

## What's Under The Tree? Matthew 2:9-11

### I. Gift Giving

- A. This time of year we all look to see what is under the tree
- B. We get excited about gifts, both giving and receiving
- C. A woman in the UK has over 300 gifts under (around, behind, all over) her tree



- D. Jesus' birth was a fabulous gift from God; the gift that keeps on giving
- E. I'm convinced that it is the other end of Jesus' life that bring us gifts
- F. The Tree
  - 1. There is a story about three trees

2. Once upon a mountain top, three little trees stood and dreamed of what they wanted to become when they grew up. The first little tree looked up at the stars and said: " I want to hold treasure. I want to be covered with gold and filled with precious stones. I'll be the most beautiful treasure chest in the world!" The second little tree looked out at the small stream trickling by on it's way to the ocean. " I want to be traveling mighty waters and carrying powerful kings. I'll be the strongest ship in the world! The third little tree looked down into the valley below where busy men and women worked in a busy town. I don't want to leave the mountain top at all. I want to grow so tall that when people stop to look at me they'll raise their eyes to heaven and think of God. I will be the tallest tree in the world.
3. Years, passed. The rain came, the sun shone and the little trees grew tall. One day three wood cutters climbed the mountain. The first wood cutter looked at the first tree and said, "This tree is beautiful. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his shining ax, the first tree fell. "Now I shall make a beautiful chest, I shall hold wonderful treasure!" the first tree said.
4. The second wood cutter looked at the second tree and said, "This tree is strong. It's perfect for me." With a swoop of his shining ax, the second tree fell. "Now I shall sail mighty waters!" thought the second tree. " I shall be a strong ship for mighty kings!"
5. The third tree felt her heart sink when the last wood cutter looked her way. She stood straight and tall and pointed bravely to heaven. But the wood cutter never even looked up. "Any kind of tree will do for me." He muttered. With a swoop of his shining ax, the third tree fell.
6. The first tree rejoiced when the wood cutter brought her to a carpenter's shop. But the carpenter fashioned the tree into a feed box for animals. The once beautiful tree was not covered with gold, or treasure. She was coated with saw dust and filled with hay for hungry farm animals. The second tree smiled when the wood cutter took her to a shipyard, but no mighty sailing ship was made that day. Instead the once strong tree was hammered and awed into a simple fishing boat. She was too small and too weak to sail to an ocean, or even a river, instead she was taken to a little lake. The third tree was confused when the wood cutter cut her into strong beams and left her in a lumberyard. "What happened?" The once tall tree wondered. " All I ever wanted was to stay on the mountain top and point to God..."
7. Many days and nights passed. The three trees nearly forgot their dreams. But one night, golden starlight poured over the first tree as a young woman placed her newborn baby in the feed box. "I wish I could make a cradle for him." Her husband whispered. The mother squeezed his hand and smiled as the starlight shone on the smooth and sturdy wood. " This manger is beautiful." She said. And suddenly the first tree knew he was holding the greatest treasure in the world.
8. One evening a tired traveler and his friends crowded into the old fishing boat. The traveler fell asleep as the second tree quietly sailed out into the lake. Soon a thundering and a thrashing storm arose. The little tree shuddered. She new she did not have the strength to carry so many passengers safely through the wind and the rain. The tired man awoke. He stood up, stretched out his hand, and said, "Peace." The storm stopped as quickly as it had begun. And suddenly the second tree knew he was carrying the king of heaven and earth.
9. One Friday morning, the third tree was startled when her beams were yanked from the forgotten wood pile. She flinched as she was carried through an angry jeering crowd. She shuddered when soldiers nailed a man's hand to her. She felt ugly and

harsh and cruel. But on Sunday morning, when the sun rose and the earth trembled with joy beneath her, the third tree knew that God's love had changed everything. It had made the third tree strong. And every time people thought of the third tree, they would think of God. That was better than being the tallest tree in the world. *Angela Elwell Hunt*

10. As much as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the real gift He has given us is in the Cross
  - G. So, imagine your Christmas tree is a cross and let's look at some of the gifts He has given us
- II. Reconciliation
- A. Matthew 27:45–46; 45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
  - B. "Forsake" - to abandon, desert, to separate connection with someone
    1. Just as God did with Adam and Eve in the garden after they ate the fruit from the tree, God had to separate Himself from His son
    2. I don't think abandon or desert really work here, because after a few days in the grave Jesus was resurrected
    3. After 53 days appearing to and speaking with His apostles and disciples He ascended back to the Father
    4. So God did not abandon or desert His Son
    5. He separated the connection because His Son became sin
    6. 2 Corinthians 5:21; For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
  - C. Reconcile - the exchange of hostility for a friendly relationship
    1. God had reserved his wrath for us
    2. Wrath - strong indignation directed at wrongdoing
    3. Ephesians 2:1-16
    4. But now God's wrath has been exchanged for a friendly relationship
  - D. Every time you hear, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" we should remember Jesus' gift of reconciliation
  - E. Under the "tree" (the cross) you will find reconciliation
- III. Forgiveness
- A. Luke 23:33–34; 33 And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. 34 And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.
  - B. Forgive - to release from legal or moral obligation, pardon
  - C. Jesus statement (in context) is asking His Father to pardon their sin of His murder
  - D. And He continues, "for they know not what they do" and that is aimed squarely at Himself
    1. He had to be our sacrifice
    2. Everything He did in His ministry brought him to this point
    3. "They" did not know that His murder was the sacrifice that God needed to pardon us, to release us from legal or moral obligation of death
    4. Romans 6:20–23; 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get

leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

5. His blood washed and continues to wash away our sins, His sacrifice releases us from our obligation of spiritual death due to our sins
6. Hebrews 9:11–15; 11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. 15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

E. Under the “tree” (the cross) you will find forgiveness

#### IV. Redefining Gifts

- A. God exchanged hostility for a friendly relationship with you; do you have any hostility towards another that needs changing?
- B. God has forgiven you; does someone need your forgiveness?
- C. Let’s give gifts that matter eternally!
- D. So when we look under the tree, we see the risen Savior