



## Gump Christmas

by Peter Covington

*“Life is like a box under the Christmas Tree. You never know what you are going to get.”* While these are not the exact words of the famous philosopher Forrest Gump, they fit the gist of his philosophy and are especially true during the Christmas season. It seems that during every



Christmas at one point or another, ***I remember that there are no guarantees in life, even though we try to pretend they exist at Christmas.***

Materialism has led us to believe that with enough time and financial savings we can make Christmas whatever we imagine it to be. In my experience, it seems that the most likely place to fall into this trap is with impressive dessert recipes never fail to disappoint. One year, I pushed myself hard and worked and worked to make the “perfect” dessert for friends who were coming to dinner. In the end, I was so stressed about it; I was in a bad mood by the time the friends arrived and fairly ruined the effect of the dessert. Another year, my wife at the time took Martha Stewart’s bait and tried to follow a very exacting recipe which she didn’t realize would take her more than six hours to complete, for an average-sized cake that was exceptionally

unimpressive in the end. In the same way, efforts to delight children who continue to grow and develop new tastes seem to consistently fall short as parents aim at a moving target.

I once had a pastor who was seemingly traumatized by a gift he was given for Christmas as a child. He had built up in his mind what could be in the beautiful box for him underneath the tree, but in the end, it turned out to be only bunny slippers. So as an adult he found a way to work that bitter disappointment into at least one sermon every year.

The Bible rightly advises at several points, “Do not put your faith in the flesh” or “in man” or “in princes” and I will add: don’t put your faith in beautifully decorated gifts. Given the unknown, the Gump philosophy does not predict constant disappointment. It simply says that we don’t know. But when expectations are extremely high, disappointment is more likely. ***The wisest course is to take the focus off material expectations and to focus on relationship instead.***

The first Christmas I spent with my man, Luis, was one of the best ever, when we materially had little but were thrilled with our budding relationship. I wrote him a poem and worked it into the branches of the tree, since there is little excitement in methods to wrap a single piece of paper, I also had the joy of showing him what “stuffing” means during Christmas dinner. He liked it and we greatly enjoyed our day together, with very few material benefits. And no matter how thrilled I was with my new husband, I rejected the temptation to try an elaborate dessert.

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Advent Scripture Reference Lectionary  
[Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19](#); [2 Samuel 7:18-22](#); [Galatians 4:1-7](#)

Advent Hymn Reflection  
“[O Come All Ye Faithful](#),” performed by Demetria McKinney from  
Kirk Franklin's "A Gospel Christmas"



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