



## Bo's Blog

Last month I wrote about how Thanksgiving helps us to recognize our blessings and to give thanks for them. December, and the seasons of Advent and Christmas, move us on to the next step by reminding us to share the blessings we have with others.

In Advent we prepare and wait. Prepare for what? Wait for what? For God's gift on Christmas Day. For the gift of Emmanuel (meaning "God with us"). For the gift of Jesus (meaning "he will save his people"). We received, so many years ago, and still have today, God's presence among us. God was, and still is, with us, around us. We received God's salvation in that gift of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, a gift we continue to share with the world. We received these wonderful gifts, and are called to follow Jesus' example and give to others.

And we do give. We give gifts to family and friends. Its fun (and harrowing at times) to go shopping for gifts in the weeks before Christmas. The best gifts, that I've received or given, are often those that reflect something of the relationship between me and the other person, something of our past history, or present interest. I think many people do try to give gifts that have meaning, rather than those that are just expensive or fancy. We want to give something that expresses the love or friendship we feel for them.

We are also called to give to those we don't know. God's gift of grace is for the whole world. Jesus' sacrifice was for all people. Many of us give donations to charities throughout the year. We also give through our church, through the apportionments we pay to our conference and through the support we give to groups like Jubilee Ministries. Jubilee, for example, through its food bank, provides families in need with food, and with a limited amount of rent or utilities assistance. Through the Red Door thrift store, they provide families with clothing and things for the home at low prices. And through the vouchers they provide, with the help of our police department, they give assistance to people travelling through our area for gas, food, or an overnight stay. By our contributions, we give gifts to many people we will never know. But they will know that we care, as God does, for all people.

This month we celebrate being blessed by God's gift of love. The way we celebrate this gift is by giving gifts of love to others. And isn't there a song about that—a song that started with the angels singing "Gloria in excelsis Deo?" And it is echoed today with the words "Love is something, if you give it away, you end up having more."

Shalom,  
Bo