

## “Giving Jesus Away”

Christmas Eve

December 24, 2009

There were three rabbis who met every week for coffee. One rabbi seemed down and when asked why he told them “It’s my son. I gave him a good home, raised in the faith, and sent him to Israel and he came back a Christian.” The 2<sup>nd</sup> rabbi said, “I know what you mean. I too gave my son a good home, raised in the faith and I too sent him to Israel and he too, came back a Christian. The 3<sup>rd</sup> rabbi said the same thing, “I know what you mean. I gave my son a good home, sent him to Israel and he came home a Christian.” They began to wonder out loud what should they do. One said, “Let’s pray to God and ask God what we should do.” So they prayed and a voice speaks from heaven, “I know what you mean. I too gave my son a good home....”

A week or so ago the Bishop of our synod came to speak here at CLC. While he was speaking he used a phrase I have not heard before but it caught my attention. When speaking about the identity of the Christian church and the role or mission of church he said, “the church’s role is *giving Jesus away*.” What a wonderful way of putting that, “*Giving Jesus away*.” As I began to reflect and think about tonight I kept coming back to this, “*Giving Jesus away*,” And the more I thought about it the more it made sense to me. Let me explain.

### *Giving Jesus away!*

***But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."***

God was *giving Jesus away*! God was bringing good news of great joy! ***A Savior*** (one who transforms and restores us as we were meant to be; or as John said in his Gospel, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly); ***the Messiah*** (the anointed one of God, meant to do what God sent Jesus to do; as Paul said, “*who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, 7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, 8 he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* ); and ***the Lord*** (the master, the one in charge, the one to whom all things belong and from whom all blessings come). No expectations. No conditions. There is nothing that we have to achieve. God accomplished everything that was needed by giving Jesus away.

God was *giving Jesus away*. Given to us, humankind, that all that causes our stumbling, that leads to wrong choices, the deceit, the corruption, the arrogance and pride, all of what causes problems and conflict, as well as that which leads to lack of trust and faith, the nature of our sin, may be overcome. *Giving Jesus away* accomplished this. God became as one of us and lived a life of service to God on our behalf, even when it meant that he would be killed by us, for us. God was truly *giving Jesus away*.

So our faith, our obedience, and our responses to this gift are just that.... Responses! They help connect what God has done but do not achieve what God has done. They help us to see what God has accomplished

for us and in us and they create a place in which we make sense of it all - but always in response to God *giving Jesus away!*

As we learn to live out our lives in response we, like God, are *giving Jesus away.*

Through acts of love extended to others, through acceptance of others regardless of age, gender, or sexuality, through the use of our possessions, income and talent, the stewardship of our lives, through our act of worship, and through all the moments in which we say no to our will and yes to God's will we are *giving Jesus away.*

All of these acts are done in response to what God has done by giving away Jesus to us. As we respond in kind we too are *giving Jesus away.*

May the moment when you are opening gifts, may the time when you enjoy family and friends, may each gift you receive having been given in love be a reminder of how God keeps giving Jesus away. May these moments help and inspire us to become people of faith who are always giving Jesus away.

AMEN