

Christmas Thoughts from Afar

In a small Southern town near Clemson University, there was a Nativity Scene that showed great skill and talent had gone into creating it. One small feature was worrisome. The three wise men were wearing firemen's helmets!

A man saw this and wondered what it meant. At a 7-Eleven on the edge of town, he asked the lady behind the counter about the helmets. She exploded into a rage, yelling at me, "You darn Yankees never do read the Bible!"

He assured her that he did, but simply couldn't recall anything about firemen in the Bible. She jerked her Bible from behind the counter and ruffled through some pages, and finally jabbed her finger at a passage. Sticking it in his face she said

"See, it says right here", "The three wise men came from afar".

Southern accents aside, (and much appreciated) the wise men did indeed come from afar, from halfway across the known world, and so do we. In the last year since Christmas just think about the places we have been, the people we have seen, the adventures and misadventures we have had. Some of them take us a long distance away from Jesus, from worship at the manger and telling others about the Savior, which is the entire reason we were born.

Perhaps a few voices from the movies and other places will help us draw near to Christ this Christmas. Read this to your friends. Worship at the manger. Forgive the unforgivable. Understand the un-understandable. Do the impossible. That is where God leads, if we are willing to follow.

First, from Ebenezer Scrooge reborn, do not just like Christmas. Love Christmas, and the God who loves you.

"Yes! Yes I do! I like Christmas! I love Christmas!"

And from one of Jimmy Stewart's all time great movies, "It's A Wonderful Life," a word about angels.

"Look, Daddy. Teacher says, every time a bell rings an angel gets his wings." — Zuzu Bailey

Angels we have heard on high, singing sweetly through the night. Guardian angels who protect us daily. The angel messengers who speak to Abraham and Sarah, to Mary and Joseph, and who do the bidding of God every day, we must give thanks for them at Christmas.

And from the Charlie Brown Christmas movie, as quoted from the scripture:

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not: for behold, I bring unto you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” — Linus Van Pelt

The story goes that the TV network did not want the scripture in the movie, as it might offend some people, but Charles Shultz stood his ground, and it went in. It became one of the most successful animated movies ever, and you can see it again this year on television, dvd, or on demand television, none of which existed when the movie first aired.

In “The Christmas Story” movie, Ralphie wanted a BB Gun to make his Christmas.

"Christmas was on its way. Lovely, glorious, beautiful Christmas, upon which the entire kid year revolved." — Adult Ralphie

Christmas, we must know, is for children, but its true glory is only seen as adults see and worship Jesus in the midsts of all of life, with its disappointments, joys, and successes. It is about salvation, about redemption, about repentance, about believing in a God who is much more than we could ever be.

From the movie “The Grinch Who Stole Christmas,” we see a little further out than gifts and food/

“He who has not Christmas in his heart will never find it under a tree. Maybe Christmas,” the Grinch thought, doesn't come from a store. Christmas is joy, religious joy, an inner joy of light and peace. Christmas is the day that holds all time together. “

As Thomas Monson writes, *“Christmas is the spirit of giving without a thought of getting. It is happiness because we see joy in people. It is forgetting self and finding time for others. It is discarding the meaningless and stressing the true values.”*

And finally, Charles Dickens writes in his story, ‘The Christmas Carol,’

“Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the delusions of our childhood days, recall to the old man the pleasures of his youth, and transport the traveler back to his own fireside and quiet home!”

In our travels afar, let us always return to the manger. No matter what happens.