

LOVE

So many presents! So many gifts shopped for, bought, ordered and delivered, or misdelivered. They're bagged or boxed or wrapped and set aside to wait for the giving. I even knitted a sweater for a gift and put it away to wait for Christmas, then forgot where I put it. Still haven't found it!

Lots of gifts are given this season. And somehow all are intended to convey, what? Love, friendship, obligation, reciprocation? Gifts are often intended to send a message. And they're usually given with the hope that the receiver will get the message. We spend a lot of money trying to send a message.

The gifts of Advent—Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, cannot be shopped for. They cannot be found by looking for them in the world. It's through Jesus that they're given by God and received by us. Those who don't know God may scan the world trying to find these graces, but only when their eyes fall on Jesus will they see the gifts they're searching for.

The Magi brought gifts to the baby Jesus after his birth, perhaps not fully realizing that Jesus himself was the gift: Love, in the flesh—living and teaching and doing and dying. His love is unlike anything humans can imagine; that's why it took a life, actually lived, to show us. God's gift is freely given. And if this gift of Love is truly received and unwrapped, we will never be the same. And if we receive it, we become lovers and givers in the pattern of God.

It looks like this:

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Now go out there and gift the world.