**Simple Christmas message:**

**Christmas**

**The gifts we give – and the one gift we have to receive**

**INTRO**

Christmas video about the many everyday blessing we enjoy as Westerners – and even as people with families and homes and beds.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZKg6N10OBo>

* What a great light-hearted video to remind us of the importance of not taking our blessings for granted
* We ‘won the lottery’ the day we were born in NZ!

**To apply this to Christmas I have two simple thoughts**

**1. [Gifts we give] We are already so material blessings. Let’s remember it is better to give than to receive**

* Kids awake early on Christmas morning with excitement at the possibility of Christmas gifts
* We all like to receive
* Acts 20:35 remins us, “*It is better to give than to receive.”*
	+ We are all able to bless others
	+ Who could you bless?
		- Who could you give something to – whether a gift, time, helping them in an area of need, an encouraging word, or even forgiveness?
		- And who could you give something to who could not give something back to you?
		- Luke 6:35  *“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”*
			* …because this is what God did for us in Christ.
				+ God coming to earth as a baby is one of the greatest mysteries of all time (weakness)
				+ God coming to a poor young couple, living in obscurity, is a profound reflection (no wealth or earthly acclaim or power/position/privilege)
				+ Why leave the comfort of heaven?

It was to give us something that we could never earn for ourselves.

…a clean record / eternal forgiveness (We’ll come back to this)

**2. [The one gift that we have to receive] However, while it is good to remember to give at Christmas, my second reflection is that there is one gift that we have no choice but to receive - because we cant earn it, and could never gift it ourselves.**

* What Jesus came to earth to do was to take the punishment we justly deserved for our wrongs.’
* Every wrong we have done is a wrong against God - because we wreck His world
* Yet because He loves us, Jesus came so that we could be fully forgiven if we could simply turn to Him, and receive this forgiveness, which He is offering!
* In other words – there is a gift we remember at Christmas that it is very important to receive – and that we have no way of ever earning.
	+ - *(E.g. pure water with a small impurity in it. If we added more water – would it be pure yet? When would it be pure?*
		- *But we aren’t like this are we – we’ve all done numerous wrongs. Even in the small thoughts of the day there is possibly some selfishness and envy, or unforgiveness and greed).*
	+ It is simply about turning to God in faith and humility – because we know we need His help – and therefore we ask.
		- And this is what the truest joy and hope of Christmas is actually all about. (God’s love for us – and what he offers us, if we would but turn from our ways toward Him, and receive it)

You see, the greatest distinctive about the Christian faith, as compared to other religions, is this:

* Other religions are about what we have to do to get to God
* While Christianity is about what God has done to get to us!
	+ It’s about ‘do vs done’

**DO VS DONE**

In Islam salvation comes by *belief* in Allah, Muhammad his prophet, and *good works.*

In Hinduism it comes by overcoming karma and incarnations by *good works.*

In Buddhism it comes by *getting rid all desires* through the eight-fold path.

In Christianity it comes by *faith alone* in Christ alone.[[1]](#endnote--1)

 It is about what God has done – not we have or need to do.

**CONCLUSION**
We enjoy many blessings – lets thank God, and lets be generous

* It is more blessed to give than to receive

However, as much as we are blessed if we have health and family, and homes and cars or TVs and the like… the greatest gift to appreciate at Christmas isn’t our health, or our homes or possessions - or even our families

* It is God’s offer of forgiveness – made possible because of what Jesus came to earth at Christmas to begin to do!
* And GOd is calling us to receive His love; to receive His forgiveness; and to become His children!
	+ We are restored to an eternal relationship with our Creator God the moment our hearts turn to ask His forgiveness for our wrong-doing, and to follow His ways
	+ At the same time we become restored to the purposes for which He has us here on earth
	+ And what I want to give you in a moment, is an opportunity to turn to God in prayer, to receive this unique gift .
		- But first a story:
		- **Invite someone to share their testimony**

**Closing summary** (including your own personal endorsement of what was said in the testimony, that this has been your experience also. This is why you are delighted to offer this invitation to others also):

**Invitation to response:** Will you turn to Jesus today to ask His forgiveness, and to commit to follow His ways in this life?

**Prayer**

1. As nicely summarized by Dr David Geisler. See www.meeknessandtruth.org [↑](#endnote-ref--1)