

KEEPING THE FOREVER GIFT!



#2907 1227 20A Post Advent
VIRTUAL

The title reminds us if we are *keeping* the Gift of the *Savior* in our heart, or are we instead *keeping* the attitudes of resentment, bitterness, anger, and hostility there instead—that is the question to ask ourselves. Keeping the Forever Gift means keeping the Spirit of Christ in our heart at all times.

Gifts of every description—gifts that were bought, baked, or built—have been given, received, and exchanged—some *needed*; some *wanted*; some *cherished*; most *enjoyed*; but all *appreciated* for the kindness and the consideration shown as well as the gift itself.

Some are just added to our collection—but the one gift to which we must say: *I am keeping this Gift!*—is *never* to be returned, but *always* to be shared—the Gift of the Lord Jesus Colossians 1:27 “*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*” It is the gift we *keep*, and *share*, and *show* to everyone.

Luke 2:39 “*And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. 40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.*” As we return to our routines, let us

take the gift of the Spirit with us—to *change* us; to *guide* us; and to *enable* this new way to be *our way always!*

A gift has a *giver* and a *receiver*—God is the Giver and *we* the receiver. If a gift is not accepted, it offers no benefit. Let us be sure we have accepted God’s gift—having Him to guide us and keep us strong in our faith. Acts 2:38 “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*”

Many have enjoyed the holiday, but there are many who are weary from shopping, cooking, and just being too busy with too many things. After all the *anticipation*, it seems strange that we are so ready to *forget* it—returning to a normal routine is often a relief—but let us not forget the divine *love* and acts of kindness that were shown by many who gave their time and their gifts to others.

Christian friends and family must never be taken for *granted*, and the story of the Lord’s visit must never be *forgotten*. Jesus came to visit our *world* so that the next one would be with *Him!* Moving beyond the holiday does not mean that something has *ended*, but that something is *added*—the Gift of the Spirit in our heart that brings forth fruits of righteousness—Galatians 5:22, “*Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 gentleness, self-control.*”

The first century church began the calendar at the Advent of Christ, because it was a *new* beginning. Everyone who accepted Jesus as their Lord should also represent a new beginning of living His Truth every day. As each year ends, we think of the salvation God promised in the *past*; the forgiveness He gives in the *present*; and the eternal home He will give in the *future*—as we keep *our faith* in Him.

The Gospels give details of the Advent—and through that of Luke, we can re-live that moment

with the shepherds; the parents; the wise men; Anna; and Simeon. The way they worshiped and adored the King, is the way we worship God and adore His Son. Our attitudes and choices should *reflect* our *faith* in Christ. Our *treatment* of people should reflect His *love* and His *patience*.

It was humble shepherds who heard the announcement: Luke 2:14 “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*” Peace would result for those who accept the *Gift* of His *Spirit*. After the holiday, all too many *return* the Gift and *retain* the wrong attitudes they *had* prior to Advent. Keeping the *Gift* of the Spirit, means keeping the *forgiveness* we have received from God.

No one can *take* our faith in God away from us—we have to willingly give it up. The shepherds heard great news, and now they would glorify God every day for being the ones to experience that momentous event of first seeing the King of kings. What do *we* take back with us after the holiday!

Luke 2:20 “*The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.*” Their lives would never be the same—they would now say: 1 John 1:1 “*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.*” God gave them a wonderful gift—they would now *retain* a joyful heart.

They felt as the apostle did 1 John 1:2 “*(For the life was manifested [appeared], and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.)*” Experience is more meaningful than just hearing—we experience trials and tests so God can bring about change.

As the holiday *fades*, may our commitment to Christ *increase*, because the greatest Gift has

been given! *Emmanuel, God with us*. God loved us so *much*, that He gave His very *best*. We can show our appreciation by showing divine love toward others.

The shepherds worshiped Jesus and returned to their jobs thanking God for sharing His Gift. We do not know what the shepherds did later, but they no doubt told all who showed any interest that the *Messiah* had come—they actually *saw* and *worshiped* Him.

This season can have *real meaning* if we leave the holiday with a feeling of *gratitude* and *appreciation* for the Forever Gift given to us; for the Truth He showed us; for the instructions He left us in a Book; and for the sacrifice He made for us at Calvary so we could have hope for the future.

If God shows that we need to make *changes* in our attitudes or *corrections* in our decisions, we should *make* them and not ignore the spiritual light. God continues to offer the gift of His Spirit to those willing to trust on His power. When we consider that Christ suffered and died to *forgive* our sins, nothing He asks should be too much.

Luke 2:11 “*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*” Having Christ as our *Lord* is to impact our life and control our every attitude toward everything. God was manifested in the flesh because it is the only way He could pay the penalty for sin. We are to take advantage of the plan He gave and to follow it by faith in the Blood He shed.

God kept His *promise* to send a *Savior*, and to all who believe that He *is* who He *says* He is—God in flesh appearing—and as they are willing to trust in His atoning work, the promise of Paradise is given. To those who would *not* believe, that promise is *not* given. John 8:24 “*I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*”

The devil would have inserted many *doubts* following the announcement to Mary. The devil would suggest that the Romans were in power; taxes were excessive; and laws oppressive. He would have said that a prophet had not spoken for four hundred years and still no sign of a Messiah. But Hebrews 10:23 “*He is faithful that promised,*” so the Messiah arrived as predicted.

Many gifts and blessings from God have been received—and we are grateful for each answer to prayer for divine healing; financial blessings right on time; divine guidance when we need it; or protection from harm at the right moment. Though *we* are often unfaithful, *God* is always faithful; though we often *break* our word, He will always *keep* His.

We are all born with an attitude that *wants* to sin by *disobeying* God. Romans 7:18 “*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*”

Before we committed our life to God; before we accepted His Son; and before we received the Gift of His Spirit in our heart, we were *not* able to do the *right* and *scriptural* thing. We now have His Spirit—we are *keeping this Forever Gift!* Colossians 1:27 “*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*”

No matter how many; how deliberate; or how serious our sins may have been, a Savior has been born in Bethlehem who will *forgive* them, if we will *trust* Him in faith to do it. Luke 2:10 “*Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*” Now we know what *Good News* it really was!

Satan seems so active at times—we call out Romans 7:24 “*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” Then a ray of *hope* and a shaft of *light*—a Savior is born

in Bethlehem who can change us and save us from an impossible situation.

God visited earth to personally pay for our sins—we should *never* live as if it *never* happened, because it *did* happen, and for a very *specific* reason—so we could be *free* from our sinful ways and be willing to follow His commands. John 14:15 “*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*”

Jesus told us to *love* others; to show *mercy*; to *share* our blessings; to let anyone *borrow* anything; and to *forgive* from the heart everyone of everything. The gift of His Spirit within enables us to treat *people* as *we* want to be treated.

Jesus told us to be: *Pure in Heart; Do not be angry; Be light and salt to the world; Do not use profanity; Give to the poor secretly; Do not resist an evil person; Love our enemies; and Pray for anyone persecuting us.*

As we return from the manger in Bethlehem, we should see *change* in our life and show *appreciation* for a Gift—a Gift which can forever bring *change*—change that is so desperately *needed* in our heart. Colossians 1:27 “*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*”

Our prayer should be that God will empower us to show *forgiveness*, *love*, and *mercy* like He showed *us*—*yesterday, today, and tomorrow*. Jesus came for that purpose—to *forgive* our sins and to give us the Forever Gift of His Spirit. We are *keeping this Gift*—because having Jesus in our heart *today*, is the living hope we have for *tomorrow*. Let us humbly receive the *Forever Gift* of His Spirit and make Him our life companion!



www.fcgchurch.org

*Be on our free mailing list—contact:

PO Box 24283

Philadelphia, PA 19120

info@fcgchurch.org

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