



Reflect: It's Christmas and I'm in a waking nightmare. Three presents to go, two kids in tow, and one hour left of shopping time. Then the bell will ring and the game will be over again for another year. In the meantime there are six hundred thousand people in the shop with me... give or take a few. How did I let myself get into this situation? Why am I such a shocking procrastinator?

I absolutely must find three presents. Not four, just three. I can't go to lunch tomorrow without them. The embarrassment, the shame. Unthinkable. Better to stay at home and hide in the shed all day. And yet I've absolutely no idea what my wife wants or needs.

I can't buy her clothes because I haven't a clue about fashion and she's so fussy. Jewellery's too risky. It's hopeless. The panic is rising.

And what about the nephew who grinds his teeth? And Aunt Gretchen with no teeth? Maybe I should get in the shed tonight before the kids start counting presents under the tree.

As I wander the store I hear the words of my favourite Christmas carol wafting through the mall:

Silent night, holy night;
shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing, 'Alleluia';
Christ the Saviour is born.
Christ the Saviour is born.

And I think, there's a Christmas gift you can't buy in the shops. Friendship with God. As I contemplate my scorched credit card and the bruising it's had since I've been in the mall, I smile at the irony of Christmas gifts.

The real meaning of Christmas is that God gave the world a very expensive gift, His one and only son to die on a cross to pay for human rebellion and you just can't buy this gift anywhere. It's already paid for, already given.

But then I stop smiling. Because, while every frantic shopper near me needs this gift, not everyone knows it. For many, what they buy or get will define their Christmas.

So I pray that somehow this Christmas, they'll all hear the words of the angel to the shepherds on the night Jesus was born:

Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

Prayer: Father in heaven, thank you for your love to us in sending Jesus, the greatest gift of all, saviour of the world and Christ the Lord.

Bible Verse: And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11)