

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the **gift** of God. (Ephesians 2:8)*

*Every good and perfect **gift** is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. (James 1:17)*

Advent is about anticipation and the preparation of our hearts for the Christmas celebration. Most children know exactly when Christmas is. They're anticipating receiving and giving gifts. The gifts are a wonderful picture of the greatest gift ever—Jesus Christ. He is the HOPE of God for us. Even though we don't see Jesus, we believe he died, rose again, and lives. Since he lives, he will return for all who trust him.

Every good gift comes from God. Christmas is about God coming to us and giving himself to us. Sometimes when we receive a gift, we can be disappointed with it because it's not what we anticipated. But when we receive the free gift of Jesus Christ, we receive more than we could ever expect. We receive PEACE with God because Jesus takes away our sins that separate us from God. In Jesus, we not only receive peace WITH God, but the peace OF God. This peace is so amazing it is beyond understanding and it guards our life.

Jesus' gift to us includes JOY! Joy is not just being happy and feeling good. But the joy we have in Jesus comes from his presence and power in us. He lives in us. He LOVES us forever. Nothing can separate us from God's LOVE for us through Jesus. Our future is secure with him. We never have to worry about if God loves us. We live in a broken world. There will always be trouble in this broken world. But there's coming a day when we will go to a perfect place, and we will live with our perfect God forever.

A gift is not really a gift until it's been given AND received. Even though Jesus has given the world his gift, some do not receive it. Some don't know about Jesus' gift. Others are too busy or preoccupied to care about receiving and opening the gift. Some just refuse it completely because they don't think they need it. Have you received the gift of Jesus? The gift of salvation that takes away your sins? We receive that GIFT by faith—trusting in Jesus to save us. You can do that right now.

When somebody has received that gift, they want to share it with others. There's an overwhelming gratitude and excitement, like the shepherds who came and found baby Jesus. They couldn't help but share the good news about Jesus coming to save us. When you receive the gift of Jesus, you want to share the hope, joy, peace and love that we have in him.

**Family Prayer:**

*Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for being a generous loving God. We pray that we would share what you have shared with us so that everyone that we know might have the hope, peace, joy and love that we have. In Jesus name, the most wonderful gift, we pray.*