

Whose birthday is it?

My birthday is December 2nd, not December 25th. My family doesn't give each other presents on my birthday. I don't give other people presents on my birthday. The presents are for me – the birthday boy – and I like it that way.

So how do you think Jesus feels when we give each other presents on HIS birthday? I like to think that He is sitting up there with a wry smile and a little chuckle, thinking to himself, "They just don't get it." And it isn't a new story.

I know, I know, it is our culture that says you must give presents to others. Hey, I'm just as guilty. I bought presents for cousins, aunts, uncles, parents, etc. I won't be sending back presents that friends and family give to me. There is nothing wrong with giving and in the same way, there is nothing wrong with receiving presents. However, I think we need to check our motivations and especially search our hearts to see what we are focusing on this Christmas season. Are we acting like Pharisees?

Read [Mark 7:1-13](#)

Now when the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands. (For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders. And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves. And there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles (and beds).) So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, "Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?" He responded, "Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts.' You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition." He went on to say, "How well you have set aside the commandment of God in order to uphold your tradition! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'Whoever curses father or mother shall die.' Yet you say, 'If a person says to father or mother, 'Any support you might have had from me is qorban'' (meaning, dedicated to God), you allow him to do nothing more for his father or mother. You nullify the word of God in favor of your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many such things."

This isn't to suggest that we should throw out the notion of giving at Christmas. It is just a reminder that we are celebrating someone on December 25th, and he doesn't dress in a white-trimmed red wool costume. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger (Luke 2:7).

So here is my suggestion. Give Jesus a gift this Christmas. I am not going to tell you what to give Him, just as I won't tell you what to give your parents or your siblings. Instead, I will share with you what my family does.

On our Christmas tree, a stocking hangs for Jesus. On Christmas morning, the first thing we do is open the Jesus stocking. Inside is a note, sharing what we will do as a family for Jesus this coming year. It can be adding family prayer time to a routine, community service as a family or any number of gifts. Our only requirement is that it is done together, as a family, in honor of the birthday boy.

What can you give Jesus this Christmas?