

## **Introduction: Hard to Buy For**

What is it that the Lord wants for Christmas? Rarely do we think of putting the Lord on our Christmas shopping list. It seems a bit out of place even to ask the question, “What does the Lord want for Christmas?” I can’t imagine that there is anything that I have that the Lord would want. Doesn’t the Bible even say, “...nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.” (Acts 17:25 ESV)? What could I possibly give the Lord? It seems like nothing. He is truly the one who has everything.

I am notoriously difficult to shop for. I feel bad that when my wife or other family members ask what I want for Christmas I rarely have a reasonable response. I am sure that you have such people in your family as well. The father who wants nothing. The aunt who is never satisfied. The friend who has everything already. We search and we search. We roam around Wal-Mart, we troll through Amazon looking for something that will do. Some mass-produced item that will let them know how particularly special they are to you.

However, the Lord does not desire an obligatory gift from you for Christmas. He did not come to receive anything that you could pick up at Target. And yet he does long to receive something for Christmas.

As we read Psalm 96 listen and see if you can discern what the Lord wants when he comes for Christmas

[Read Psalm 96]

[Prayer]

What does the Lord want for Christmas? This Christmas He wants to be praised. This is what we see in our Psalm is that the Lord desire in coming is universal worship.

### **Point One: The Lord’s Advent Longing is Your Praise**

The first thing that we see is that the Lord desires *your* worship this Christmas. Look at verses 1-2 again,

*“Oh, sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth! Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.” (Psalm 96:1–2 ESV)*

This is the Lord’s desire for Christmas, that you would sing praises to his name. That you would bless him for the salvation that he has won for you in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the reason that he comes. This is the reason that he was born, to be worshipped as God and praised as Savior.

In Luke chapter 2 we read of the Shepherds who encounter a host of Angels on the night of Christ’s birth. And what happens? First, we read,

*“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”” (Luke 2:13–14 ESV)*

And then of the Shepherds following their encounter with the Christ child,

*“And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.” (Luke 2:20 ESV)*

The one thing that we are called upon to give the Lord at his coming is our worship. As the angels worshipped him, as the shepherds worshipped him, so too must we also worship him.

And so, I commend you for gathering this evening to offer to the Lord what he desires. To sing of grace and wonder. To present an offering to the Lord. To pray to his name. To declare his salvation. To receive the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. For these are all aspects of our worship to God.

Every so often Christmas will fall on a Sunday and when that happens inevitably people will ask, “Should he still have a worship service?” I even know of some churches that have canceled services so that people can stay home with family. But the whole discussion betrays our lack of understanding of why the Lord has come. He has come that you might worship him at his coming. So, Christmas 2022, the next time Christmas is on a Sunday, I expect every one of you to be in Church, giving the Lord the one thing, he desires, even as you are right now worshipping him.

So, offer to the Lord your heartfelt worship this evening. And even as you gather with family and friends tomorrow take time during the day to offer your praise the Lord who has come. To pray, to read his word, to sing the hymns of this season. For he was born to save the world from her sin. Praise him for he was born for the purpose of the cross.

### **Point Two: The Lord’s Advent Longing is the Nations’ Praise**

Yet the Lord desires more than just *your* praise. The Psalm tells us that his longing for praise extends to all people. Look at verses 7-10

*“Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength! Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts! Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth! Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns!” (Psalm 96:7–10 ESV)*

What does the Lord desire at his coming? What is his advent longing? It is that all people of the earth would praise his name. That all tongues, tribes, and nations would join their hearts in worshipping the splendor of his holiness. And therefore, we sing, “Joyful, all ye nations, rise! Join the triumph of the skies!”

In Matthew's Gospel we have recorded for us a sign that the birth of Christ would bring about such universal worship for we read of the wisemen who came searching for the messiah born in Bethlehem. And after traveling from the ends of the earth to see him we read,

*“And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him.” (Matthew 2:11 ESV)*

The Lord comes to be worshipped by all. Martin Luther once commented on Psalm 96 that, “This is a prophecy concerning the kingdom of Christ and the spreading of the gospel over the whole world.” This is what the Lord desires, that the gospel would reach all peoples. For all people need to hear of the salvation won in Christ. All people who celebrate his birth at Christmas must also know of his death on the cross, of the blood shed for the forgiveness of sins, and of the new and eternal life given to all who come to him in faith.

So we must spread the glory of his name. We must share the gospel with friends and family. And we must pray and financially support our missionaries. To the end that all nations would worship Christ.

This is what the Lord desires for Christmas, the knowledge of the glory of the Lord to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

### **Point Three: The Lord's Advent Longing is the Universal Praise**

Dutch theologian, Abraham Kuyper, once famously wrote, “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!” And here we see that what the Lord desires at his coming is not just your praise, not just the praise of the nations, but the Lord desires universal praise. He looks out over the whole realm of existence and he says, “Mine!”

Look at verses 11-13,

*“Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for he comes,” (Psalm 96:11–13 ESV)*

Why has the Lord come? He has come that everyone and everything in all of creation would rightly glorify him. God not only wants but he requires universal praise be given to His Son Jesus Christ.

Now what a second. Isn't the Lord getting a bit greedy? We began having a hard time thinking about what to get the Lord and now we have come to the conclusion that he wants everything? That he wants the heavens and the earth, that he wants the fields and flood, rocks, hills, and plains?

Yes, he wants everything to praise his name. He wants all of creation to join together in a unified and universal chorus of praise. Yet he is not greedy to require such an offering. He is worthy of such an offering.

And so this Christmas offer to the Lord all things. For he desires not just an hour of worship or a day, but a life of worship. A life that in everything from morning coffee to evening rest brings glory to God. Even as 1 Corinthians 10 says,

*“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”(1 Corinthians 10:31 ESV)*

What are we to offer the Lord this Christmas? We are to give him everything!

### **Conclusion**

Advent means coming. And Christmas is the height of our advent celebration in the Church. It is the time that we remember that God became man and was born among us. And at his coming the shepherds and wiseman gathered to worship him. Just as we are called to worship him.

And his word tells us that he will come again in glory. Why? We read in 2 Thessalonians that

*“he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed,” (2 Thessalonians 1:10 ESV)*

This is the offering, the present that the Lord desires this advent that all people might glorify him and marvel at his beauty.

Let earth receive her king  
Let angels' voices ring  
Let men their songs employ  
And repeat the sounding joy!