

This **might** sound familiar. Husband and wife decided to do their Christmas shopping at a large, multi-storied, well-known department store.

They agreed, when the husband finished his shopping, he would go to the department store to meet her, for a spot of lunch.

He finished his shopping, entered the large store and panicked! It was **H-U-G-E**. Where might he find his wife? He could see a central bank of escalators climbing up three floors; might there be more? They should have agreed to meet at a specific place for their rendezvous. Too late now!

A quick gallop around the entire first floor, then down the escalator to the bargain basement. No sign of her. Back onto the moving stairs, glancing frantically in all directions for a glimpse of her that would put an end to his growing fear of never seeing her again.

Then, from the middle of the escalator going up, he sighted her! Unable to push his way to the head of the crowded escalator, and frantic not to lose her, as soon he reached the top, he swung around and started the decent, steadying himself on the moving stairs with the weight and bulk of his own shopping in both hands. He looked around and his wife had vanished. Once down, a quick sprint in the direction of the last sighting, and she was not to be found. Sweating and out of breath as he made his way around the floor, FINALLY, on the other side from where she was sighted, there she was, unperturbed and disinterested in her husband's trauma. She said she would be in the store, and that was it. "But dear, if we had decided on a time and place ..."

Then dawned on him, ***If only he had phoned and cancelled their credit and debit cards, she would have come looking for him!***

Well! It's over! Its done! Christmas is here! You cannot buy presents for anyone, for this year, that is!

The morning after, the night before Jesus' birth, was as different as chalk and cheese. His birth changed the lives of everyone who was drawn into it.

It is ironic, perhaps even paradoxical, lives were being transformed 30 some years ***before*** Jesus went about changing the lives of people through his teaching, preaching and healing.

The priest **Zechariah's** life was transformed when God answered their prayer to have a child. *This is the Lord's doing, prayed Elisabeth. He answers prayer, according to His purpose. How affectionate is God's love! He has taken away my disgrace of not having children.*¹

Mary's life was transformed when an angel was dispatched from heaven to inform this young Jewish maiden, living a normal life, in a small village in Galilee that she would be pregnant with, not an ordinary child, but the Son of god Himself! Talk about show-stoppers and life-changing plans.

Joseph's life was transformed when he heard, the young lady who had was pregnant

The lives of **the families** of Mary and Joseph would have been transformed.

And so were the lives of the Angel **Gabriel**, the

¹ Luke 1:25

angelic choir, the **shepherds**, the **citizens of Jerusalem**, the **religious leaders** and **King Herod** when a group of foreign visitors showed up asking, "*Where is He who has been born king of the Jews?*", which set the cat among the pigeons; Jerusalem's gossip mill would have been *smokin'*

So this Christmas, after your sumptuous, six-course Christmas dinner, after the dishes are done and the dessert plates licked-clean, and the last of the wrapping paper and ribbons are gathered, and you settle down with a cup of tea or coffee, or even port or brandy, consider this:

God gives each of us a precious gift, given out of all the love He can muster, a gift which is far more valuable than anything we have ever received. Those who unwrap God's gift, to them is revealed the riches of the Kingdom of Heaven, for them to have and enjoy.

Those who never bother to unwrap God's most precious gift.... they don't know what they have missed out.

Let me close with this. Imagine Christmas morning and the children in the house run to the Christmas tree to open their presents. One young child runs to the tree, reads the names gathers her presents and opens them up one by one. Amidst the chatter, one hears the child's delight when discovering some presents and disappointment at others, and it shows!

Now consider another little child, also running to the tree, heading for the **BIGGEST** box which has the child's name on it. The child reads the name of the giver, and before opening it, runs to giver to plant a **BIG, WET** kiss on their cheek, and thank them for it, **BEFORE** running back to open the present with their name on it - which child showed genuine gratitude?

Not under the tree but in a cradle, is God's precious gift to us. Will we rush to open it and perhaps be disappointed it does not answer all our questions and problems?

OR, do we have an deep-rooted trust in the Giver, that the Giver would **never** give us something harmful and ruinous, and our trust in the Giver was so complete and absolute, that we would first desire to express our deep gratitude to the Giver of the gift, before opening it to discover its inherent value?

How well do you know this Gift-Giver? Do you trust Him enough to know, He would only ever give you a gift, that is most precious to Him?

If you trust the Giver of the Christmas gift, then go ahead and open His Gift - your life will be transformed and you will never, ever regret it!

AMEN.