

December 2022

A very merry Christmastide to you... wherever and whenever this letter finds you!

I don't need to say much this month; the holidays for most people are typically full enough.

I *do* want to say, before anything else, that our entire team sends lots of love to and prayers for you and yours at this beautiful, difficult time of year! We love being your friends and comrades in this great mission to rescue and restore the human heart! Merry Christmas, everyone!

That's the heart of this letter. Now, if you'd like a few Christmas thoughts, read on...

I've been thinking a lot about treasures.

Obviously, because gifts have become such a central part of most Christmas observances. And there is biblical connection in the lavish gifts the Magi brought to Jesus. (What a beautiful way for the Father to prepare Joseph to fund their flight down to Egypt and sojourn there.) And above all, "Unto us a Son is given" (Isaiah 9:6). *The gift of Christmas.*

But maybe I've been thinking about treasures because I've been on Amazon ordering so many presents for people. (Maybe also because I love *getting* presents!)

Treasures. The heart loves them. We were created to treasure things.

If I were to offer a lifeline to you (and to myself) in this lovely Christmas season, I would simply say this: Treasure Jesus, in a fresh way, all over again. Devote this season to saying, *Jesus, you are my heart's greatest Treasure. I treasure you again, Lord. You are my greatest gift!*

There are so many reasons, but currently my concern has to do with comfort. These are trying times; they have been for quite awhile now. Each and every one of our souls is crying out for comfort, solace, something to help us feel better. Sometimes the soul cries out quietly, sometimes loudly. (Honestly, I was pretty sure it was a down jacket I found on sale on Cyber Monday. I felt it would make me happy. Which let me know my soul is still looking for comfort.)

The enemy knows the human soul is vulnerable right now; he's engineered nearly all our recent distress. He then steps in and offers all sorts of "comforters"—from vacation fantasies to a little too much to drink this month. It doesn't seem like a big deal, but where the soul looks for comfort ends up being where our hearts are either restored... or even further disappointments.

Therefore, the most beautiful and defiant act a soul can make in a world of a thousand comforts and a thousand disappointments is to actively treasure Jesus above all things. Because as you do, you are rescued from the World and the snares of the evil one. Your soul "comes home" to God and all the care he has for you. This is how the psalmist proclaims it...

*I still belong to you;  
you hold my right hand.  
You guide me with your counsel,  
leading me to a glorious destiny.  
Whom have I in heaven but you?  
I desire you more than anything on earth.  
My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak,  
but God remains the strength of my heart;  
he is mine forever.*

– Psalm 73:23-26 NLT

If you read the prior passages, he was really upset before this moment. Finally, he turns his heart back to the One he treasures above all things. He comes home. And he is rescued.

When we actively, decisively choose God as our Treasure, he becomes the strength of our hearts. It's not that we don't love or care about other things; it's that we choose and keep Jesus Christ as our truest and greatest treasure *above* all other things.

So here's a simple spiritual practice we could all agree to share this season: Every time you encounter the topic of gifts, presents, and treasures—whether in shopping or in decorations or you are once again online trying to find someone that special something; even on Christmas morning as friends and family open gifts—in these moments, quietly say in your heart, *Jesus, you are my Treasure! You are my heart's greatest Treasure, Lord, and I treasure you above all things.*

I think you'll be delighted with the results. You will have Jesus, and with him you can ride out all the highs and lows of the season and emerge in such a good place. Your heart will rest at home in Christ and be so well in him. I promise.

So Merry Christmas, friends!

With so much love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John' with a stylized flourish.

John (and Stasi, and our whole team!)