

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 25, 2016

The Rev. Michael Gehrling '08, Pastor of Upper Room Church Community / Director of International Graduate and Faculty Ministry for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship

1 JOHN 4:7-16

7 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. 15 God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. 16 So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

DEVOTIONAL

It's Christmas, and I am exchanging gifts. Gifts express love. Receiving a gift can also change us. The gift may be as mundane as socks, changing the recipient's wardrobe ever so slightly, or as profound as an engagement ring, changing the course of the recipient's life forever.

In his letter, John tells of God's two most profound gifts—Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. These gifts show God's love. They have also changed every person who has ever received them. Just consider Mary, or the apostles, or any of the thousands who have opened these gifts.

It's Christmas day, and I'm also grieving. This is the first Christmas I'm celebrating without my mother, who died this year. In grieving, God has convicted me that God is not going to bring back the past, but God will give new gifts to me that are good. Put another way, God has something new in front of me, and it's going to be good.

This Christmas, be open to God's doing something new in your life. It may be unfamiliar, but it will certainly be good.

PRAYER

God, what new gift are you giving to me today? Jesus, to what, or to whom, are you calling me? Holy Spirit, what new thing do you desire to do in me? Even if it changes me forever, I'll open your gift, because You are good.

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Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
616 North Highland Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
Phone: 412-362-5610



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