

The Great Unloved

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Christmas, as everyone knows, is a time of giving. We all look forward to this event with such tremendous excitement. We love to see lots of presents underneath a beautifully decorated tree. But Christmas is at its very core the giving (and receiving) of the greatest gift of all time. We have to learn to better appreciate that gift.

Most of us, like children, are concerned more with getting than giving. Picture kids on Santa's knee telling him what they want for Christmas. Think of the intense anticipation for all of us of much hoped-for gifts as the magic morning finally arrives! I remember these times so well. One particular Christmas I had asked for a football. But because I was so small and skinny, I was told that if I got one I would just get hurt (Does this remind you of the movie [A Christmas Story?](#)). When Christmas morning finally came, presents were opened in a rush and amidst all of the paper and bows and toys I could find no football. I remember having to pose for pictures with my presents which, though they no doubt were good presents, they were not what I really wanted. Eventually one of my parents said to no one in particular, "What is that stuck behind the Christmas tree?" And there it was! For the next two days my friend and I played in the frozen slush with that football until the white stripes on the ends were rubbed off.

Unfortunately kids are not usually able to discriminate between wants and needs. Parents make up for this deficiency by also giving needed things such as clothes and clocks. Perhaps you have received a tie or a sweater or such; it wasn't very exciting, but it sure came in handy when you needed to dress up or go out into the cold. We don't appreciate them at the time, but we eventually find them to be very useful.

I know you have seen someone open one of their packages and say: "Uh... thanks." All the while they are wondering, "Just what is this?" Someone had spent a great deal of time trying to find the "perfect" gift, but it didn't go across very well. I think that we see Christ in this way. God picked out a perfect gift for us: His Love as expressed through His Son. But we look at it and cannot see the treasure. To many of us, Christ is the gift that wasn't really wanted. We were hoping for riches, glory, or pleasure; but we got what was needed instead. We don't see that what we really want flows down from God's gift. We need to understand the value it, for if we embrace it we find that our deeper wants are satisfied.

The need for love is one of the most fundamental in all existence. We need to know if we are loved. Think about how it shapes us. We need love from our parents, our spouse, our children, but especially our God. God's love can really shape us. It can give us the peace that passes all understanding.

God cared enough to give the very best, but what do we offer in return? It's silly to think of God on Santa's knee, but we can still ask the question, What does God want most of all? (We don't have to worry about whether He has been Good or not.) Though God is fully "shaped", He still strongly desires our love. Peter Marshall, the former chaplain of the Senate, once prayed:

*How strange it is... that You who are love, who gives love to hungry human hearts, should Yourself be **the Great Unloved**.*

Think about it! God looks down upon a world that mostly just doesn't care. I remember being near tears when I thought that I hadn't gotten my precious football. God shows a similar sadness because His creation does not return His love.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"
Luke 13:34

This year, as you are picking out that "perfect" gift for someone, think about giving God what He really wants. And what He wants more than anything is the outpouring of our love for Him from every fiber of our being. And perhaps we can fill His "stocking" by loving each other as ourselves.

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