

Why do you think people give me presents on July 10? It's not because July 10 is such a special day. It's because it's my birthday, and some people are happy that I was born, and so they show me love by giving me a present or sending me a card. Sometimes my family gets together and we have special food and we play games as part of celebrating my birthday.

Why does Santa give out presents at Christmas? Because it's *Jesus* birthday. And we're so happy that we also give presents and sends cards to each other Sometimes they get

And that's why we come to church before everything else – to remember *why* we're giving presents to each other, and why we're spending time with our family, and why we're having special foods. It's all because we're celebrating Jesus' birthday.

And why do we do that? Because his birthday was something that changed the whole world. Our God, who made the sun, and moon, and the earth, and all the planets and animals – is a pretty terrific God. And God can do things that none of us can do. And then God did something that no one expected. God said, I can't show you enough how much I love you when I am up in heaven. I keep trying but you're not all getting the message. So I am going to be born and live just like you, so that I can be close to you and really show you how much I love you.

That was a big deal! God never did that before. And God was taking a big chance, because not everybody wanted God to be close. Some wanted to think there was *no* God, and they didn't want to have to change their minds. And some wanted there to be a God, but they wanted God to stay away so they could do whatever they wanted. But when God is close we usually end up doing things differently. So it was a big deal that God came to be so close to us. And it all started with his birthday, which we just heard about in the Gospel. It was such a big event that angels even showed up, and we don't see that very often, do we?

So I am going to finish with a very short letter, written by a 10 year old girl, and it was printed in the newspaper. This is what she wrote: *Christmas is a time for giving, getting, sharing, being together, and loving. But most of all, Christmas is a time for celebrating Jesus' birthday. Some people don't think about what Christmas is all about. They think Christmas is a day that you just give and get presents and have a lot of fun. You can have a lot of fun even if you think of what Christmas is all about. So now that you have [heard] this, go tell people what Christmas is all about. So tonight and tomorrow, take a little time to talk about Jesus – after all, it's his birthday!*