

John 1:14
Christmas Day 2014

The Greatest Promise Kept!

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

How far would you go to give your family the perfect gift? If you could give the perfect gift, how far would you be willing to go? For forty years, the story of Charlie Duke's gift to his family lay hidden in a massive archive of photos. Two years ago, a researcher browsing the archive came across the photo that showed the gift he gave them.

The year was 1972 and Charlie Duke was an astronaut, back in the glory days of NASA when they were sending men to the moon using slide-rules. Those were glory days for our space administration. We owned the moon. No one else had been there. No one else could. We left a car up there with the keys in it, because we were only ones who could come back!

Charlie was driving the lunar rover across the surface of the moon when he stopped, got out, and did something very special for his family. He reached into the pocket of his space suit and pulled out a picture wrapped in clear thermal foil. It was a family portrait of him, his wife and his two kids. He laid it on the surface of the moon, stepped back and snapped a picture of his footprint in moon dust next the family portrait. Both the footprint and portrait remain there right now, undisturbed, on the surface of moon.

He gave his family the gift of knowing every time they look up into the night sky they could see a statement to their father's love. It was a gift didn't look like much at first, a picture of a footprint and a family portrait. Until you realize the lengths Charlie went to give it to them.

How far are you willing to go to give your family the perfect gift? Charlie Duke went 238,000 miles. Your heavenly Father was willing to go even further. He sent his Son so that Jesus became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

God had made a promise thousands of years earlier to the very first two people who lived on this earth – not long after the moon, along with everything else in the universe had been created. He had a plan to keep that promise. He was willing to do whatever it took to keep that promise.

If you would have walked past a stable in Bethlehem on that first Christmas night, would you have seen that little child lying in a manger God's greatest promise kept? Or would we look at that gift and think: "This is it? A baby in a barn? That's God's greatest gift?" Because really, it doesn't look like much at first. When you hear the account of the birth of Jesus, it is striking how unimportant it all seemed. I mean, Mary and Joseph were a couple of nobodies stuck with no place to stay. The narrative is so simple: She gave birth to her first born, a son, she wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger.

But think how far that child had come. Jesus, had come from heaven to earth and made the trip from deity to humanity. This was the all-powerful God of the universe who put the stars in their places and planets in their courses. This God did the unthinkable: "**The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.**" That in and of itself is really pretty incredible. But God wasn't done in just sending His Son to be born in a manger. He wasn't done in having His Son live among us. His mission and God's promise would not be complete until Jesus would die on a cross.

You see, God gave a lasting gift to solve a long-term problem. You know how this world at times seems broken? When loved ones get sick or accidents happen? It can feel like this world isn't running the way it's supposed to. Well, that feeling is spot on. Things are broken. But it's not just the world that's not right, it is also that you and me that are not right. That long-term problem is called sin. We cannot get rid of that problem on our own. You can try all you want, but it doesn't work.

And so, God stepped into history. He made a promise to send his Son, and he kept that promise. God gave us the greatest gift ever given.

He gives us a Savior. A Savior who can take your guilt away. He gives us forgiveness. He gives us faith to trust in that promise of forgiveness. He gives you a promise -- "I forgive you for it all. And I will remember your sin no more. No more guilt. No more sorrow. I put it all on my Son, so that you can be free. So that you can be mine, forever." God wrapped himself in human flesh because one day this perfect gift would die. In fact, that's what made him the perfect gift.

You know it's a nice story that someone put a family picture on the moon, but it's a much different story if someone put your family picture on the moon. The perfect gift is personal. It's meant for you. Today – God kept his promise. How far are you willing to go to give your family the perfect gift? Charlie Duke traveled 238,000 miles. How far was God willing to go for us? Let us give thanks that **"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."** Amen.