

**CHRISTMAS DAY 2018. Luke 2: 1-14**  
**All-age, CCO and StJN**

God, our Father, as we think about gifts today, help us to accept and receive your great gift into our hearts, and be thankful. Amen.

What gifts gave people received?

Why do we give each other presents, gifts, at Christmas?  
Because they remind us of God's great gift to us.

And what is that gift?  
JESUS.

What does that mean? Let's think about it.

Bring out my gift, ALL WRAPPED UP, really tightly, with multiple layers, and little gift between maybe

Offer it. What might they say? (Thank-you)

But what are you saying thank-you for?

Don't really know what you're getting.

If I gave you a present, would you just put it on a shelf or in a cupboard and forget about it, ignore it? Would you say 'I can't be bothered with that just now, I'm too busy, or I want to play on my iPad or whatever? If you did that, would my gift to you be any good to you? NO!

To be able to enjoy a gift, we have to find out what it is. And to do that we have to unwrap this precious gift. *Get them to start unwrapping.*

It can take a while, all the different layers – but we know there's something special inside.  
Each time you look a bit further in, you find something new. But you know that there is still something better yet to come. (*Stop the unwrapping*)

So, for a gift to mean anything to us, we have to do something.  
What do we have to do?

First, we have to ACCEPT the gift. We have to take it to ourselves.

Now if I gave you a present, you wouldn't ask your friend to unwrap it for you, would you? – we can't expect someone else to UNWRAP the Jesus gift for us. We have to do it ourselves.

Then we have to apply ourselves to unwrapping it – and this might take some effort.

How do we unwrap the gift of Jesus? Clearly it's not a matter of scissors and tearing paper off?

How do we unwrap God's gift, of what appears to be just a baby in manger. Of course a baby, new life, is always a precious gift. But Christians have always claimed that Jesus was no ordinary baby.

So how do we find out about this gift? What do we have to do??  
How do we 'unwrap' the Jesus gift? (*Ask for ideas*)

We have to find out more about this baby Jesus who grew up to be an amazing man. How do we find out about him? How do we discover what this gift is all about? Through:

Bible reading –read all about it! Read the Gospels, over and over. You'll always find something new in them.

Church services – come and let yourself enjoy that sense of the presence of God. Let him lift your heart and mind and voice in worship. Let yourself be changed by the experience.

Fellowship with other Christians – we can often learn most from each other, as we share our experiences and understanding.

Prayer, when we talk to God, and make quiet space for him to talk to us, giving us new ideas, different thoughts, changing the way we see the world and the people around us.

Stepping out in faith to talk to others about Jesus and the love of God that he has shown us. Not being afraid that other people will think we're a bit odd, or a bit foolish.

And all that means putting our trust in him. We read his promises in the Bible, but it's when we believe those promises and act on them that we discover the power of Jesus in our own life.

*(Finish unwrapping parcel)*

Then get reaction to discovering what the gift really is?

It's something to share! I'm not going to give this just to one of you to take away and enjoy all by yourself. It's for all of you to share with each other and with the other people here if there's any left.

We have unwrapped this little gift and found out what's inside. But when we unwrap God's amazing gift to us in Jesus, what do we find?

We start with the baby Jesus in the manger at Christmas; what are we supposed to do with a baby born 2,000 years ago? How is Jesus God's gift to us? When we unwrap this gift we find that:

Jesus brings to us the gift of knowing that we are precious in God's sight, that we, you and I, are held in the palm of his hand, that God

knows us and loves us and will never leave us. If we are blessed with good parents, they show us something of that sort of love, the love that makes us feel safe and secure as we grow up and find our place in the world. And if we are even more blessed, our parents teach us and help us to see that their love for us is just like a tiny part of the great love that God has for us. They help us to see that, tiny and insignificant though we may feel, we have our place in this amazing universe. We matter. That is what Jesus shows us, by his teaching, his life, his dying and rising to new life, he shows us what God is like, and he shows us the undying, true, faithful love of God for each and every one of us. And he shows us that there is a point and a purpose to our life here.

With Jesus, the love, the power and the kingdom of God came into our world here. When he was killed and raised to new life, he showed us that evil will not have the last word in this world, that all the badness in our own lives can be forgiven, and that life with God is life forever. That's quite a gift.

How many of you can remember what gifts you received last year? . . . .God's gift is everlasting – it will never wear out, seem old-fashioned, or break, and once you start to unwrap it you will find that there is always another layer, always more to discover. You will never get bored with this gift!

And if we receive a gift like that, what must our response be? Surely it is to say thank-you, as we do at each Eucharist; but more than that, surely it is to offer our love to God. And how do we show that love? Not just by coming to church now and then and singing nice songs – although that is part of it. We show our love for God by living in a way that pleases him, by caring for other people, by caring for our world, by loving our neighbour as ourselves. Then God's great Christmas gift can be enjoyed by everyone. Amen.