

Aldersgate UMC of Butte, MT
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Pastor Matthias Krier

December 24, 2021

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service - 5:30pm

Reflection

Best Present Ever! Matthias Krier

What is the best Christmas present you ever received? Like you, I have probably received some pretty fantastic Christmas presents over the years, but the best present I have ever received was not wrapped with a bow. And if we are honest, Christmas has become a bit too commercial and we are losing and actually have been losing the true meaning of Christmas for quite some time now as illustrated here in this cartoon:



However, at the same time many have lost their way to the commercial aspect of Christmas, many are simplifying by drawing names instead of trying to get everyone a gift. Many are now making gifts or making goodies instead of charging everything onto a credit card. Besides it is very stressful as well as expensive in trying to buy everyone a gift.

There is no question that many have realized that Jesus is indeed the reason for the season.



After all, whose birthday is it anyway?

Okay, okay back to the best Christmas present ever? Obviously, I cannot speak for you, but I can tell you that the best Christmas present ever for me came on December 17, 1980. Della and I had our first child, a girl and we named her Heather Elizabeth. My life changed in a moment. I was now not just a husband, but now a father. Heather changed our lives and while there were some challenging times while she was growing up, I would not trade them for anything.

Not every couple decides to have children and frankly, some couples should not have children. Having children is a calling and while hardships and conflicts occur while they are growing up, they are gifts to behold. Heather and our son Eric have brought such joy into our lives and we feel so very blessed. And now we are doubly blessed because we now have four grandchildren and there is something so very special the first time we held each of them after they were born.

Now imagine Mary & Joseph holding Jesus for the first time. Parents, I know you can relate because you know what that feels like.

For those of you who are not parents, if you have not already done so, hold a baby in your arms, with a mask of course, but hold a baby whether it is a niece or a nephew or a baby that belongs to a friend.

Something happens within us the first time we hold a baby in our arms. And just as these words you heard earlier from Georgia in the song she sang, “Mary Did You Know”, can wake us to a new reality that changes everything. Listen to these lyrics once again:

Mary did you know that your baby boy would give sight to a blind man?
Mary did you know that your baby boy would calm the storm with his hand?
Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?
When you kiss your little baby, you kiss the face of God.



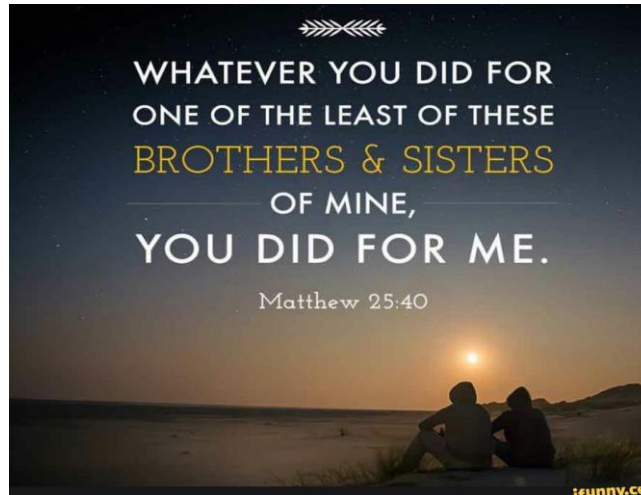
Now I have come to realize that there are millions of innocents who are not being taken care of properly in this world oftentimes because there is no room at the inn, so to speak. They are hungry, they are hurting, they are in danger and when we hear those words from Jesus, “*Whatever you did to the least of these you did it to me.*”

God asks us to live with our eyes wide open to what is happening with our children these days in schools, in inner cities, in day care centers as well as their very own homes. We hear these words:



if we see something, we say something, but are we? For many of us growing up this was not the case. If we saw something, we were told to say nothing. We were told to ignore it because it was none of our business. Well, things have changed for the better because we now know if we see something, we say something, but the question remains, "Are we?"

When we lack the courage to say something may we remember these words:



The best present ever came in the form of a baby that changed the course of history and gave us hope, peace, joy and love ... this day and everyday.

Let us pray:

A Blessing of the Light

When the days are dreary and the light is dim,
When it seems that the world is hopeless,
Full of illness, violence, and death,
Bless the tender signs of hope we see
In a newborn child, in the generosity of a stranger.

When the night is long and tragedy reigns,
When acts of hate drown out voices of justice,
Children dying, mothers crying,
Bless the tenacious love to which we cling,
Love that hangs on, though we would sink into despair.

When all around us is sadness and grief,
When each new day brings news of illness,
Stories of disease, announcements of death,
Bless the promise of a light that shines through darkness,
Light of a star, light of a smile, light of a babe.

Bless the tears,

Bless the grief,
Bless the despair,
Bless the dying.

Bless the hope,
Bless the love,
Bless the life,
Bless the light.

Come Emmanuel, God with us,
And bring us light.

Amen and so be it!

From Beth A. Richardson in *Christ Beside Me, Christ Within Me*