

Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols

The first lesson: Hidden in plain sight.

And so it arrives. The night of Christ's birth. And so we begin the lessons and carols with Isaiah's prophecy.

Isa 9:6-7

For a child has been born to us,
a son has been given to us.
He shoulders responsibility
and is called:
Extraordinary Strategist,
Mighty God,
Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.

7 His dominion will be vast
and he will bring immeasurable prosperity.

He will rule on David's throne
and over David's kingdom,
establishing it and strengthening it
by promoting **justice and right relationship**,
from this time forward and forevermore.

The Lord's intense devotion to his people will accomplish this.

New English Translation adapted, italics added.

The Kingship of Jesus, establishing it by "**justice and right relationship**". In plain sight, there is a fundamental expectation. (Don't mean to say "I told you so", but this was the sermon for the second week in Advent) In plain sight, do we associate Christmas with justice? I don't expect so. BUT WE SHOULD. Fairness and right relationship are an integral part of Jesus, and needs to be an integral part of us.

The Second lesson

The second lesson in some sense is built on the first. Or at least it is attached to it and only slightly to the side. It is our human problem that we are always looking for God to rescue us and do our work for us.

As Natalie Sleeth said,

"They waited for a King with crown of gold,
to save the world as was foretold, a Sov'reign wise, a rule bold
but only a baby came.

They waited for a Prince to gain the throne,
a Savior sent by God alone, a Lord with Kingdom yet unknown
but only a baby came"

Natalie Sleeth – Only a baby came @Hinshaw Music

We are always looking for King Jesus. Powerful. Faster than a speeding bullet and able to leap buildings with a single bound. We want superheroes. But what God did in Christ was something else.

God gave a gift. A gift and a model of grace and humility. God gave an invitation and a model of service, self sacrifice and love.

The third lesson

The third lesson is another sung message. (Which is an advantage – because I could not ask you to memorize my sermon – but as you learn a Christmas carol you will memorize the message without even trying). Barbara Mays (of Richmond, Indiana) wrote this wonderful carol in 1986.

Verse 3

The mystery of Bethlehem was long ago they say,
But miracle of miracles the Baby lives today in each new heart that hears
Love coming through the years,
Singing “Come, Come Christ is born!
Come, come, world forlorn.

The child of peace and sacrifice is waiting to be found!”

Hymn 34 “In Bethlehem a Babe was born”

Christmas is about us taking in God’s love. God’s love, God’s peace and God’s sacrifice.

We take in this love, **and then we offer it** to our forlorn world.

Christmas Eve

Contemplation and Embodiment

Which brings us not to a lesson. But to a contemplation and an embodiment. We contemplate the humble infant, the embodiment of God’s grace and love. And in our contemplation we take on, we put on the embodiment of Christ’s love for our world. We take the light of Christ, God’s light for the world, and we light our candle.

May your year ahead be a faith filled and faithful embodiment of God’s love for us in Christ, our humble, infant Savior, the sacrificing servant, the risen Christ of God.