**Christmas Ponderings**

**For this day is born to you in the city of David,
a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
(St. Luke 2:11)**

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Sign on a St. Louis church bulletin board: “Merry Christmas to our Christian friends. Happy Hanukkah to our Jewish friends. And to our atheist friends, good luck.” (William E. Burke, in Reader's Digest)**

**Next to the official state Christmas tree in the Capitol building in Madison, Wisconsin, an atheists’ group put up a sign expressing their disbeliefs in Christmas and on the back of it, affixed another sign that read – “Thou shalt not steal.” *(Bill Flick, 1997)***

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**The best of all gifts around any Christmas tree: the presence of a happy family all wrapped up in each other. (Burton Hillis, in Better Homes and Gardens)**

**Christmas: a candle with haloed ray quietly giving itself away. (Esther E. Gillette, in Pen)**

**The celebration of Christmas is an expression of God already and always at work within us, whether or not we are conscious of that work. As Meister Eckhart said: “God bears his Only-Begotten Son in you, whether you like it or not. Whether you are sleeping or waking, he does his part.” (James Gaither, in Unity magazine)**

**Every family on the block had strung Christmas lights except two – the Goldbergs and the family across the street, where there was no money for frills. At the Goldberg’s, their little son asked why there were no lights on his house. “Well, we’re Jewish,” said his mother. “We’ll be celebrating Hanukkah this week. It’s called the Festival of Lights and we’ll be burning candles in the menorah, but it’s not the same as Christmas.” She explained that Christians were celebrating the birth of Christ and that Hanukkah marked the dedication of a new altar in the Temple of Jerusalem in 165 B.C. Three years earlier Antiochus IV had profaned the Temple when he tried to force the Jews to offer sacrifices to heathen deities. The little Goldberg boy thought a bit, staring across the street. Then he said, “The O’Toole’s across the street must be Jewish too. They don’t have any lights, either.” (Bits & Pieces) 1212913**

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**Here’s how to make Christmas come more frequently: move the earth closer to the sun. (Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)**

**Christmas comes when you can believe in the unbelievable, see the invisible, love the unlovable, forgive the unforgivable, pardon the unpardonable, sing the unsingable, give the impractical, receive the improbable, heal the incurable, understand the misunderstood, bless the cursed, learn the difficult, know the unknown, accept the intolerable, teach the unteachable, cleanse the unclean, hear the unheard, remember the forgotten, praise and give thanks, do the impossible. (Unity of Springfield, Illinois newsletter)**

**From a commercial point of view, if Christmas did not exist it would be necessary to invent it. *(Katharine Whitehorn)***

**Christmas is the day that holds time together. (Alexander Smith)**

**Christmas deals not with how Jesus came into the world, but with what came to Jesus, and what must come unto us. (Rev. Larry Swartz, Unity Minister)**

**Add Thanksgiving decorations to our endangered species list. If we're going to continue decorating for Christmas before Thanksgiving, who'll ever need them? *(Bill Flick, November 29, 2002)***

**One very special Christmas day, little Amy unwrapped a beautiful golden-haired doll given to her by her grandmother. “It's such a pretty dolly,” Amy squealed excitedly, hugging her new doll. “Oh, thank you, Grandma!” Amy played with her new doll most of the day, but toward the end of the day, she put down her golden-haired doll and sought out one of her old dolls. Amy cradled the tattered and dilapidated old doll in her arms. Its hair had come off; its nose was broken; one eye was gone, and an arm and a leg were missing. “Well, well,” smiled Grandma. “It looks as though you like that dolly the best.” “I like the beautiful doll you gave me, Grandma,” said little Amy. “But I love this old doll the most, because if I didn't love her, no one else would.” (Glenn Van Ekeren, in The Speaker's Sourcebook, p. 10)**

**Christmas is Bethlehem. The ancient dream: a cold, clear night made brilliant by a glorious star, the smell of incense, shepherds and wise men falling to their knees in adoration of the sweet baby, the incarnation of perfect love. *(Lucinda Franks)***

**The nearby Catholic school was having a Nativity play on the eve of the last school day before the Christmas holidays. Two Sisters busied themselves making last-minute adjustments to the children in their costumes. The pastor stood in the aisle, talking with parishioners and keeping an eye on the preparations. One of the Sisters rushed up the aisle to him. “Father,” she said, “we forgot the Baby Jesus!” With a grin, he said, “That’s the trouble with this world.” (Curtis Beirschmitt, in Catholic Digest)**

**Your friendship is a glowing ember through the year; and each December, from its warm and living spark, we kindle flame against the dark. And with its shining radiance light our tree of faith on Christmas night. (Thelma J. Lund)**

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**Christmas Gift Suggestions:**

**To your enemy, forgiveness.**

**To an opponent, tolerance.**

**To a friend, your heart.**

**To a customer, service.**

**To all, charity.**

**To every child, a good example.**

**To yourself, respect. *(Oren Arnold)***

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**It is Christmas in the heart that puts Christmas in the air. (W. T. Ellis)**

**He who has not Christmas in his heart will never find it under a tree. (Roy L. Smith)**

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**Christmas is a time when you get homesick – even when you’re home. (Carol Nelson)**

**Just for a few hours on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day the stupid, harsh mechanism of the world runs down, and we permit ourselves to live according to untrammeled common sense, the unconquerable efficiency of good will. We grant ourselves the complete and selfish pleasure of loving others better than ourselves. How odd it seems, how unnaturally happy we are! Just for a few hours we “purge out of every heart the lurking grudge." We know then that hatred is a form of illness; that suspicion and pride are only fear, that the rascally acts of others are perhaps, in the queer webwork of human relations, due to some callousness of our own. (Christopher Morley, in Essays)**

**If “ifs” and “buts” were candy and nuts, wouldn’t it be a Merry Christmas. *(Don Meredith)***

**The Greatest Gift: And when we give each other Christmas presents in His name, let us remember that He has given us the sun and the moon and the stars, the earth with its forests and mountains and oceans – and all that lives and moves upon them. He has given us all green things and everything that blossoms and bears fruit – and all that we quarrel about and all that we have misused – and to save us from our foolishness, from all our sins. He came down to earth and gave us Himself. (Sigrid Undset)**

**Getting is good. Giving is better. Once you understand that, it’s always Christmas. (Doogie Howser)**

**Roses are reddish / Violets are bluish. If it weren’t for Christmas / We’d all be Jewish. *(Benny Hill)***

**There is a story about a little boy who was particularly drawn to his class's Christmas manger scene. It was filled with animals, and angels, and shepherds, and every type of ornamentation. But this one small boy was not satisfied with the lovely display. The teacher asked: “What are you looking at? What about the manger scene bothers you?” The child simply asked, “Well, where will God fit in?” (King Duncan & Angela Akers)**

**That's some of what this day we call Christmas means. It is the remembrance of God's greater answer to man's very great need. (Charles S. Mueller, in The Christian Family Prepares for Christmas)**

**Signs of the Season: One Christmas season the front doors of the Faith Lutheran Church in Jefferson City, Mo., were decorated to resemble a gaily wrapped holiday gift. A sign read: “PLEASE OPEN BEFORE CHRISTMAS.” (Associated Press)**

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May the blessings of “Christmas Past” and “Christmas Yet to Come” be your “Christmas Present.” (Judy Kahn)**

**Here is a wise old saying -- Christmas is a holiday when neither the past nor the future is as interesting as the present. (National Federation of the Blind, Wit & Witticism)**

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**Elementary teachers in Nome, Alaska, subscribe to the same professional publications as their colleagues in other states, but their problems are sometimes different. The third-grade teacher, a newcomer to Alaska, had just received her latest project magazine and was discussing with the class the suggestions for a Christmas pageant. For the children playing Santa’s reindeer, there should be brown cambric outfits, and passable reindeer horns could be made of bare branches, trimmed to the proper shapes and painted. She looked out at the barren, treeless landscape. “Well, children,” she sighed regretfully, “I guess we’ll have to do something else. We can’t make horns of branches, because there isn’t a tree for miles.” The children looked disappointed. Then one little boy spoke up. “We haven’t any trees, teacher,” he said, “but we do have lots of reindeer horns.” *(Edith M. Jarrett, in Reader’s Digest)*)**

**One of this country's outstanding preachers, John Killinger, tells of staring through the window of a little shop in Washington state one Christmas. The shop was filled with Christmas items. There were exquisite creche scenes from faraway countries, fuzzy-faced elves, sleighs and reindeer of every size, stars, snowmen -- the shop was fairly bursting with Christmas. And on the front door was the neatest touch of all. It was a small sign that said: “Christmas Spoken Here.” (Glendon Harris, in LectionAid)**

 **A star, a light in darkness is the sign of Christmas. See it not outside yourself, but shining in the Heaven within, and accept it as the sign the time of Christ has come. This Christmas give the Holy Spirit everything that would hurt you. Let yourself be healed completely that you may join with Him in healing, and let us celebrate our release together by releasing everyone with us. The Prince of Peace was born to re-establish the condition of love. Let no despair darken the joy of Christmas, for the time of Christ is meaningless apart from Joy. (A Course in Miracles)**

**What everybody learned but not everybody remembers is that Christmas started out as “Christ's Mass.” (L. M. Boyd)**

**Christmas is not a date. It is a state of mind. *(Mary Ellen Chase, American writer)***

**You can’t stay out of my Christmas – it will come and find you, wherever you are! *(Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)***

**I was happy to see January 2nd roll around. The holidays had worn me out, with all the demands of cooking, shopping and family get-togethers. Won't it be nice to get back to normal? I thought as I began dismantling the Christmas tree. Before I'd gotten far, David, my three-year-old grandson, walked in. “Can I help?” he asked, picking up the tree skirt and draping it around his shoulders like a cape. “Put these ornaments in the box,” I said. David put them on himself instead. “Honey, it's time to put Christmas away.” He looked at me sadly, so I hung candy canes on his ears and pinned the treetop star to his blond hair. “I am the boy who sings the hallelujah song,” he said, holding out his arms. Yes, I thought, hallelujah! Each and every day. Thanks to a boy who wouldn't put Christmas away, I was reminded of the joy that has no season. (Mary Belle Estes, in Guideposts magazine)**

**Children don't need toys to play. My one-year-old is never happier than when he is unraveling an audio tape, wearing underwear on his head or making music by clinking a crystal ornament against the glass coffee table. And his favorite part of birthdays and Christmas is the chance to taste so many kinds of colored wrapping paper while everyone else is distracted with whatever is inside. Even my older children don't need toys -- they are quite content reprogramming my computer, taking apart the lens of my camera or face-painting with the makeup in my bathroom. It's the parents who need toys. We need toys to keep our children away from our things. (Philadelphia)**

**We are better throughout the year for having, in spirit, become a child again at Christmastime. *(Laura Ingalls Wilder, in Country Living)***

**Christmas reminds us we are not alone. We are not unrelated atoms, jouncing and ricocheting amid aliens, but are a part of something, which holds and sustains us. As we struggle with shopping lists and invitations, compounded by December's bad weather, it is good to be reminded that there are people in our lives who are worth this aggravation, and people to whom we are worth the same. Christmas shows us the ties that bind us together, threads of love and caring, woven in the simplest and strongest way within the family. (Donald E. Westlake, in A LIkely Story)**

**When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flock, the work of Christmas begins: to find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among brothers, to make music in the heart. (Howard Thurman, in The Mood of Christmas)**

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