

P Levy Xmas Day

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Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] And if you've come in late, let me offer you again a very warm welcome. It's great to have you here.! Who was up this morning before eight? Raise your hand if you were up before eight. 8. Terry. Who was up before seven? Anybody up before seven? Anybody up before six?

Emma Vane with her one month old baby. Emma Roberts, sorry. Anybody up before five? Anybody up before four? Chuck, you won't have you normally up around that.

We should also have a competition with the best dress, isn't it? Now this is real enough. This is great bow ties. People are dressed as snooker players. It's great to have you here. Thank you very much for coming.

I'm getting the story about the atheist who's walking in the woods on Christmas Day. Amos. So there's an atheist walking in the woods on Christmas Day and suddenly he meets a great bear. The bear chases him. He chases him into a cave and there's nowhere for the atheist to go. And the atheist doesn't know what to do. He's scared. He falls on his knees.

[1 : 19] After the first time in his life, the atheist begins to pray. And he says, Lord, I don't think it's fair after I've been an angry atheist all my life that I become a Christian.

But please would you make the bear a Christian? He opens his eyes and he sees the bear fall to his knees. Close his eyes and put his hands together and say, Lord, for what we're about to receive, make us cry.

It's very good of you to laugh because it's an old joke. I hope you're thankful for your gifts. I really hope you're thankful for your gifts. We are very privileged, aren't we?

There are people today who have nothing. Nothing in this area. Who have nothing in this country. There are migrants. We are a free generation, aren't we? We are so blessed.

We have so much to be thankful for. And I hope you're grateful. I hope you're thankful. I've been doing the Christmas Day service for 13 years. And it's a struggle to be original.

[2 : 23] I don't know if this is original. I probably have done something like this before. But I wanted to think about how we receive our gifts. Because I think the way that we receive our material gifts, the way that we receive our presents, is often the way we treat God's gift.

So four different ways we receive gifts. That's all I want to think about. Not very long. Okay, so here's the first thing. I'm a volunteer. Is there a volunteer? Can I have a volunteer? Gus, come to the front.

Okay. Now, I'm not going to let everybody keep these gifts. But I'm going to let you guys keep this gift. Okay? Alright. So, can you hold it? What do you think that is?

Can you have a guess? Give me a shake. It's like a massive chocolate orange, isn't it? Do you know what a chocolate orange is? No. No. What does it feel like?

You're done now. Do you want to rip it open? Do you want to see if you can get it? See? Are you good at opening presents? Good luck. Go on. Go on. Keep going.

[3 : 34] It's all yours. What is that? Do you know what that is? No. That's not this. You can have that. Can you hold it up? Hold it up?

Give me a round of applause. Do you know what I mean? Thank you. That is what we call a swede. And all vegetables are dangerous.

But this vegetable is the most dangerous of all. I would want to argue this. This is repulsive. And of all the things that I was forced to eat as a boy, sweet would be the one that I hated the most.

It doesn't matter what you do with it. Roast it. Mash it. Disguise it. It is gross. People complain about Brussels sprouts. But sweet.

I would say it's the worst, isn't it? So if I say to you, do you want this at Christmas? No. No. Are you sure? No. You give it to your dad.

[4 : 40] It's the first thing, isn't it? Someone gives us a gift, isn't it? And it happens very rarely. But there are gifts, aren't they, that we just don't like. And there are gifts that actually, we really, really don't like them.

Sometimes when we're little, we might even say really ungratefully, I hate that. I don't like that. Gifts we don't like. As you grow up, you get a bit better at hiding it, don't you?

But there are gifts that we don't like. And do you know what? We do that with God, don't we? God gives us the greatest gift of all, the Lord Jesus. And there are many people that say, well, I don't want Jesus.

I just don't want Jesus. I think that's the most common response I get. I don't want forgiveness. I don't want it. They hate the message. That message that I am a rebel and that I have sinned against God and against others.

And I need a savior. And there's nothing I can do about it. And that I need God to save me. And people say, I don't want that. I hate that. I really don't like that.

[5 : 48] I don't want God in charge of my life. And so what they do is they reject it. I say, I don't want it. First response. Second response. Is there another volunteer? Is there another volunteer?

What about we need? What is it? What is it? What is it? Come on, come on, come on. You can open that. You can't open this, but you probably don't want it. Who's that?

Do you know who that is? Winnie the Pooh. Winnie the Pooh. Does that look brand new? No, it doesn't, doesn't it? Do you know this is my Winnie the Pooh that someone bought me? And it's all a bit strange, isn't it?

It's nice to see. Do you think I should carry this around? Do you think I should take this to work when I go to work? Yeah.

Would it be funny? It would be funny, wouldn't it? Why would it be funny? Because he wouldn't normally take a teddy to work. Does your dad not take a teddy to work?

[6 : 53] No, it doesn't. She doesn't carry a teddy bear around with him, does he? No. Who has teddy bears? Children. Children? That's right. Really well done. Goodness, man.

I'm going to have a good one. It is, isn't it? Okay. Teddy bears, isn't it? There are gifts that you grew out of.

So I remember the Christmas I got this. And I was thrilled, wasn't I? I can't remember what I was. I would have been about five, six or something. I liked Winnie the Pooh. I thought it was quite funny. And I loved it.

I thought it was really great. And it was a gift that I enjoyed. I'm sat now at the bottom of Noah's bed. And I brought it with me. And it was a gift that I really enjoyed.

But I don't play with it now, do I? I don't think, oh, I tell you what. This afternoon when I get home, I know what I'm going to do. Me and Winnie the Pooh are going to have a picnic or something like that. I don't know about it. When I go away to speak somewhere or I go to a conference, I don't think, oh, I remember what I've got to pack.

[7 : 52] I've got to pack Winnie the Pooh. I don't think that because we grow out of gifts, don't we? Gifts we grow out of. And I think that's something. The first thing was gifts we don't like, gifts we hate.

Second thing, that's gifts we grow out of. And once upon a time, I like cuddly toys. But I'm not a boy now, am I? I'm a man now. I'm a real man.

And so real men don't have cuddly toys. And so many people, they treat the Lord Jesus like that, don't they? They treat the Lord Jesus like that. They think, oh, it's really nice for children.

So everybody loves it, kids, when they come to your school nativity play. Everybody loves that. But actually, they think it's just the children. And so God coming to earth, I'm living a life that you and I should have lived.

I'm dying the death that you and I deserve for our sins. And then rising again, I'm ascending to heaven. I'm being seated at the right hand of God the Father where he is this morning.

[8 : 51] And that Jesus Christ will one day come again to bring in the new heavens and the new earth. And God loving me. And bringing in a world without suffering and pain and death.

People think, oh, that's make-believe, don't they? They think that's Cinderella. They think that's Billy Goat Gruff. And all the little beautiful nursery rhymes.

They think that's just Never Neverland. Many, many people, particularly at this time of year, they're really happy to come to a carol service. If you said to them, would you come to church next Sunday

morning?

They'd say no. If you said, do you want to come to church for a carol service? They'd say, oh, yeah, yeah, of course. Because it's sentimental, isn't it? They love the songs. They love the stories. They'll tell their children about the Lord Jesus. But they think they've left it all behind. They think they've grown out of it. That's the second thing we do with gifts. Gifts we don't like.

[9 : 50] Gifts we can grow out of it. And the third thing is gifts that we're obliged to wear. Now, I haven't got a gift for this, but occasionally you, as the generous people of this church, give me clothes. And last year, I put on a little bit of weight last year, and someone who I don't think is here gave me a jumper that was at least two sizes too small for me.

And so when I put it on, it kind of roared to the top of my stomach. But I felt I had to wear it. I felt I had to pay lip service. Some of you are wearing gifts like that this morning, I can tell.

But you don't want to hurt the person's feelings. And so you pretend. You know what it is, isn't it? That jumper that someone's made for you, or that gift that someone gave to you, that piece of jewellery that you really don't like, but you put it on when they come round, because you want them to think that you loved it.

You pay lip service. You feel obliged to wear it. And do you know what? There are many people like that. When you go to church, I go to church Christmas and Easter. You can even go to church each week like that.

And you pretend, now and again. Many people pretend that Jesus is King, but they don't actually want Him. They don't want to know Him.

[11 : 09] They don't want to be in a relationship with Him. Somebody was telling me today that they had been given interdental brushes as a present for Christmas. It's one of them. They do the same thing.

Interdental brushes. The next time that person comes, that person will have brushed their teeth right in between the gaps. They'll have clean teeth, because they will want to pay lip service. And there are many people that feel obliged that pay lip service to Jesus.

Fourth gift is this gift. One more volunteer. One more volunteer. One more volunteer. And drink. That's great. Now this is what I bought my wife last year.

And well, I think it'll ruin the surprise. You know this, we have to do that. I would normally bought very bad gifts for this year and last year, as far as myself.

What is it? What about this? Have a guess. A month old. Yes. What do you think that is? It's another one. It is another one.

[12 : 15] Well done, well done, well done. You can put a set of them. It's another one. And I think Claire was, after 15 years of marriage, was greatly shocked. It was pure desperation, I'll give you that.

But she was greatly shocked. And she said, you know what she said? She said, I love it. I love it. And this year, she's really loved it. She's been able to watch Strictly Come Dancing incessantly on it.

And she's, well, she isn't always on it, but she's often on it. And so occasionally, we lose the iPad. And a state of emergency is declared. And we all have to find the iPad.

And there are gifts out there, gifts that you treasure. Gifts that you treasure. We've all got that. So, what's your favourite gift, children? What's been your favourite gift today? What's the favourite gift you've received today?

Anybody want to tell us? Noah, what's been yours? I think it was my, I got a superhero book. A superhero book?

[13 : 18] It wasn't that tough, fresh. Ali, what about you? It was like my princess book. Your princess book. What about you, Miriam?

I don't know. Playmobil. Very cool. Gasp. Playmobil. Very cool. And so there are gifts out there that all of us, we treasure.

And there are gifts that we want to say, oh, thank you. I love it. I love it. And do you know what?

There are millions upon millions upon millions upon millions of people today who have received the Lord Jesus Christ with great joy and great thankfulness.

And they meet together and change it like we do this morning to say, I love him. I love him. He is very precious. And he is part of our daily life. In fact, more than that, he is our life.

Christmas is him. Christmas is about receiving him and knowing him and loving him. Four gifts. Do you remember them? Gifts we don't like. Gifts we grow out of.

[14:20] Gifts we pay lip service to. And gifts we love. Now be honest. Okay? Be honest. Which one of those four represents how you treat the Lord Jesus?

Be honest. Which one? There's only two basic responses. The first three, they all reject Jesus. And again, we shouldn't be surprised at that. Do you remember what Peter read to us from John 1? It's an amazing thing that even though the world was made through him, he was in the world or the way it was through him and yet the world did not know him.

He came to his own but his own did not receive him. And they reject him. They said no. Herod, teachers of the law, some of the people of Israel, they rejected Jesus.

And that is bad and that is sad and that is rejecting the God who made you and owns you and who loves you. It is rejecting the Saviour. It's rejecting your only hope that we will be condemned for eternity without him.

[15:27] But it doesn't have to be like that, does it? Because that verse goes on for all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. A couple of chapters later in John, there's that famous verse, you know it, isn't it?

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whosoever will believe on him shall not perish but have eternal life. So if we believe in him and trust in him and receive him, well we receive eternal life with God.

And so let me ask you, this Christmas day, have you received the gift? Have you received the gift? It's not that you don't need it, we all need it. It's not that it's not available, it is available.

It's not that God doesn't want you to have it. He sent his Son. And so take it, take God at his word and receive the gift. And he will give you the greatest present that you can ever know and that is to know Jesus.

And that is something that we all need. And actually, do you know when you delve down a little bit deeper, it's something that we all want. And God offers it.

[16:38] I think I say this every Christmas day. My brother Dave, he's 12 years older than me, he became a Christian on Christmas day. It's a wonderful day to become a Christian. It's a wonderful day to receive the gift. To pray to God and say, thank you.

I know I need rescuing and Jesus is the only rescuer. Why not do that today? Let's pray. God our Father, help us not to forget what we've heard and sung and read this morning.

Thank you that you didn't give your Son so that we could celebrate once a year, but you sent him so we could celebrate life with you forever. And so now, may the wisdom of Jesus, the wonderful counselor, guide us.

May the strength of Jesus, the mighty God, protect us. May the love of Jesus, the everlasting Father, enfold us. And the peace of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Bring us peace this Christmas time and always. Amen. Amen.