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*"...a net...cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind."* Matthew 13:47

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**The Sense God Gave a Christmas Goose**—I'm sure you've heard expressions with the old goose at the center—your goose is cooked; what's good for the goose is good for the gander; a goose egg (lump, or zero); goose bumps; silly as a goose; wild goose chase; goose someone (tickle); and goose step. The one that always puzzled me is the one used to imply lack of intelligence—you *don't have the sense God gave a goose*. Since I've never figured out how much sense a goose has, nor how to accurately measure its IQ, I was forced into some research, and here's what I've found.

Geese fly in a "V" formation. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. As a result, the entire flock adds about 70% greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own. Wow! How many times in my life have I tried "winging it" on my own? And failed? How many times have I been too stubborn to admit I needed help from another human being? I've noticed that I can fly with at least 70% greater efficiency with just a kind word of praise or a pat on my back. Prayer can boost my flying range even further. Did you know that when one goose drops out, it begins to feel the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and quickly gets back into formation? It's sad that I sometimes don't have the good sense God gave a goose. I forget how much I need fellow Christians for support in this old world.

Then there's the head goose, that has to work harder and drops back to an easier position when it gets tired in order to let another goose take the lead. When every goose takes turns pulling its share of the load, one lone goose doesn't have to do all the work all the time, or bear the burden and responsibility all alone. There are times to lead, and there are times to follow. Followers can be more difficult to learn than leadership. How many times have I carried the weight of the world on my own two shoulders—proof positive I don't always have the good sense God gave a goose.

One more thing—when one goose gets sick or is wounded, two fall out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. Isn't that great? When we fail to care for the wounded and hurting, when we fail to bear one another's burdens, it's just another indication that we don't always have the good sense God gave a goose.

Let's use these thoughts to make this season of the year (like the goose) sensible, with God's help. Galatians 6:2, *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."* (From 2013, Fisher-Mund)

**Number 6**

**God Sends the Best**—(This took place many years ago before cell phones and when it was easier to open a locked car.) A woman was at work when she received a phone call that her daughter was very sick with a fever. She left her work and stopped by the pharmacy to get some medication for her daughter. When returning to her car, she found that she had locked her keys in the car. She was in a hurry to get home to her sick daughter, and didn't know what to do, so she went back to the pharmacy and called her home and told the babysitter what had happened and that she did not know what to do. The babysitter told her that her daughter was getting worse. She said, "You might find a coat hanger and use that to open the door." The woman looked around and found an old rusty coat hanger that had been thrown down in the ditch. Then she looked at the hanger and said, "I don't know how to use this." So she bowed her head and asked God to send her some help. Within five minutes an old rusty car pulled up with a dirty, greasy, bearded man who was wearing an old biker skull rag on his head. The woman thought, "This is what you sent to help me?" But she was desperate. As the man got out of his car, he asked her if he could help. She said, "Yes, my daughter is very sick. I stopped to get some medication and I locked my keys in my car. I must get home to her. Please, can you use this hanger to unlock my car?"

He said, "Sure." He walked over to the car, and in less than one minute the car was opened. She hugged the man and through her tears she said, "Thank you so much; you are a nice man." The man replied, "Lady, I'm not a nice man. I just got out of prison this week. I was in prison for car theft." The woman hugged the man again, and cried out loud, "Thank you God, for not only sending me help, but sending me a professional!" Romans 11:33, *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"*

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**GOOD AND PERFECT GIFTS**—James explained, *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"* (James 1:17).

Some are deceived into thinking that the temporary gratification of sin is a "good and perfect gift". Revenge can bring quick and cheap gratification. Crushing another's feelings by cruel words and gossip can bring a warped kind of pleasure. But these are not gifts from above. They are not "good and perfect gifts". They are tainted, tarnished, and temporary. Then there are those blessings that don't immediately appear to be blessings. James has already pointed out

how trials can bring blessings such as faith and perseverance and spiritual maturity (James 1:3-4).

--The gift of loneliness makes us seek the fellowship of God.

--The gift of failure makes us more understanding of those who fail.

--The gift of erring gives us the ability to forgive those who err against us.

--The gift of sorrow makes us better qualified to sympathize with those who grieve.

Not every gift looks like one. Don't be deceived. Trust the Father, who is not capricious, who does not lash out because He's "having a bad day". (He doesn't.) Even heartache may be a gift of love.

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**WHAT WILT THOU?**—We are all different. We have different gifts and abilities. We also have different levels of these gifts. God gave everybody something to work with. Jesus referred to some who brought forth thirty, some sixty, and others one hundred fold. A pastor once gave a message on stewardship. He pointed out seven things the Lord has given to all His children. **First**, our time. We can use our time to honor the Lord and make ourselves count or we can waste time, accomplishing nothing of eternal value. **Second**, our treasure. Most folks spend their time and energy getting all they can and "canning" all they get. It is a mistake to ignore the lesson of the rich man who planned to tear down his barns and build greater ones, only to hear Jesus say, "...*Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee...*" (Luke 12:20). **Third**, our talents. Our gifts, our abilities, and skills are from the Lord. James wrote that every good gift and perfect gift comes from God (James 1:17). **Fourth**, our temple—our body—which is God's dwelling place. We are to use it for His glory. **Fifth**, our trade or skills are to be for Him, for His glory. **Sixth**, our teaching. We are sermons and lessons. Paul explained that we are "...*known and read of all men...*" (2 Corinthians 3:2). **Finally**, our temperance. This speaks of our morals and lifestyle. Ethics and standards show who we really are.

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**PUTTING THE CHRIST IN**—The usual signs of approaching Christmas are with us again; streets jammed with frantic buyers, shopkeepers feverishly raking in a landslide of dollars, bootleggers working overtime on holiday hootch, a hundred or so Santa Clauses speaking from every broadcasting station while children wonder which is the real thing.

A few more days and we shall be in the midst of it. We shall be getting gloves that don't fit and books we don't read; husbands will open ties that nobody would wear, wives will receive exactly the kind of pearls they didn't want, Uncle Henry will get bedroom slippers when he never wore a pair in his life. Modern Christmas has about everything but Christ. We have commercialized Jesus out of His own birthday.

We have an orgy of buying and selling. We have a fever of giving presents. That would be well enough but so many of us give *things* instead of giving ourselves. Some husband reading this will have spent a month's salary on a gift for the wife, when what she wants most is himself, his heart. She is dying for devotion, not diamonds. And some wife will buy hubby a trunkful of junk for Christmas and nag him

into nervous prostration the rest of the year. Most of our giving is because we look for something in return because it is customary. We send Mrs. Van Snoodle something because we know she will remember us. We get Aunt Hephzibah some stationery, not because we love her, but because she is on the list and hasn't died yet.

How many of us will think of the Christ in Christmas? Oh, we shall go see the pageant at church or perhaps even take a perfunctory part, but were He to view it from the backseat, seeing our hearts as well as hearing our parts, would He be glorified?

Of course we donate to a Christmas dinner for the poor and let them shift the rest of the year as best they can. We grow generous and tip the beggar on the corner, send the sick man a book, help cheer the crowd in the jail. But we do not follow it up and it is the follow-up that counts.

A lot of modern "Christmas spirit" is pure hokum. It is simply a temporary outburst of shallow sentimentality with which we excuse our failure to really follow the Christ. We will not actually make Him our Lord and live His spirit every day—it is so much easier to celebrate once a year with a spectacular demonstration that hides the very Christ it claims to honor. If we once set out to daily do His will, every day might be Christmas and every wayside bush a Christmas tree.

To say anything contrary to this annual ballyhoo is to be at once labeled a Scrooge, but we want a *genuine* Christmas spirit and not a pagan, sentimental craze that has been commercialized out of all reverence and spirituality.

Amid this wild orgy of traffic and trade, drink and dance, extravagance and excess, we have lost the Christ. We have exchanged Him for Santa Claus, substituted holly trees for His cross, the giving of things for the giving of self. Nothing else do we need so much this day as to put the Christ back into Christmas. (December 22, 1929 Vance Havner)

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#### FISHY THINGS TO PONDER

--Why do "tug" boats push their barges?

--Why is it called "after dark" when it is really "after light"?

--Why doesn't glue stick to the inside of bottles/tubes?

--Why do we drive on a parkway and park on a driveway?

--Why do we say something is out of whack? What is a "whack"?

--Why would you say the fish was great because it didn't taste fishy? What was its taste?

--The greatest surprise on Christmas morning? Batteries not included.

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**FISHY QUESTION**—Last edition we had a math limerick--- the correct answer was 9. For this edition we have a riddle. What kind of lights did Noah use on the ark? Put on your thinking cap! Write us!

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#### MY END OF THE YEAR BLESSING TO YOU

May there always be water under your boat.

May she always be seaworthy, ever afloat.

May the bilge pump be certain to work night and day.

May the GPS always show the safe way.

May you find gentle harbor as every day ends;

May you lower your anchor amidst peace and good friends.

Remember—Jesus Christ is still the hope of the world!

(Written in 2011 by Fisher-Mund)