

The First Christmas Gift Christmas Eve A: 5 PM (2007)

Let me tell you about the first Christmas gift brought long, long ago. It is the story of a young man and his young bride who came from afar to bring the first Christmas gift to their people.

What was this first gift? It was a baby whose birthday we would celebrate from the day he was born to this very day. The strange thing is there were no baby gifts a baby would know. No rattles, no blankets, no play toys. How could he play with gold, incense and medicine? What strange gifts these were. But this was meant to be.

Mary his mother delivered this gift child of hers in a stinky stable. It was a strange place indeed for a gift let alone a baby to be delivered. Who would know he was born? A sheep, a goat? How would other children get to his party? There would be a party, yes, indeed there would come a time when many would visit that stable again and again to celebrate his birthday. And today we and the animals visit the stable again and wish happy birthday to the gift child, Jesus.

What did this gift to the world look like? Was he wrapped like a present with paper and bow? Baby dolls come in boxes but not this baby. After Mary his mother delivered her gift child she wrapped her gift, this baby of hers in the strangest way – it's the way they did it in those days when there was no paper, no diapers, no way to cover the gift of the baby. Mary delivered her gift, she wrapped her gift in strips of cloth, then she placed her gift, her baby, in a crib made for hay.

What a strange place to put a gift – no tree, no stand, under no lights except what shone from the night sky. So tell me what do you think? Was this Christmas a little different? Would you say this first Christmas gift, this baby was a true gift? What was his name?

The first Christmas gift did not stay a secret for long. Who found out? The angels? The shepherds? The sheep? What did they do when they heard the baby was born? The angels were so glad they could tell the shepherds about the first Christmas gift they sang a song! What song do you think they sang? The angels sang the first Christmas concert.

Then what did the shepherds say? They tried to find him you think? What road did they take? How did they get there with all those sheep and wooly lambs? How?

They finally found Mary and Joseph and then the baby, the gift child born to Mary and given by God. And when they saw the baby they found him wrapped like a Christmas present in strips of cloth. And he was lying down in a manger, a crib used to feed animals.

Were the animals there that first Christmas? Yes. And they are here with us again.

So let me ask, who came to that first Christmas to celebrate Jesus birthday? (His parents, the shepherds, the angels, the animals). But where were the boys and girls?

Then the shepherds told their story – about the angels visiting them and singing to them and telling them aboutJESUS!

Were they happy now? Yes. Why were they so happy? They found the First Christmas Gift and his name is JESUS!

The baby, the wrapping and the crib – that is the first gift of Christmas! Why? Because God gave his Son Jesus to Mary and Joseph, he gave Jesus as a gift to the Shepherds and he gave Jesus as a gift to whom else?? (The world, you and me)

And why did God give us the baby Jesus, His Son as our first Christmas gift? (To love him! Just to love him!)

Let's sing: Away in a Manger! Hymn #101.