

Christmas Living

Each year at this time I hear well-meaning Christians decry the fact that atheists are ruining the holy season of the nativity of the Christ. They decry the growing practise of wishing people "Happy Holidays" and the disappearance of manger scenes in favour of more secular symbols like trees and santas and stars. "This is a Christian country" I hear them say. But countries can never be Christian, only individuals following the Christ.

As I See It the battle for Christmas as a purely religious celebration was lost long ago, not to the atheists but to our commercial secular society. You can see that clearly in societies with no Christian heritage, like Japan and Turkey, which celebrate the secular Christmas. Indeed our daughter in Turkey tells me that that Christmas' origins are lost to the young university student she teaches.

But we who do know the origins of Christmas are reminded each year that Love came down at Christmas, and we celebrate the birth of a person so totally connected to God, that we claim him as the Son of God. In the person of Jesus the Christ we are shown a way to live our lives fully. So why not celebrate regardless of how the season has been cheapened by commercialism and lost in the scramble to have a good time. Let's not dwell on the hijacking of Christmas, let's live the real meaning of the coming of the Christ in our day to day living and not just at Christmas.

So let me conclude by offering three gifts for you to savour this Christmas, quotes that have given me great pleasure:

"I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round, as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women

seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys."
Charles Dickens

"I sometimes think we expect too much of Christmas Day. We try to crowd into it the long arrears of kindness and humanity of the whole year. As for me, I like to take my Christmas a little at a time, all through the year. And thus I drift along into the holidays - let them overtake me unexpectedly - waking up some fine morning and suddenly saying to myself: "Why, this is Christmas Day!""
David Grayson

***"Christmas is forever, not for just one day,
for loving, sharing, giving, and not to put away
like bells and lights and tinsel, in some box upon a shelf.
The good you do for others is good you do yourself..."***
Norman Wesley Brooks, "Let Every Day Be Christmas," 1976

So it just remains for Jenny and me to wish you all a peaceful Christmas, filled with love and joy and hope for the coming year. And may the star-light of the heavens bring promises each night, the signs of coming life be near your feet as you walk, and the hand of God reach out through all the earth for the creation of a new future.

Tony would be more than happy to chat about the above article.

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