

**A Simple Christmas: Give More**  
**December 10, 2017**  
**Lynn Haven UMC**

**Introduction**

In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus. Christ himself was like God in everything. But he did not think that being equal with God was something to be used for his own benefit. But he gave up his place with God and made himself nothing. He was born as a man and became like a servant. And when he was living as a man, he humbled himself and was fully obedient to God, even when that caused his death – death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8 NCV)

One of the things that complicates our lives at Christmas is the pressure we face in coming up with gift ideas. Maybe we would find the season more enjoyable if we took our cues for what to put on our shopping list from the life and ministry of Jesus. Let's look at three aspects of what happened when God gave us His Son, the greatest gift of all, that will help us experience a simple, and meaningful, Christmas.

**Digging Deeper**

**A simple Christmas is experienced when you give more...**

**Of your PRESENCE.**

- When Jesus was born in the manger of Bethlehem, God became present in our lives. When will we learn that what folks really need is not something, but someone? Jesus lived this principle daily by never being too busy to stop to listen and engage with all different kinds of people He met. His critics even labeled Him a “friend of sinners” because of His relationships with people on the outskirts of society. One might assume this label didn't offend Him, but rather pleased Him. What is something you and your friends or family could do this Christmas season that would allow you to give of yourself in a way that might challenge your idea of a “normal” holiday?
- Truly giving of yourself fills your life with joy and nourishes your soul. As Mahatma Gandhi said, “To find yourself, lose yourself in the service of others.” Have you ever participated in a service related event on Christmas (or Thanksgiving) day? Did it feel like a sacrifice or did you recognize the blessing of giving the one gift you cannot wrap and put under a tree? Was your family understanding of (or upset by) your absence?

**That is PERSONAL.**

- “But he gave up his place with God and made himself nothing. He was born as a man and became like a servant.” (Philippians 2:7a NCV) Jesus gave up quite a lot to become flesh and dwell among us. This unselfish act placed Him in a lesser position and exposed Him to life as we experience it- full of love, laughter and even physical suffering. What have you given up for the sake of someone else? (Parents might answer: sleep!) What can you give someone this year that will clearly demonstrate your desire to be in a relationship with them that goes beyond a meaningless trinket wrapped up in a pretty bow?

**That is PRECIOUS.**

- “It's not how much we give but how much love we put into giving.” — Mother Teresa. When you are thinking of giving a gift, do you take the time to ask yourself, “How can I personalize this gesture so this person feels special for having received it?” That type of giving certainly requires more effort than grabbing a gift card as we head to the checkout, but it is the type of giving that touches the heart of the receiver in a lasting way. Have you ever received a gift that you knew required a great deal of effort or thought? Did it inspire you to do the same?

**Conclusion**

We live in a culture that entices us to “shop till we drop”. But if we travel that road we know where it leads – to exhaustion and bills to pay. So let’s choose to celebrate the holiday differently this year using Christ’s own gift giving strategy as a guide. Let’s give more of our presence in personal and precious ways. That, my friends, is the pathway to a simple Christmas because it will help us discover that it truly is more blessed to give than to receive.