



## The Cost of Love

By: Mark Kruger

For most of us, gift-giving is a part of Christmas. God's greatest gift came to us in the form of a child, and so we remember that gift by giving things to each other. In this meditation let me ask, "What will you do with the gift of the Christ child?"

***"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16***

This most famous verse in the bible sums up the Christmas story. Out of his deep love, God gave us this gift - His son - with the promise that whoever puts faith in Him will have abundant life here and eternal life in the world to come. The birth of Jesus proves that *you are beloved of God*. In a way, you are at the center of the story. You are the target of this unfathomable gift. For some, this is fantastic news, and they welcome it with open arms. But not everyone is great at receiving gifts.

Ask yourself this question, are you more comfortable loving or *being loved*? Loving seems like a choice within your control, but you cannot dictate who will love *you*. The truth is, for some of us it is difficult to be beloved. Perhaps you feel unworthy and too lowly to be loved. But the point of God's gift is that it was freely given to those who were unworthy. It is in accepting that gift that we *become* righteous. Refusing the gift out of a sense that you "don't deserve it" diminishes His love, and puts the cart before the horse. God's love is not a prize to be won. It is a gift freely given. ***You absolutely do NOT deserve to be loved by God - and He does it anyway!***

Or perhaps you are in another camp. Maybe you don't like the cost of being beloved. 1 John 4:19 tells us our love is in response to His loving us first! God loves us so deeply that it demands a response from us. His gift and His sacrifice mean that the response can only be surrender. Being beloved means surrendering to the love of another - and trusting that love. Because we often want control, it is uncomfortable that our relationship with Jesus remains on an unequal footing. He is God and we are not. ***Accepting His love means surrendering to love and Lordship as well.***

Even if you have served God for years, you can still find yourself fighting these 2 battles - careening from trying to earn His love to trying to avoid His Lordship. The good news is that He is faithful and patient with us as we learn and grow in Him. Christmas is a great time to remind ourselves of His gift and its consequences - to accept His love and surrender to His will.

*Jesus, thank you for your love! You did not just tell us you loved us. You came down, shared our humanity, and walked with us. Thank you for that gift. Help us to accept your grace without*

*reservations. We have no gift to bring in return except to offer ourselves in surrender. Amen.*