

JUNIOR TOPICS

DECEMBER 21.—THE BEST GIFT.—
John 3: 16; Luke 2: 8-20.

First: Suggestions for the Junior who is to prepare this topic for the meeting.

In every gift there are three persons to give; (1) Some person to give; (2) Some person to receive; (3) Something to pass from the one to the other.

This is true no matter whether the gift is a book or a slate, a house and lot or an automobile, a five-cent toy or a hundred thousand-dollar farm. Somebody has something that somebody else has not, and when that something is passed from the one who has it to the one who did not have it before, it is a gift. Get this clear in your mind, and then study John 3: 16. Who is the person named next? "God." Who is the person named next? "Whoever." What is it that God gives? "Everlasting life."

Re-state it thus: God had what the whole world needed—everlasting life—and He provided that every one might have it as a gift from Him. This is the first simple statement in the text—*God gave everlasting life to the world.*

You will notice now that sometimes when one person gives a gift to another, a messenger takes it and tells all about it. So God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to bring His gift—everlasting life—to the world.

In other words, Jesus came to earth to bring God's gift—everlasting life—to the whole world, and whoever will take it from Jesus may have it for his own. That is the next statement you must make clear.

Consider now that every person making a gift has a motive. That is, he gives because of some kind of reason which prompts him from within.

You know how this is with girls and boys. One says, "I hate you," and gives the other one a kick. Another says, "I love you," and gives the other a kiss. Whether it be a kick or a kiss depends on the spirit of the giver. It may be hate or it may be love; but some kind of motive prompts the gift.

Do you see why God sent Jesus to bring everlasting life to anybody in the whole world who would receive it from Him? It was because He "loved." No other spirit moved our Heavenly Father to send His Son, and no other spirit moved our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come.

Study now what it is that makes one gift better than another for our topic, you know, is the *Best Gift*.

You will see that it is not so much the value of the gift itself that makes it good as the motive or spirit of the giver.

One person may give another a five-dollar present, hoping to get a ten-dollar one in return. Is that good? But a child or a poor person may give a five-cent present without even a passing thought to anything at all ever coming back by way of return. Is that good? You will see at once that the motive not money makes our gifts good or bad in reality. What then is the best gift? The one that costs the most money or the one that means the most love? You know.

Now you will see in what way God's gift of everlasting life to the whole world is the very Best Gift. It had the whole of love in it. There is its highest value.

The gift of itself was the greatest ever made; the cost of it was the highest ever paid; but the motive behind it was the holiest ever felt. God loved, and because He loved He gave. God loved perfectly, and therefore He gave His best. God

loved everybody, and so not one single soul in all the world need fear to take His gift. What a wonderful Christmas message.

Second: Suggestions for the Superintendent who is to review the topic in the meeting.

God gave because He loved. Love is the mightiest motive force in the universe. No one can love without giving. Write on your board and have your Juniors memorize it, "We can give without loving, but we cannot love without giving." Show how unworthy are all gifts prompted by a selfish motive.

"What will you give me if I do?" the boy asks. "Give me something and I will," the girl says. These are self-seeking spirits, and the end of such is poverty, not possessions. Show that love gives cheerfully, ungrudgingly, and without expectation of repayment. Apply the whole teaching to the Christmas season. God's love is the essence and end of Christmas. The gift was not the expression of His spirit. So should it be with us. God's motive in giving is the nation of ours. We cannot give what He gave; but we can give in the same way—the way of love.

Teach that, and you have gone to the very heart of a Happy Christmas.

Third: Extracts which may be read, or, better still, recited, by some of your advanced Juniors in the meeting:

THE CROWN OF ALL GIFTS.

O Thou bounteous Giver of all Good,
Thou art of all Thy gifts Thyself the crown!

Give what Thou canst, without Thee we are poor,
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away. —Couper.

SMALL GIFTS YET GREAT.

Every gift which is given, even though it be small, is in reality great, if it be given with affection.—Pindar.

SOME GOOD GIFTS.

The best thing to give to your enemy is forgiveness; to an opponent, tolerance; to a friend, your heart; to a child, your good example; to a father, deference; to your mother, conduct that will make her proud of you; to yourself, respect; to all men, charity.—Mrs. Balfour.

JOY AT CHRISTMAS.

This is the time when the grey old man Leaps back to the days of youth;
When brows and eyes wear no disguise,
But flush and gleam with truth;

Oh, then is the time when the soul exults,
And seems right heavenward turning;
When we love and bless the hands we press,

When the Christmas log is burning! —Cook.

THE BEST PRESENT.

The three sons of an Eastern lady were invited to furnish her with an expression of their love, before she went on a long journey. One brought a marble tablet with the inscription of her name; another presented her with a rich garland of fragrant flowers; the third entered her presence and thus accosted her: "Mother, I have neither marble tablet nor fragrant nosegay, but I have a heart; here your name is engraved, here your memory is precious, and this heart full of affection will follow you wherever you travel, and remain with you wherever you repose."—Arvine.

TWO KINDS OF LOVE.

There are two kinds of love—love which receives and love which gives. The former rejoices in the sentiment which it inspires, and the sacrifice which it obtains; the second delights in the sentiment which it experiences, and the sacrifice which it makes.—Monod.

DECEMBER 28.—THE ARAB. Matt. 22: 37-40.

It is said that Arabia lies at the crossroads of commerce of three continents. "It is the gateway into Africa, the bridge between Europe and Asia, and the political condition of Arabia deeply interests Great Britain, Germany, France and Asia." There are two splendid little books which we recommend to our Junior officers, "Fifty Years of Little Arabia," and "Children of Arabia."

Interesting chapters in the latter book may be found on a trip through this wonderful country. Suppose you join our party. We land first at Aden for coal, and begin there our journey into the interior. We see the "Baker's Rocks of Aden," the desert sands of Amran, and the gardens at Sheikh Othman, within a short distance of each other. A zarah is held every year at this latter place, which is really a pilgrimage to the tomb of some holy man on the day of his birth or death.

Swings, pep-shows, etc., are arranged for the boys and girls, while the older folk have other forms of amusement. Festivities and then prayer around and in the Mosque complete the day's performance. Did you ever see an Arab read? He begins at what we call the last page of the book, and reads from right to left. When he writes a letter he leaves out the vowels; for instance, "rmed" means December. While we find some fine horses, we journey most on camels. These pathetic animals kneel down for our luggage, which is strapped upon their backs, and when the camels think they are carrying enough they become restless and we let them ride. We disliked the motion of riding on their backs at first, but became accustomed to it. How delighted we were in crossing the desert to reach an oasis, where animals and travellers rested and quenched their thirst. In South Arabia one may travel many weeks before seeing a Bedouin's tent. The Bedouin women still weave goat's hair into water-tight coverings, as they did when Solomon wrote of the "Black tents of Kedar."

"No Arab would dream of looking for valuables in the middle room of a tent, and so we see that when Achan stole the shekels of silver, the wedge of gold, and the Babylonish garments, he hid them in the middle room of his tent."

Every kind of looking for them, especially as the usual mat of palm leaves would cover the spot, and make the tent look as if the ground had never been touched. The men occupy the middle portion of the tent, but keep their valuables in the women's compartments. While the Bedouins of the desert may not be all we would wish them to be, they are kind to strangers, and are brave and courageous. They call the folks who live in the towns "the people of the walls," and are scornful from these towns and cities, and on duty to learn to be brave, to grow strong and healthy in body. In the village homes we see the women grinding the corn, kneading it into dough, spreading it into thin cakes and baking them on a dung in the earth. Many interesting places we visit, such as the pottery, the carpenter's shop, and the schools. The children at school sit upon the floor, and recite their lessons in concert, keeping time with nodding heads. The boys are anxious to please God in their own way. They will