this Christmas season and always, may we give to Him by loving as He loves. May we remember the humble dignity of His birth, gifts, and life. And may we, through simple acts of kindness, charity, and compassion, fill the world with the light of His love and healing power. ■

NOTE

1. See Glen L. Rudd, *Pure Religion: The Story of Church Welfare since 1930* (1995), 352–53; see also Glen L. Rudd, “A Bowl of Oatmeal,” *Church News*, Dec. 2, 2006, 16.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

President Uchtdorf teaches that we should follow the Savior’s pattern of giving. Consider asking the people you visit to take turns naming a gift the Savior has given to them, and discuss how they can use that gift to serve others. For example, if a member was blessed with musical training, he or she could go caroling to some of the neighbors. You could offer to kneel in prayer with those you visit, asking for inspiration about which gifts to share, how to share them, and with whom. Follow up on any inspiration you receive.

For ideas on teaching this message to youth and children, see page 6.

YOUTH

Learn from Others' Experience

President Uchtdorf speaks from personal experience when he teaches that “the most memorable Christmases can be those that are the most humble.” We can learn so much from the older generation; many adults have lived through times of war, unemployment, sickness, or other trials. Ask the older

members of your ward or branch to tell you about their most meaningful Christmas. You could write down their stories. Try to learn from their example by focusing this Christmas more on giving sincere service and remembering the Savior.

CHILDREN

Gifts from Jesus Christ

Some people use a Christmas tree to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Sometimes people place gifts for others under the tree.

What gifts has the Savior given to you?

Read each scripture below and color in the gift. You can give gifts back to Jesus by finding ways to help others.

