

***The Gift is God Himself*** (Joh 1:114).

\* Can you believe that in our gathering at the church this morning the invisible hosts of angels surround us? They may help us meditate much on eternity in disfavor of the perishable things. What they want to do now that is to engross our attention on the incomparable and inconceivable treasure belonging to God! And yet, God's possession becomes ours by a clearer vision, a deeper love, and a more intimate fellowship with Him. For the Almighty himself came to us and became the Cause of this order.

\* Just consider this, what can be more valuable in the world if not God himself, who some 2,000 years ago came to the slaves for life and ransomed them from the bondage of Satan and the sentence of death? Just think of what God did. He became a Man in order to take the transgressions of many upon Himself, and by His doing, He freed them from eternal torments. Rejoice o daughter of Zion, and with her all people to whom God has spoken through the angel. *"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord,* (Lk 2:10-11).

\* Some years in the past, we believed the good news and have been experiencing much of God's goodness in His Son and in the Holy Spirit. As we experience the spark of eternal life dwelling in us, we rejoice with all the heavenly hosts singing and praising the King of kings as it was on that memorable night and is now in this morning:

*Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;*

*Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"*

*Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;*

*With the angelic host proclaim "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"*

*Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"* (# 380, LSB).

\* Dear friends, let me ask a question. When your families join together in celebration on Christmas Day following this service, then, will it bring to your mind Jesus Christ as the priceless gift, especially after unwrapping your presents: toys, electronics, videos, books, clothes, grants, and even autos? Suppose that the invisible hosts of angels will help you again. Therefore, being helped in thinking of what you have owned from this world, you will recall the house or apartment you are living in, the car you drive each day, the money in your account. You may be reminded about the collection of gold coins you've inherited and the stocks you've traded, and the clothes you've purchased. Then, what do these things mean for you?

\* It is not difficult to guess what people may think on this matter because we are all same by nature. For example, we may conclude that it took a lot of our energy, time, and even health in order to get all these to be ours. On the other hand, in virtue of our newborn nature we agree with the Scripture stating about our possession as a temporary use. Thus, when the wealthy man John D. Rockefeller died, his personal accountant was asked, "How much did John D. leave?" The man replied, "All of it." This is what really happened to all who are gone before us - they left everything, they returned to God with empty hands.

The author of Ecclesiastes says, *As a man came forth from his mother's womb, naked shall he go again as he came, and shall take nothing for his labor, which he may carry away in his hand,* (5:15).

\* It is true, man cannot take his possessions beyond the veil; and even if he would be able to take all the treasures of the world, neither in Heaven nor in Hell are they useful. But there is something that follows after man's death even if he wouldn't like it. Take heed of what we said and beware of covetousness, said Jesus, *for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses*" (Luke 12:15). In the heavenly realm the earthly values are not values at all; but those who get wealth for themselves while living on earth are foolish. It say that we'll be known by treasures we've stored in our hearts, either good or evil, (2Co 5:10).

\* The Scripture teaches that the heart which doesn't have Jesus, cannot love God and His little ones, and as the result of this people may not inherit life eternal. Therefore, to own Jesus Christ to be our Savior is what we ought to consider as the matter of greatest importance. Today the Scripture reading reminds us again that we are a blessed people when we were called by God to faith in Christ Jesus. Around 2000 years ago God gave His Son to all humanity in whom we are given to believe and by believing have eternal life. *For the true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ... And to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God,* (Jh1:9-13).

\* When we accepted Jesus in our hearts by faith, he came to us and established his kingdom - peace, righteousness and joy in the Holy Spirit. Along with Jesus himself, these virtues are the real treasure we are given to keep it in safety throughout all our life. With this possession we will be welcomed into Heaven as beloved sons and daughters of the Almighty God.

\* Let's repeat that wealth cannot buy happiness forever; rather, let's rejoice at having daily bread and life as God-given gifts; while the real treasure is God himself in Christ Jesus – the free gift to all who believe. As you continue to celebrate Christmas during the following two weeks, make sure you don't forget that *to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,* (Isa 9:6). When the prophet wrote this wonderful message, it was still the object of an upcoming event, but now it is the reality. The Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace has come and abides, full of grace and truth, (Joh 1:14). *"Let all God's people and angels worship him,"* (Heb 1:6b).

Brothers, may the God of our salvation save and preserve us in the living faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.