



Third Sunday of Advent, December 16, 2018

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

THOUGHT: Anyone who believes that men are the equal of women has never seen a man trying to wrap a Christmas present. —Anon.

Writing in *Today's Christian Woman*, Mayo Mathers tells the story of the “perfect” Christmas she arranged one year. It began in October when their well-drilling business hit a slump. To relieve the money crunch, she took a temporary job at a department store. Big mistake. It allowed her to have the first choice of all sale items as well as a generous employee discount.

“As a result,” she writes, “Christmas morning revealed a shocking amount of gifts beneath the tree.” She had no idea how carried away she’d become until she piled them all together. But she had a lot of fun watching her husband and sons open gift after gift! She was delighted with their excitement and pleasure.

Later, however, after all the presents had been opened, she noticed one of her sons slumped on the couch in dejection.

“What’s wrong, sweetie?” she asked. “Aren’t you happy with your gifts?”

“Yes,” he replied sadly, “but Mom, I got everything I wanted and now I don’t have anything to look forward to.”

His words stunned Mathers, slicing straight through to the devastating effects of commercialism. The excessive giving it promotes robs us of the true joys of Christmas. The brief pleasure found in ripping open packages is consumed as quickly as the wrapping paper is tossed in the waste can.

The perfect Christmas is never found in a pile of packages, but in a gathering of hearts.

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: O God, what brings me joy today has nothing to do with the material things with which I have been blessed. I have joy because I know I am loved. In Jesus’ name. Amen.