

Sermon Draft

Text: Romans 9:1–5 (6–13)

Sermon: “God’s Gifts”

The emphasis for this Sunday and what ties the readings for today together is the gifting nature of God (*Introit, Collect, Psalm*). It is from him that man can and does receive the very best of gifts—the best of foods that cost a person nothing (*Old Testament Reading, Isaiah 55:1*), the gift of the Messiah, who came through the covenant given by God to the Hebrews (*Epistle, Romans 9:5*), and the miracles God the Messiah performs (*Gospel, Matthew 14:19–21*). These gifts are not only earthly blessings but eternal blessings, which, again, cost nothing on the part of man, but everything on the part of the Son. Paul notes how the Hebrews had everything given to them (*Romans 9:4–5*). So sadly, they spurned it all, while the Gentiles gladly welcomed them, even as we have.

Oh, how we like to receive gifts! As children, young children, we likely don't think about what they cost or even from where they come. As we get older, we begin to realize that someone bought or made them for us and that they cost something. The older we get, the more fully aware we become of just how much gifts cost and recognize the difficulty in getting just the right one. But God knows from the very beginning both how much gifts cost and precisely what it is that we need.

God has given gifts down through history, but none is greater than the Messiah, who came and purchased salvation for all mankind. So often we take for granted God's gifts and even thinking sometimes we are entitled.

Paul addresses the Christians in Rome. As we listen to his words we can see his heart, his pastor's heart. Paul's pastoral heart appreciates God's gifts and loves those who have received them.

In last week's text from chapter 8 Paul expressed faith to the highest level. Nothing can separate the believer from God. Paul realizes and testifies that this is all through the redemptive work of Christ. He came, He lived, He died and He arose for us. Now we can live secure in Him. What a joyful message.

But, Paul descends into what seems the greatest of anguish. Paul has seen how both Jews and Gentiles have come to faith through his preaching the Word. And yet a large portion of his fellow Hebrews are still rejecting the Messiah. Paul wanted to be pastor not only to the Gentiles but also to his Hebrew brothers and sisters.

Like Christ Paul wished he could gather them under his wings. He even goes so far as saying he wishes that he could be condemned forever in Israel's place, he knew the path they had chosen.

So, what an amazing statement by one who knew fully the horror of what eternal death would be like. Even more amazing, then, that Christ not only made the promise, but actually completed it, taking the full condemnation of God upon himself!

Paul wanted them to realize the wonderful gifts God had given were special, the gifts God gave, he first gave to the Hebrews. The Hebrews were chosen, of all peoples on earth, to be the line through which the Messiah would come; like we heard a few weeks ago they received the gift of adoption. Since all men were separated from God's family because of the sin of Adam and Eve, one can now be a child of God only by adoption. The Israelites were the first to be brought into God's holy family, so they were indeed adopted. They should not have received such a gift for how they conducted themselves, yet God chose them anyway. And they rejected His gift and His Promised Messiah and Son.

God gave His covenant, an agreement, first made with Adam and Eve, then with Abraham, repeated it to David, and continued it through the prophets. God's covenants are special they are one-sided arrangements, with God establishing and man receiving thus not a contract with equal giving on both sides. The covenant was established by blood with Old Testament Israel by the blood of animals, but pointing to the One whose blood would be shed one day, actually removing sin. God made the covenant with them, He would be their God and they would be His people. Wow, what a covenant yet they again walked away.

God gave the gift of the Law; no one else had God's Word, but the Hebrews. God had given them his very own Word, every word of which is perfect. Torah, "the Law," was the whole counsel of God, both Law and Gospel.

He gave it so there would be no question as to what the truth was; they had it directly from God himself. God's Word is the truth but they did not listen and distorted His Word, just like the world does today. This worship service is a gift from God for us to use and hear His Word. Our liturgy today is right out of Scripture. No better words to use than the ones God gives!

Israel's worship focused on the sacrifice. Then it was about the animals that would die, but that pointed toward the Man who would die. Now it points toward the One who did die, Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb who died on behalf of all mankind, the Lamb who saved us when we could never save ourselves. It was through this service that forgiveness was given. When the Hebrews saw the sacrifice, they knew the blood forgave, the blood that was sprinkled on them. Today when we receive the blood, we know we have forgiveness.

God gave His gifts freely. His promises then and now are sources of joy, peace and comfort. From the beginning, we have God's promise that He would send us a Savior, the promised Messiah would one day come and now will one day return. He will never leave us nor forsakes us. We are his now and for all eternity. God has promised. All this was promised to the Hebrews, this is a comment about Israel's honored heritage. They came from Adam and Eve, as have all people. But Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his sons were also in their bloodline. Jesus was of that same blood! This made them the people through whom the Messiah was to come and had now come.

God also gave the gift of glory, His glory He bestowed on them. Of course, it was God's glory that they had, not their own, but he gave it.

What honors! All these gifts were for the most part and for a time given to no others—only to those of the nation of Israel. But now Paul shifts gears, only slightly.

Now Paul speaks of the greatest Gift—who came through the Hebrews but is given to all mankind. Yes, Jesus is of the same blood as these Hebrews, but he is more, vastly more. He is of holy blood, blood of the very God himself. Thus the Jesus whom the Jews saw walking and teaching and healing and feeding is man, yes, for he was man in every respect. But he was also the very God about whom the prophets spoke. Therefore, of greatest importance is that, as both God and man, Jesus is the perfect substitute for his fellow man, and (*and!*) what he did applies to people, all people. And we know what he did! Precisely what the covenant and the Torah and the sacrifices and the promises said he would do.

So, when Paul talks of a gift, he could not be talking about a more important gift! There is none greater than the gift that forgives all sins. There is none that has a more significant eternal impact than being at harmony with God Almighty himself. There is none that empowers believers to do what they could never otherwise do confess the faith, both to one another and to those of the world whom they meet in their daily routines. There is none that comes close to making the heart secure, in both how one knows the truth and feels secure and how one is now holy before God Almighty for eternity.

Most of the gifts we receive in this life cost someone something, though we may not always know what it was or who paid the price. As for belonging to Christ, we know both what the cost was and who paid the price.

It was Jesus and Jesus alone who did absolutely everything needed for us to know of the gift, have the gift, and pass the gift along to others while still having the gift personally. This gift and gifting could be of no greater significance for anyone anywhere of any time. And we have that gift for time and eternity. Thank you, Jesus! Amen