

Just Like Christmas

*This sermon was told in three parts throughout the service.
It is largely based on the children's book "Just Like Christmas"
by Birdie Black and Rosalind Beardshaw.*

Introduction to the Story:

[Image: King with bolt of red cloth.]

I want you to think about
the most special gift you have ever received.
What did it look like?
Who was the gift from?
How did receiving it make you feel?

Today I'm going to tell you a story
about a really special gift.
It was so big that it brought joy to many people
all in one day.

It was Christmas Eve,
and the snow was falling
as the king strolled around the market. What
should he see but a huge roll of beautiful bright-red cloth.

"Oooh!" he said.
"That cloth is so red and soft and Christmassy!
It would be just right for a grand cloak for the princess!"
And so he bought it and took it back to his castle.

In the castle,
the king's sewing maids snipped and sewed
and snipped and sewed,
and by lunchtime,
they had made a beautiful long cloak for the princess.
The king was delighted.

He wrapped it up
in **golden paper with green bows.**

"What shall we do with the scraps?"
one of the sewing maids asked.
"Oh, just bundle them up
and put them outside the back door," said the king.
Jenny, the castle's kitchen maid,
had finished work for the day.
What should she see on her way home
but a big bundle of beautiful bright-red scraps.

"Oooh!" she said.
"That cloth is so red and soft and Christmassy!"

It would be just right to make a jacket for my ma!”

When Jenny got home,
she snipped and sewed
and snipped and sewed, and...
by dinnertime,
she'd made a pretty red jacket for her ma.

She was very happy,
and she wrapped it up
in **beautiful blue paper**.

Then she bundled up the little scraps
and put them outside the back door
so her ma wouldn't see them.

So, our that's how our story begins –
with two beautifully wrapped presents waiting to be unwrapped.
I wonder where the red cloth will lead us next.

The Story Continues

[Image: Bertie the Badger.]

Do you remember that special gift you were thinking about?
The one that was given to you?
Why was it special?
Perhaps it was beautiful
or was given with kindness
or brought joy to your day.

Our piece of red cloth brought joy
to different people for different reasons.
And it wasn't just for humans.

Bertie Badger trotted past Jenny's house.
What should he see
but a little bundle of beautiful bright-red scraps.

“Oooh!” he said. “That cloth is so red and soft and Christmassy!
It would be just right to make a hat for my pa!”

When Bertie got home,
he snipped and sewed...
and snipped and sewed, and...
by the time the clock was striking six...
he'd made a nice red hat for his pa.

He smiled as he wrapped it up
in some **simple brown paper**.

Then he bundled up the tiny scraps

and put them outside the back door.

Samuel Squirrel bounded past Bertie's house.

Suddenly, he stopped.

What should he see but a tiny bundle of beautiful bright-red scraps.

“Oooh!” he said. “That cloth is so red and soft and Christmassy! It would be just right to make a pair of gloves for my wife!”

When Samuel got home,

he snipped and sewed

and snipped and sewed, and...

by the time the moon was rising,

he'd made a beautiful pair of gloves for his wife.

He wrapped them in a leaf.

“It's just as well I've made her

something to keep her hands warm,” he said.

“This winter wind is so chilly!”

A gust picked up the tiny scrap of red cloth that was left over

and blew it out his window,

where it fluttered to the snowy ground.

It was nearly midnight

when Milly Mouse plodded past Samuel's house.

She was tired and cold,

and the snow was falling on her ears and whiskers.

She had been looking for a nut

to give to little Billy for Christmas,

but she couldn't find one.

As she passed the bottom of Samuel's tree,

she saw something red sticking out of the snow.

What could it be? It was the tiny scrap of cloth!

“Oooh!” she said. “That cloth is so soft and red and Christmassy.

It would be just right to make a scarf for my Billy!”

Billy was asleep when Milly got home.

She snipped and sewed and...

snipped and sewed

and by the time the candle had burned low,

she's made a cozy scarf for Billy.

She didn't have anything to wrap it in,

but she **folded it carefully**

and put it under her tiny sprig of Christmas tree.

The End of the Story

[Image: Christmas Tree in the Forest.]

And this is how the story ends:

On Christmas morning,

the princess opened her huge gold present.
And Jenny's ma opened her big red present.
And Bertie's pa opened his small brown-paper present.
And Samuel's wife unwrapped her leave.
And Milly gave little Billy his scarf.

Each present was so soft and red and Christmassy
and felt just right...
just how Christmas should feel.

How does Christmas feel?
For the people and animals in the story,
Christmas felt soft and red and Christmassy.

A woman named Natasha Niemi
wrote a little poem called,
"What Christmas Feels Like"
and it goes like this:

The tree's aglow with colors of red, green, blue, and orange,
The heat's toasty arms warmly embrace us.
Presents under the Christmas tree
Beg to be released from their bright, sparkling coats.
Santa Claus cookies washed down with boiling, hot chocolate;
Shouts of glee and appreciation;
Hearts overflowing with love;
This is what Christmas feels like.

Hundreds of people have written Christmas carols
to try to capture the feeling of Christmas.
"City sidewalks, busy sidewalks, dressed in holiday style.
In the air there's a feeling of Christmas.

Children laughing, people passing, meeting smile after smile,
and on every street corner you hear
Silver bells, silver bells, it's Christmas time in the city."

In this month's *Observer* magazine,
lay minister Jennifer Thompson
gives a wonderful description of how Christmas feels.
She talks about returning
from leading three identical church services on Christmas Eve
to kisses from her children,
a foot rub from her husband,
last-minute wrapping,
and hot cocoa by the tree.

There is joy in all of these things.
Perhaps joy *is* the feeling of Christmas.
Joy, like we've felt today.
Joy in the beating of little drums by wee ones.
Joy in hearing a great Christmas story.

Joy in the singing of Christmas carols.
Joy is the wonderful gift that we have been given.
Joy was born in Jesus
and it's like that red cloth that passes on from person to person
until all our hearts are warmed.

So, next week, when you listen to the Christmas story,
remember that the gift of joy is for you --
it is for all of us.