

GIFT TIME

It's getting to be that season in which people, especially the tiny humans we call children, long to hear, "It's time to open presents!" The expectation rises as people scramble to the designated place with an amped-up eagerness. Why? I grew up with a sense that the quality and quantity of gifts are directly correlated with behavior one has demonstrated over the previous year. Sometimes, there is discussion and even songs questioning whether an individual has been naughty or nice. Rumor is that there is a list. I don't think it's just me, though. I hear people throughout the year attempt to discipline their children with statements like, "If you don't stop that, Santa isn't going to come see you!" Even little Ruby Sue doesn't understand why she didn't receive any gifts in the previous year even though she didn't do anything wrong.

Only one gift matters (Romans 3:24) and is the inspiration for the festive times we celebrate this time of year. However, it isn't earned or owed despite all the "holiday" confusion. The word grace in the Bible refers to having the favor of God. On the other hand, we recognize the power of sin to separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2). As a result, any favor or kindness we receive from him is entirely undeserved.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Romans 5:17

For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is one thing to open a gift with the idea that I should be receiving it, I have earned it, or the gift giver owes me! It is altogether different to recognize that nothing is owed to me, for I am wretchedly sinful, and anything I receive is an unfathomable grace. As recipients of the most precious gift, may we be reminded that it is not our own doing but the grace of God, only because his love and mercy are so great.

May you find great joy in the gift!

Shalom,
Ryan