

God's Good and Perfect Gift

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James 1:17

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (NIV).

Introduction:

- Even though it is hard to believe, we are just four years away to have lived through the first quarter of the twenty-first century.
- We are witnesses of great things: the advent of smartphones and advanced communications, autonomous vehicles, improved medical technologies, and more access to information.
- However, we are also witnesses of troublesome developments: cultural wars, social turmoil, the specter of hate rising again, and over a year of pestilence and death afforded by COVID-19.
- Much confusion and misinformation are being disseminated quickly, creating an atmosphere of mistrust, fear, and uncertainty.
- However, the Good News is that we can still turn to God for a steadfast answer.
- The Good News is that He still reaches down to give us guidance and understanding
- The Good News is that His Light still shines brightly in our midst.

I. Knowledge: God's Generous Act of Giving

- We are all familiar with Bible verses dealing with knowledge:
 - *“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”* (John 8:32).
 - *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction”* (Proverbs 1:7).
 - *“An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge”* (Proverbs 18:15).

- *“The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly”* (Proverbs 15:14).
 - *Speaking of Jesus: “In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* (Colossians 2:3).
 - *“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits...”* (James 3:17).
- There are more Bible verses dealing with knowledge, but these are enough to illustrate the importance and our need to seek after knowledge.
 - Why do we need to seek after knowledge? Because it is a gift from God.
 - James 1:17 plainly declares that *“Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights”* (NRSV).
 - This means that contrary to what some may think, the capacity for knowledge, the drive for knowing things, intellectual curiosity are gifts bestowed to us by our Creator.
 - Even more, our capacity for knowing (i.e., for critical thinking, for discovery, for making things) is further evidence of the *Imago Dei*, God’s image or God’s imprint, present, active, and working in us, and through us.
 - God is generous, and He has given us the tools that we need to discover medicine, devise medical procedures, and provide a measure of healing for our frail bodies.
 - Even today, as we consider the knowledge needed to develop a vaccine to stop the inexorable advance and the carnage wrought by COVID-19, we must recognize that this is part of God’s perfect gift for us.

II. Science: God’s Light Shinning

- The history of humanity describes times of great difficulties, of cultural and economic deterioration. We call those times the Dark Ages.
- But the good thing is that those dark times were followed a period known as The Enlightenment.
- These were times of discovery and growth in the areas of theology, art, and science.
- Now, to think that these times of great light just happened by human fiat would be disingenuous. These times were part of God’s gift to humanity.

- Why do I say that? Because the Word of God makes the connection between darkness being dispelled as God's light shines through.
- John 1:4-5 declares: "***In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it***" (NRSV).
- Today, we are living times reminiscent of Jesus' words on Mathew 24:5-ff: there are wars and rumors of wars, there is civil unrest, nations rising against nations, famines, pestilence, and death.
- Nevertheless, God's Light still shines brightly in our midst, as a beacon pointing us in the right direction.
- James 1:17 speaks about God as a generous God, a God that loves us so much that pours out these good gifts from above for our benefit.
- One of those gifts is science. Science gives us a window into how God's creation work.
- Science gives us the tools to fight against a pandemic that is decimating our people.
- Science is part of God's light shining brightly, showing us the way we should go.
- Therefore, we should understand the scientific development of a vaccine to fight against the pandemic, not as a nefarious plot, but as God's light shining over our lives.

III. Life: God's Perfect Gift from Above

- As Christians, we know that life is a gift from God. After all, we are people who believe God himself created us.
- We know Genesis 2:7 by heart: "***Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being***" (NRSV)
- We are fashioned by God's hand, and it is God's breath (i.e., His Eternal Spirit) breathed in us who makes us "***nephesh***" (נֶפֶשׁ); living, breathing, thinking, moving, and acting beings.
- Thus, life is a gift that must be cherished because it is intimately and innately related to God's indwelling presence and power coursing through each one of us.

- Deep down in our hearts, we know this. That is why we are unabashedly pro-life; because we understand life as a gift from God and as undeniable evidence of the *Imago Dei* operating in us.
- So, as we read John 1:4-5, “*In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it*” (NRSV).
- Moreover, as we meditate on today’s New Testament verse, “*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows*” (James 1:17, NIV).
- We are reminded that this life we live is a gift from God, and as such, it must be cherished, and valued, and appreciated.
- Even more, we are stewards of this gift of life.
- God calls us to protect “*the least of these*” (Matthew 25:40, NIV) by actively caring for their needs, by doing that which is right and honoring to God.

Conclusion:

- Today, I submit that cherishing God’s gift of life is about protecting ourselves, to protect the least of these, our brothers and sisters.
- Today, I submit that cherishing God’s gift of life is standing in the light that Christ is shining for us.
- Today, I submit that cherishing God’s gift of life is to trust the knowledge God has given us.
- Today, I submit that cherishing God’s gift of life is to love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-40).