



God's unspeakable gift : an address to children

<https://hdl.handle.net/1874/26348>

ger

God's Unspeakable Gift.

3

AN

Address to Children

BY THE LATE

REV. DR. KOHLBRÜGGE,

OF THE REFORMED CHURCH, ELBERFELD.

PREFACE.

AMONG the many faithful preachers who at various times have held aloft the torch of the pure Gospel in the valley of the Wupper (that focus of religious life in Germany), the late Rev. Dr. Kohlbrügge, Pastor of the Reformed Church at Elberfeld, was at the same time one of the most eminent and the most successful. Several of his sermons have already, at the desire of his friends in this country, been made accessible to English readers. Those who have admired the depth and fervour of these discourses, will readily believe that this earnest servant of Christ was a great favourite with the children. The following series of addresses to the young have not as yet found their way into print in their German home. They embody the substance of copious notes taken by one of the congregation, at the request of some friends in England; and it is hoped that in their present form they may make their way into the hearts of many children, both young and old, and that, by their freshness, simplicity and positive teaching, they may prove an instrument whereby one of the Lord's most faithful witnesses "being dead, yet speaketh."

God's Unspeakable Gift.

REPORT OF AN ADDRESS TO CHILDREN ON DECEMBER 2, 1869.

My dear children, Christmas will soon be here again. What does Christmas remind us of?

CH.—The birth of Jesus Christ.

How do you children feel when you are looking forward to some great feast or holiday?

CH.—We feel joyful and happy.

What part of you is happy, your understandings or your hearts?

CH.—Our hearts.

What is in your hearts, then, when you are looking forward to your birth-day, for instance?

CH.—Joy.

And what do children generally get on Christmas day?

CH.—They get presents.

Do you know about those presents beforehand?

CH.—Yes.

And what does the thought of them make you feel in your hearts?

CH.—Joy.

Do all Christian children get presents at Christmas?

CH.—No.

Well, I do not think there are many who do not receive any presents at all. For now-a-days, even the

poor children at Orphanages and other Homes have something given them at Christmas. But why are presents given to children on Christmas Day?

CH.—Because God at that time gave us a great gift in His only Son.

When Jesus Christ came into the world, what did He bring with Him?

CH.—Salvation for all men.

Did He bring us *everlasting* happiness only, or did He also bring *earthly* happiness?

CH.—He also brought earthly happiness for us.

Therefore, the presents are to remind the children that the Lord Jesus has received for them from His Father all sorts of bodily as well as spiritual gifts. Children have presents given them at Christmas in order to impress this thought upon their minds and hearts. But is your Christmas joy to consist only in the pleasure which you feel at the presents given you by your parents and others?

CH.—No, we should be still more pleased that on that day the Lord Jesus was born for us.

If one looks at the papers just now, one sees a great many advertisements from people who have all sorts of things to sell as Christmas gifts. Are those gifts temporal or eternal?

CH.—Temporal.

In what kind of gifts should you take the greatest pleasure?

CH.—The heavenly gifts.

What thought should these presents which your parents are so kind as to give you, put into your minds?

If our parents love us so dearly as to give us such beautiful presents, how great must God's love be.

And if God's love was so great as to make Him give us His own Son, how should He not with Him also freely—?

CH.—Give us all things.

We have many beautiful Christmas hymns, in which the men who made them express great joy at the birth of their Saviour. What gave them this joy? Did they look at the birth of Christ with the understanding or with the eye of faith?

CH.—With the eye of faith.

When they look at the wonderful salvation and glory that has come to us in and through the Child, they call upon all the faithful to go with them to Bethlehem, and to behold in that Divine Child God's unspeakable love. And you will understand how it is that we always sing joyful hymns at Christmas. Jesus has come to be the Bearer of the burden of our sin, our Light in darkness, our Comfort in sorrow, our only Stay in life and in death, and our Blessing to put away the curse. What becomes of my burden?

CH.—Jesus bears it.

John the Baptist called Him "the Lamb of God which beareth the sin of the world." What becomes of my darkness? What did Christ say on the cross?

CH.—My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?

When He said those words, *His* soul was in darkness in order that *I* might be turned from the darkness to the light. Again, Jesus is my comfort. What then becomes of my sorrow and my fears?

CH.—Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.

How did Christ feel in the garden of Gethsemane?

CH.—Sad and sorrowful.

How sorrowful ?

CH.—Sorrowful even unto death.

He was sorrowful even unto death, that He might be my comfort, even in my dying hour. What does the Holy Spirit say in Isaiah xl. i. ?

CH.—“ Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.”

Once more, Christ is my Blessing. Read me Galat. iii. 13.

CH.—“ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

He was made a curse for us, that we in our turn might receive—what ?

CH.—A blessing.

So the Apostle says in the next verse, “ That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Then again, Jesus is my only treasure. As there is no other real comfort, so there is no other real treasure. No other possession can comfort or enrich me. Jesus alone can do this for my soul. Let us hear what Asaph says in Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26.

CH.—“ Whom have I in heaven but Thee ? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth : but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”

If the Lord Jesus Christ is my only treasure, what must I lay at His feet ?

CH.—Myself.

What, then, should he who has received Jesus, give Him in return ?

CH.—Himself.

Because God has given him—what ?

CH.—Jesus Christ.

What is Jesus to every one who has received Him ?

CH.—The Bearer of his sin, his Light, his Comfort in life and in death, his Blessing, and his only Treasure.

What is one who has received Christ anxious to do ?

CH.—To show Him his gratitude.

But such an one has nothing to give except— ?

CH.—Himself.

And is that after all such a very great and beautiful gift ? What is every man in himself ?

CH.—A sinner.

What does he lack if he have not Christ ?

CH.—Light and comfort.

One who is in darkness and sorrow is wretched, and on his back are laid— ?

CH.—Burdens.

Well, if that be so, he is a poor, blind, miserable wretch ; and it is just because he has nothing in himself, and everything in Christ that he is anxious to give himself to Christ. Is Christ willing to take him ?

CH.—Yes.

What does the Child in the manger say ? Come unto ME—

CH.—“Come unto ME, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Does not the Child also say : “My Father is your Father, and my God is your God ?” And does not the Father say : “For my Son’s sake I will receive you

as my own children by adoption?" Is Christ ashamed of us? What are we told in Hebrews ii. 11?

CH.—For this cause He is not ashamed to call us brethren.

What did He take upon Himself?

CH.—Our flesh and blood.

Not the flesh of angels, but flesh and blood—?

CH.—Such as we have.

That the Lord Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary, means that the everlasting Son of God, whom we are now thinking of, as lying in the manger, took upon Himself—?

CH.—Our human nature.

Not, as has been said, something which merely seemed a human body, but real flesh and blood. His flesh and blood was taken from the body of Mary. He did not merely pretend to be one of us, but was a real man. He was made like unto His brethren in all things, yet without sin. And why did He not become like us in sinfulness?

CH.—Because in that case He could not have redeemed us, or taken away our sins. If He had had sins of His own to bear, He could not have borne ours. A man, then, who feels the burden of his sin, and knows that in himself he is accursed, and that his salvation lies in Christ alone, must also feel that he can show his gratitude to the Lord Jesus in no other way than by giving—?

CH.—Himself.

What should *you* give Jesus?

CH.—Ourselves.

There is not one of you who has been all that he should have been. You have been naughty, lazy, untruthful, and disrespectful. You have quarrelled with

your brothers, been unkind to your sisters, and disobedient to your parents. You know that God says: "Cursed is everyone who continueth not in everything that is written." The thought of this must make you feel that you have sinned, and deserve to be punished. But if you are really sorry for what you have done, you will kneel down at your bedside before you go to sleep, and beseech the Lord Jesus to forgive your sins, and not only to forgive your sins, but also to change your hearts. God wants your hearts to be His. My son, He says, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. So you must ask the Lord Jesus to take you as you are, and to make you all He wants you to be. That is the gift which he who receives Christ offers in return to Him, by whom the worlds were created. How is it that you cannot, properly speaking, give anything to the Lord Jesus?

CH.—Because everything is His already.

If you have any money in your pocket, from whom have you received it?

CH.—From my mother.

And if you give a present to your mother, it has been bought with money which she has given you. We have nothing that we have not received from Christ. We cannot make Him rich, but He can make us rich. He gives us back an hundredfold all that Adam had lost. What did Adam and Eve do, when God called to Adam, saying: "Adam where art thou?"

CH.—They hid themselves amongst the trees of the garden.

What is your name, my child?

CHILD.—Mary.

Well, Mary, have you ever, after doing something

wrong, felt inclined to run away and hide yourself, when your mother called out : " Mary, where are you ? "

CHILD—Yes.

When God asked Adam what he had done, did he make a frank confession, or did he excuse himself ?

CH.—He excused himself.

On whom did he put the fault ?

CH.—On his wife.

Was that kind ?

CH.—No.

Then God spoke to Eve ; did *she* admit that she was guilty ?

CH.—No.

On whom did *she* put the fault ?

CH.—On the serpent.

There is nothing to be done with a man, my dear children, so long as he will not admit his sin. He gets entangled in its meshes of falsehood, and it is impossible to do him any good. One gives up as hopeless the case of a man who *will* not see that he is to blame. When Adam began to make excuses, his case had become desperate. He was as foolish as the children who never will admit that they have been doing wrong. With most children, whatever is amiss, is always somebody else's fault, and never their own. It needs the teaching of the Holy Ghost to awaken a child from the slumbers of sin, and to open its eyes to its own wickedness. Men refuse to have anything more to do with a person who will not admit his guilt. But God's ways are not as our ways. God decided to open for Adam a way out of the misery which he had drawn down upon himself. And so He promised Adam something. What did He promise him ?

CH.—Christ.

To whom was God speaking when He gave the promise of Christ—to Adam and Eve, or to the serpent? What did He say?

CH.—He said to the serpent: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

In whose hearing were these words spoken?

CH.—In the hearing of Adam and Eve?

God’s words of rebuke to the Devil, then, were for Adam and Eve, the—?

CH.—First preaching of the Gospel.

What came into their hearts after they had heard the preaching?

CH.—Faith in what they had heard.

That it was true for whom?

CH.—For Adam and Eve.

How then does faith come into our hearts?

CH.—By preaching.

What does St. Paul say in Rom. x. 16, 17?

CH.—But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Therefore, it is necessary that those to whom the Gospel is spoken, should *hear* it. If you were to stop your ears while I stand in this pulpit, and preach to you, the sermon could not possibly produce—what?

CH.—Faith.

If this address is to do you any good, I have to speak it, and you have to—?

CH.—Hear it.

Now once more, who heard the promise in Paradise ?

CH.—Adam and Eve.

And who made them understand that the promise applied to *themselves personally* ?

CH.—The Holy Ghost.

And you may be sure that He also made them feel truly sorry for what they had done. What we call repentance is wrought by the law. But only the Holy Spirit can make us feel heartily sorry for our sins. It was the Holy Spirit who made David exclaim: "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and clear when Thou judgest." What must there be in the heart of any one who makes such a confession ?

CH.—Faith.

When Cain was born, Eve seems to have thought that he was the promised Saviour. In that belief she was, of course, greatly mistaken. But was her faith in Christ vain because she did not yet rightly know who He was ?

CH.—No.

God puts faith and hope into our hearts, and yet we may be mistaken about the fulfilment of our hope, until it pleases God to give us more light. Eve believed God when He told her that a Saviour would come, and therefore, her faith was a good faith, even though she did not at once understand who that Saviour was to be. When she found that she had been mistaken in Cain, she did not, therefore, give up her belief in the promised Christ. Now let me ask you, dear children, did Adam and Eve have a Christmas Day in Paradise ?

CH.—No.—Yes.

Did not they receive the same gift from God as we ?

CH.—Yes, because they received the promise of a Saviour.

We also read that after the promise had been given, God made coats of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. They had never worn any clothes before, and therefore did not know how to put them on themselves. What robe are you unable to make or put on for yourselves ?

CH.—The robe of righteousness.

A man does not dare to touch that robe. He says: I am too great a sinner, and altogether unworthy. But God, in His mercy, says again and again: "It is for you—for you I have made it." And then, God Himself must put it on for us. What are we told in Isa. lxi. 10 ?

CH.—"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robes of righteousness."

When it says "*He* hath clothed me with the garments of salvation," what follows ?

CH.—That *I* was not able to clothe *myself*.

Once more, do you think that Abraham had a Christmas Day ?

CH.—Yes.

Adam and Eve had a Christmas Day which they must have remembered all their lives. And so it was with Abraham, too. What is written in John viii. 56 ?

CH.—"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad."

What is "my day" ?

CH.—The birth-day of Christ, of which God spoke to Abraham.

Did Abraham see the real birth-day of Christ, the day on which our Saviour came in the flesh, or did he only behold it with the eye of faith?

CH.—He beheld it with the eye of faith.

Has any of us seen the birth-day of our Lord?

CH.—We see it by faith only.

Abraham saw the day of Christ, when Isaac was born, and again, when God told him that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. And now we come to David. Did he have a Christmas Day? What does God say to him in II. Sam. vii. 12 and 13?

CH.—“When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.”

Whom was God speaking of?

CH.—Christ.

When David heard God's promise, he was filled with great joy. That we may see from a passage in his prayer (v. 19), where he says that not only has God shown him great loving kindness hitherto, “but thou has spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come.” God's promise was given to David on a certain day, and that was his Christmas Day. David was a king. Can you tell me any one of the prophets who with the eye of faith saw the day of Christ's birth?

CH.—The prophet Micah had his Christmas on the day when he spoke the words: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth that is to be

ruler in Israel ; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”

To whom was he referring ?

CH.—To Christ.

Then that was Micah’s Christmas Day. Do you know of any other prophet to whom the birth-day of Christ was present by faith ?

CH.—Isaiah, who says : “ Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given : and the government shall be upon his shoulder ; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

And again, in vii. 14 : “ Behold a virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” The great and unspeakable gift of Jesus Christ, then, was given not only to us, but to believers of all ages, that out of His fulness all who have faith in Him might receive forgiveness of sins, and everlasting life.