He Did It For Love

I once saw a painting by Julius Gari Melchers entitled simply, *The Nativity*. Perhaps it was the way the artist captured the brooding face of the husband-not-father as he leans forward on his squatted knees and pensively stares at the bedded Newborn tucked at his feet in that crude box of hay. Or maybe it was the utter “spentness” of the young birth mother, exhausted, now prone on the cold floor, save for her slumping shoulders propped against the stable wall, her tired eyes at half mast, her weary face expressionless and resting upon the side of her betrothed. It makes you wonder: What is it the husband broods upon? What thoughts are hers, the young mothers? In the heavy, still air do they wonder that the “infant lowly”
is the “infant holy”?

“Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.” (I Timothy 3:16 NIV)

The ancient words of this Christmas text are as provocative in the Greek as they are in the English—\textit{mega musterion}—a truly “mega mystery.” How else shall we describe the immersing incarnation (literally, “infleshment”) of the Infinite into this shadowland we finites still call home? G. K. Chesterton was right: “We walk bewildered in the light, for something is too large for sight, and something much to plain to say.” The Seed of God planted in the womb of humanity—why the very mechanics and genetics of such a divine-human anatomical transfer are more than even our third millennial science can fathom. But in the end, the great mystery that Christmas bids us ponder isn’t so much that God could do it, but rather that God would do it. “The work of redemption is called a mystery, and it is indeed the mystery by which everlasting righteousness is brought to all who believe. . . . Christ, at an infinite cost, by a painful process, mysterious to
angels as well as to men, assumed humanity. Hiding His divinity, laying aside His glory, He was born a babe in Bethlehem” (7BC 915).

It was the day before Christmas. Busily wrapping packages, the boy’s mother asked if he’d please shine her shoes. Soon, with the proud smile of a 7-year-old, he brought her shiny shoes for inspection. She was so pleased, she handed him a quarter. On Christmas morning she felt a strange lump in one shoe. Taking it off, she shook the shoe and out dropped a quarter wrapped in a small piece of paper. On it in a child’s scrawl were the words: “I done it for love.”

by Dwight K. Nelson, Lead Pastor

Exceptional Giving

Recently I attended a conference
where the speaker asked two questions. What is the best gift you have ever received? What is the best gift you have ever given? Hands waved and stories were shared. A grandson told of the World War II dog tags he received from his adored grandfather. A prodigal daughter told of her rebaptism just three months prior to her father’s sudden death. A friend talked of the forgiveness received after mean words were rapid-fired in an emotional moment. Funny, no one mentioned a white Lexus with red bow on top!

I thought about the best gift I have given. It was the love I put into writing a tribute for both my father and my mother. For weeks I edited and re-edited, trying to distill on one piece of paper what each meant to me. I carefully chose stationary, font and matte, and had both tributes framed side-by-side in gold gild. The next time my parents visited, after supper dishes were done and a fire was lit, I read to each what would have been too hard for me to verbally articulate. Since then, those framed words have hung in the most prominent place in their home.

One of the most meaningful gifts I have received came two years ago on my birthday. At 5:30 a.m. I donned exercise clothes and headed for my walking partner’s
house. When I knocked on her door, Shelly flung it open with a mischievous smile on her face. I heard cries of “Happy Birthday” behind her and began sorting out the individual faces of a group of friends. I was led to a gorgeous breakfast prepared for me in the wee hours of the morning. We ate at a table set with linen and china and candles, and talked and laughed and celebrated friendship until the work day could wait no longer. I will never forget this gift; people (husband's included!) got out of bed at 5:30 in the morning to let me know I was special!

The best gifts always have to do with the relationship between the giver and the receiver. Exceptional givers study their recipients and find ways to let them know how much they are loved and valued.

Are you an exceptional giver? Are you finding ways to let God know how much you love and treasure Him? Are you seeking to discover the gifts He longs for? He will show you how to be generous to Him, if that is what you truly desire.

by Tari Popp, Stewardship Committee Chair
Christmas Eve Program

December 24, PMC Sanctuary

The program will begin at 6:00 p.m. Come and enjoy a variety of music to celebrate the season. Refreshments will be served after the program in the PMC Commons.
Pioneer Memorial Church

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