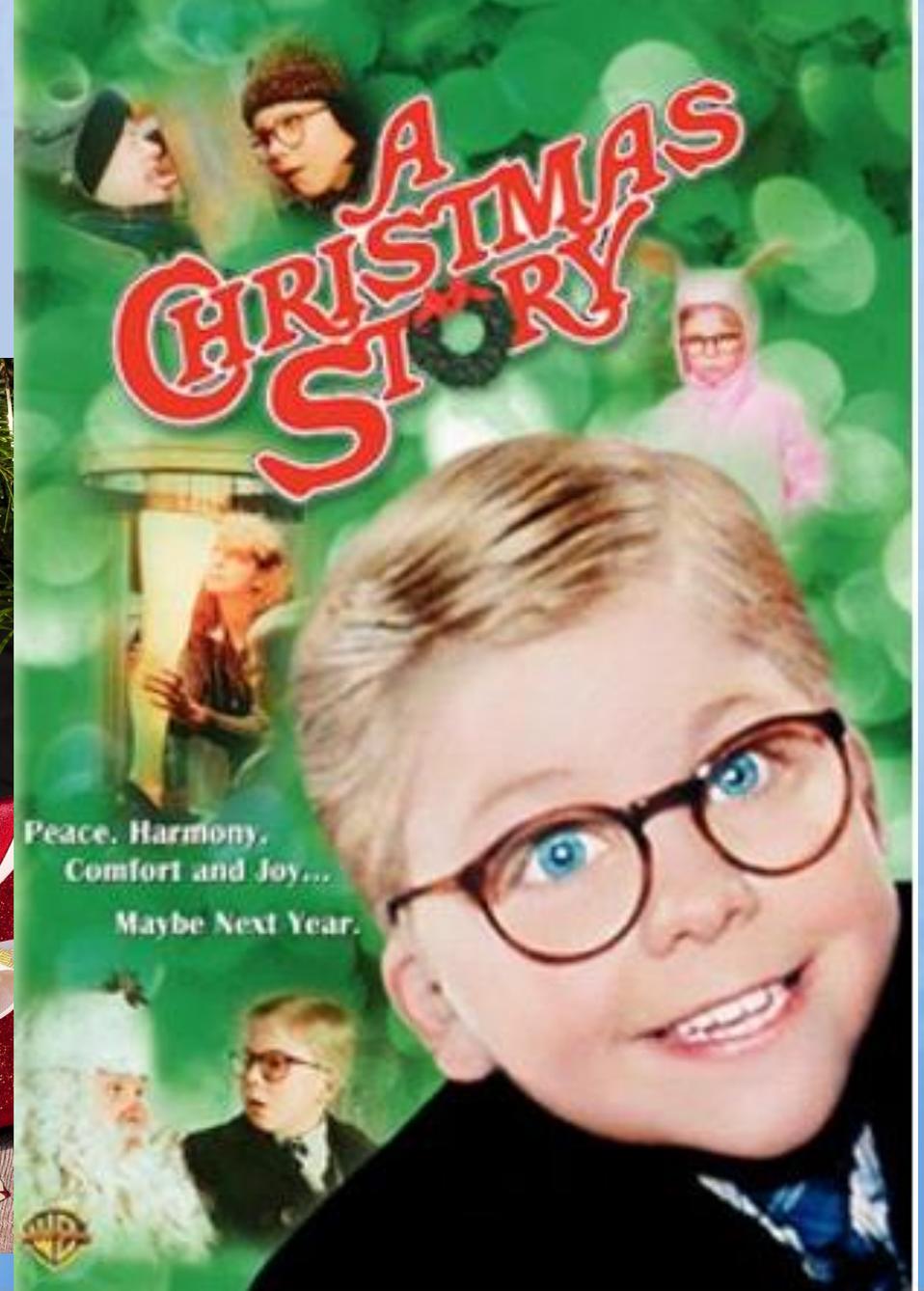


What Did You Get For Christmas?

Wonderful Mercy Church
December 29th, 2019

Did You Get Everything
You Wanted?



What Does the Gift of Love Look Like?

- › **It looks like God incarnate. A newborn baby, lying in a manger**
 - **“She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.”**
Luke 2:7 (NLT)
- › **It looks like eternal life:**
 - **“God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.”** 1 John 4:9 (NLT)

What Does the Gift of Love Look Like?

› It looks like the cross.

– “[Jesus] entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.” Hebrews 9:12 (ESV)

– “We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us.” 1 John 3:16 (NLT)

What Does the Gift of Love Look Like?

- › **It looks like a full life, a real life.**
 - **“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”**
John 10:10(b) (ESV)

What Does the Gift of Love Look Like?

› **It looks like the love of the father of the prodigal son.**

– **“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.” Luke 15(b):20 (ESV)**

What Does the Gift of Love Look Like?

- › **It looks like being accepted and cared for not because of what you have done, what you are doing, or what you will do, but because of who you are: a son or a daughter of the Father.**
 - **“Look with wonder at the depth of the Father’s marvelous love that he has lavished on us! He has called us and made us his very own beloved children.” 1 John 3:1(a) (Passion)**

What Are You Doing With Your Gift

- › **God incarnate**
- › **The cross**
- › **Abundant, real life**
- › **A father's love**
- › **Being accepted for who you are: a son or a daughter**

Me, 1976



Me, 1976



Earl Scruggs



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Christmas Morning, 1976



What Are You Doing with the Gift of Love?

- › **The Gift of Love is ours, whether we put it to good use or not.**
- › **We don't have to earn our status as son and daughters. We cannot earn our salvation.**
- › **Our Gift of Love is something we are meant to use.**
 - **It is given so that we can be transformed by it**
 - **It is a gift we are meant to pass on to others**

What Are You Doing with the Gift of Love?

- › **When we make use of God's Gift of Love, we can become sons and daughters who love others with the same outrageous, unbridled love the Father has for us.**

“Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents. Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that.” Ephesians 5:1-2 (MSG)

When We Are Transformed by Love

- › **We are patient and kind**
- › **We are not jealous or boastful or proud or rude**
- › **We do not demand our own way**
- › **We are not irritable**
- › **We keep no record of being wronged**
- › **We do not rejoice about injustice**
- › **We rejoice when the truth wins out**
- › **We never give up, never lose faith, and are always hopeful**
- › **We endure through every circumstance**

Learning to Love

- › **There is nothing wrong with my banjo**
- › **There is nothing wrong with God's Gift of Love**
- › **As hard as we try, we cannot make ourselves into the conduits of love we are meant to be.**
- › **When we practice spiritual disciplines, with the intent of allowing God to transform us into conduits of his extravagant, unbridled love, he will do just that: he will transform us.**

Learning to Love

“We do indeed engage in practices— disciplines, if you will— but remember these practices earn us nothing in the economy of God. Nothing. Their only purpose is to place us before God. That is all. ... God then steps into our actions and, over time and experience, produces in us the formation of heart and mind and soul for which we long.”

[Foster, Richard J.. Celebration of Discipline, Special Anniversary Edition (p. xvii). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

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