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**Capitol View  
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**Simple Gifts for This Christmas**

Christmas 2019. The time for gifting and receiving. It’s been a complicated year on a lot of fronts. Let’s look at making things simple as we approach this holiday.

“'Tis the gift to be simple  
'Tis the gift to be free  
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be  
And when we find ourselves in the place just right  
It will be in the valley of love and delight.”

I first paid attention to those lyrics when I bought a copy of Judy Collins’ 1970 album Whales & Nightingales which included the song “Simple Gifts.” In case you have forgotten, albums were made out of vinyl and spun at 33 1/3 rpm on a massive device we called a record player. And Judy Collins had those liquid blue eyes … but I digress. I was younger. No wife. No kids. Life was simple.

The song’s composer is believed to be Joseph Brackett (1797-1882) of Maine. He was a member of a mostly communal religious group known as the Shakers. The song was largely unknown outside Shaker communities until composer Aaron Copland used its melody for the score of dancer Martha Graham’s ballet, Appalachian Spring, first performed in 1944.

“When true simplicity is gained  
To bow and to bend, we will not be ashamed  
To turn, turn, will be our delight  
'Til by turning, turning, we come round right.”

So, what can we learn from this simplicity? Well, somewhere in the commercial hustle that envelops us every Christmas, we can learn to resist. Of course, by now many of us have probably succumbed to Black Friday and son of Black Friday and Cyber Monday and Cyber Everything. Maybe some of you even participated in Small Business Saturday and kept your dollars at home.

Who remembers the Christmas catalog? The wish book, the thing of which little boy and little girl dreams were made. Visions of sugarplums aside, Red Ryder BB guns and Barbie dolls were the fabric of our youthful desires

thanks to those catalogs. But alas, the tree huggers won and the catalogs disappeared.

**For Release Wednesday, December 25, 2019 – Page 2**

Life got complicated and the obligations and responsibilities mounted. Somehow the world got difficult and we got lost in a sea of confusion and bitter banter. Disagreements escalated and hatred thrived. The 800-pound gorilla in the middle of the room seemed to grow.

But wait, there’s hope. Research has revealed there were even more verses added to that simple song.

“And when we expect of others what we try to live each day,  
Then we’ll all live together and we’ll all learn to say,  
‘Tis the gift to be simple  
‘Tis the gift to be free.”

“‘Tis the gift to have friends and a true friend to be,  
‘Tis the gift to think of others not to only think of “me”,  
And when we hear what others really think and really feel,  
Then we’ll all live together with a love that is real.”

Stop. Did you read that? “…when we hear what others really think and really feel, then we’ll all live together with a love that is real.” Try it. You might be surprised at what a difference that can make.

“‘Tis the gift to be loving, tis the best gift of all  
Like a quiet rain it blesses where it falls  
And with it we will truly believe  
‘Tis better to give than it is to receive.”  
  
“‘Tis a gift to be simple, ‘tis a gift to be fair  
‘Tis a gift to wake and breathe the morning air  
and each day we walk on the path that we choose  
‘Tis a gift we pray we never shall lose.”

The simple things, “to wake and breathe the morning air.” When’s the last time you were simply satisfied to wake up and be able to breathe?

Merry Christmas friends.

May the gifts you receive be simple.  
May the gifts you give be rewarding.

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