

Still Christmas

In Spite of Sectacular Clausmas

December 11, 2022

Today we're gonna relax in the midst of the chaos of Clausmas, and rest for a moment in the meaning of Christ-mas. And *practice* being *still*. But before we get to that, I gotta ask: **Got all your wrapping done?** Not your *gifts*. But, *you*.

Cuz we sure seem to get wrapped up in the *frenzy* and *flurry* and *fatigue*. But hey:

This *is* the day the Lord has made; let us *resent* and be *mad* in it. – Psalm 118:24 NIV

Not a *Scripture*, actually. Though it's easy to live, especially *this day*, as though it *is*. But ...

This *is* the day the Lord has made; **[so]** let us *rejoice* and be *glad* in it. – Psalm 118:24 NIV



Not a *suggestion*, actually. Though it's easy to live as though it is. But it *isn't*.

For we walk by *sight*, *not* by *faith*. – 2 Corinthians 5:7 NKJ



Oops, I got that a bit *backwards* – but I sure hope *you* don't. Chuck Jones, animator of the original Grinch, once said: **"Everybody hates Christmas a little."** He's confusing Christmas with something else entirely.



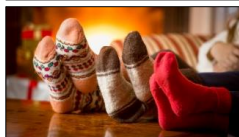
After Christmas, most people are gonna ask, "What'd you *get*?" But I want to ask: **"What'd you celebrate?"** Or should I say **"most celebrate"**? Because, for believers, **two simultaneous celebrations occur this time of year**. One *sacred*. One *secular*. And we've created such an *odd yet charming fusion*, and often *confusion*, of the two.



So **what are you most celebrating this day: Christmas or Clausmas?** I have to say, I *love* Clausmas. Twinkle lights. Evergreens. Bing Crosby. Ugly sweaters. And sugar cookies, cocoa, and candy canes! It's just *plain fun*; and adds a *ton* of *festivity* to the ol' reason-for-the-season.



But it's *precisely because* Clausmas is *such* a *significant* part of Christmas, that we *must just* be *still* for a moment, and remind ourselves that *that's not* the holy-day; *that* would *still* be Christmas – **if we're still enough, long enough, in the midst of the faux and fuss of Clausmas, to truly focus on Christmas.**



Ever say anything like, "Christmas *already*?" I'm still *recovering* from *last* year!" You're thinking of *Clausmas*. Clausmas is *typified* by clogged malls, backed up traffic, piles of packages, and irritable crowds. While *Christmas* is characterized by soothing stillness *spent* with our Savior, and **shared with a true Christmas Who: the ones we love, who love the Lord.**





But it's just *so tempting* to let that stillness get swept away in a spectacular tsunami of Grinches and snowmen and reindeer and elves, until it seems as if the *only one* saving *anything* is some guy named Ernest. But *that's Clausmas*. And yet, if we're not earnest, our *rejoicing* will be reckoned as *revolting*.



For the Lord has spoken: Sons I have *raised* ... but they have *revolted* against Me. An ox knows its *owner*, and **[even]** a *donkey* its *master's manger*, but ... My people do not understand. Oh, *sinful nation*, people *weighed down with guilt* ... **[Why?]** They have abandoned the *Lord* ... they have turned away from Him. – Isaiah 1:2-4 NAS



Our *Father's heart* is *distraught* when our *Savior's* displaced in *ours*. Cuz *Clausmas* is about the *mall*, and the *mall* is about *sweaters* and *trinkets* and *toys*; whereas *Christmas* is about the *manger*, and **the manger is about the miraculous gift of God**. As in: *from God and was God*. “[Christ’s] **burden is light**”! (Mt 11:30) Whereas **Claus comes bearing guilt, with a clause**: cuz you gotta be *good enough* to get on *his list*. But the *priceless gift* is to *one* and *all* by God’s *grace* through our *faith* in the loving *presence* of the *Gift Himself*.



Come what may, it's still Christ's day. Cuz at its *core* it's *still* the time that we *adore* God's only Son – *love's pure Light*, who came into the heart of darkness on a strategic *suicide mission*, **to free us from sin, to save us from death, to make a way to carry us home**. Therefore, the *best* way to celebrate *Christmas* in the *midst* of *Clausmas*, is simply by **seizing a little silence, and stealing a moment of stillness, to ponder the purpose, and the actual wonder**, of a *pregnant virgin* and a *hesitant husband* coming to be *registered*, but meeting *terrified* shepherds, *starry-eyed* wise men, and a simple stable, packed with prophecy, stacked around a baby in a feed trough – who *happens* to be *the Creator* of time, space, and dimension, not to mention *us*. So let's sit back, settle in, and practice *seizing* the *stillness*; cuz I've written a *poem* just for *this day*.



I've titled it: **A CRIB TO A CROSS**

Away in a manger (a mangy cow trough),
The little Lord lay in a lowly hay loft.



'Twas Christmas *day one!* And came A.S.A.P.
(That *day*, by the way, B.C. be-came A.D.)

As Mary hummed mildly, her hymn was cut short,
By herdsman who shared a shear shocking report!



"We's watchin' our flocks in the ease of a breeze;
Our eyes on our ewes as they caught up on zzz's,

When Boom! we's beholdin' a Heavenly Host!
A choir – *on fire* – 'round a most holy ghost,
Whose boast was God's gift, what come registered post.



He'd flown 'Virgin Air' and her "airmail" He'd be.
But, 'H-E-I-R' and then, 'M-A-L-E'.

Tho it were a *babe*, 'He'd *be* wrapped,' it were said,
'In ribbons of *cloth* from His heels to His head.'

He *roared*: 'Do not fear!' as the angels soared 'round!
No lie, we *did try*, but were floored and fell down.

If *you* felt the *force* of the *source* of them notes,
You'd drop like yur dead! Like them weird fainting goats.

Good News, they proclaimed; then proclum it *again*;
Cuz *we're* merely shepherds and not such *wise* men.

But *we* heard God's Word, and *our herd* heard His Word;
And thoughts done occurred from His Word what we heard.

Tho *we're* not so bright, there's a thing we done learned:
By coming to *us* we learned it *can't* be *earned*.
Then POOF! They was gone! And then WOOF! Our *hearts* burned!

Cuz one thing we *knowned* from decoding our *sheep*:
If *rams* bleat commands they expect *lambs* to *leap*!

So *no* one stood still; we made haste to this stall.
For sheep fast *asleep* will be fleeced of their call.

And now *we's* awake to face what we foreknow,
Our eyes t'ward the *Lord* and our *backs* to the wool.

And *just* for historical, Scriptural records:
God's *Lamb* led *us* poor, humble, sheepish-type shepherds."

But as they tiptoed to behold that newborn,
The barn was alarmed by the blast of a horn.

And in marched the Magi regaling *their* story,
Of chasing a star, from afar, for God's glory.



These sages weren't Jewish, just king-size wise guys.
So all turn to hear what *their* presence implies.

"When kings are declared for their kingdom to see,
Crowds bow in a wave; and friends drop to a knee.
For when he's proclaimed then he reigns *over* thee.

But *we* saw a *star* that decreed in the *sky*.
So *we* reigned our *camels* and waved a goodbye.

Now see! It is *we* who bend down on a knee,
To find what that sign had foresaid we would see.

For bowing to *Christ far* exceeds what could please us.
So let us crowd gifts 'round this cow-crib of Jesus.

Cuz *we've* come prepared, having spared *no* expense.
Here's *gold*! And here's *myrrh*! And here's *pure frankincense*!

Now gold speaks of *kings* – least it *does* in the *East*.
And frankincense christens the head of a *priest*.
And myrrh, as it were, well, anoints the *deceased*.

And though myrrh may seem an odd gift for a child,
This One we revere *will* one day be reviled.

Yet myrrh is much more than mere mourning perfume,
That's brushed on the dead as they're rushed to the tomb.
So *please* don't assume that it's *all* doom and gloom."



And thus it was so; and then, so it was thus.
The infant had grown to atone sin for *us*.

Some thirty-three years and some months came and went.
And *all* were *long* gone 'cept that *Myrrh's* morbid scent.



Christ hung on a tree like a crushed ornament,
His life pouring out and His energy spent.

He gave up the ghost ... but, when Grim came to *reap* 'im,
His grave wouldn't boast, cuz it couldn't quite *keep* 'im.



Though swaddled *again*, but *then* laid in a *tomb*,
These ribbons of cloth were more like a *cocoon*.

For on the third day when that stone rolled aside,
That tomb's res-i-dent left it un-occ-u-pied.

And *this* was discovered by Peter and John,
The latter the brains and the former the brawn.

They'd crept t'ward His crypt, cuz they'd been made aware:
His deathbed was *bare*! And His *corpse*? Who knows where?!
It seemingly vanished by thief or thin air!

So Peter, the bolder, sp'lunk in that stone cave;
And *what* he observed rocked a *seismic* shock-wave!

"Behold! I see wrappings forsaken as waste;
Yet nothing's *unfastened* and nothing's *unlaced*.



Just picture a *mummy*, but *hollow* somehow.
So oddly *deflated* ... it's hit me *just now*:

It wasn't no Roman nor Jew who *exhumed* Him;
'Twas *God* who *unveiled* Him, for *love* had *entombed* Him!



Conceived before *birth* – before *earth*! – His intention.
Ol' *death* was His method to *reap* our redemption!



He wasn't decaying, but paying for man.
The *ul-ti-mate*, *con-su-mmate*, layaway plan!

Our sin's been forgiven! The Pit's lost its power!
He's reigning on high! Lo, this day! Lo, this hour!"

Yes, who could've guessed as that cross snuffed His cries?
His grave would *just cave* and release Him to *rise*?!

He *chose* Mary's womb as His *means* to *this tomb*!
Cuz seeds *must* be plant-ed be-fore they can bloom.



That cow-feeder trough *was* a crib to a cross,
which meant His descent net a gain, not a loss.

For swaddled in ribbons away in that *crèche*,
Our Savior, God's Son, had come gift-wrapped in flesh.

And since He's a gift, there's but *one* limitation:
He must be believed and received for salvation.

[Therefore] Let everything that has breath *complain this Christmas*. – Psalm 150:6 NKJ

That's *not* a *Scripture*. So let's not *act* like it *is*. In fact, let's do the polar opposite:

Let everything that has breath *praise the Lord*. [this Christmas] – Psalm 150:6 NKJ

The little Lord Jesus received His *first* gifts that *first* Christmas. **Mary and Joseph gave their trust; the shepherds gave their testimony; and the wise men gave their treasures and true worship.** And you know *what*? **Jesus never outgrew those gifts.** They're *still* His favorites. Still *exactly* what He *desires* and *deserves most* from *us*. OR ... you *could* just:

Conform to the pattern of this world, and do not be transformed – Romans 12:2 NIV

[And] Let your hearts be troubled and be afraid. – John 14:27 NIV

For if you forgive others when they sin against you, *you're a chump*. – Matthew 6:14 NIV

Not Scriptures. **How hollow the holiday without the hope** – filled with festivity, while lacking **the only truly substantial, most meaningful, eternal centerpiece to aim it at, focus it on, and build it around.** But we're *here*. *Together*. In the *midst* of the *chaos* of *Clausmas*. Go *team*! Cuz Clausmas comes but *once* a year, *fades fast*, and will all be over in two weeks ...

But *this* I call to mind, and therefore I have *hope*: The *steadfast love* of the Lord *never* ceases; [His presence is 24/7/365; and] His mercies *never* come to an *end*; [in fact] they are *new* [not just *Christmas morning*, but] *every morning*; – Lamentations 3:21-23 ESV

Now *that's* a *Scripture*! And if *you've* been focused a bit *too much* on *Clausmas* this Christmas, never fear, *this day* the Lord made is *still* here ... *if* we'll just be *still* enough, *long* enough, to *see* it. I mean, **it's a profoundly simple request on His part:**

"Be *still*, and *know* that I am *God*" – Psalm 46:10 NIV

Definitely Scripture. So let's *do* it! **Let's give Him what He *still desires* and *still deserves*: our trust and testimonies and treasures and true worship; and for heaven's sake, *some stillness*.**