



Let Our Gladness Banish Sadness

Gladness and sadness meet face to face during Christmas; ironic, but true. Commercialism, like a sparkling Scrooge, has saddened Christmas for many people. Things that we can't afford overshadow the joy and goodwill that we really need. Commercialism allows us to visit the poor once a year, but will not allow us to join them even then. The lonely don't even get a visit. They are invisible to eyes blinded by red and green lights.

But there is a gladness that will not be discouraged, even though it may be disappointed. The joy of Christmas hangs in there. It hangs on trees and streetlights and memories. More and more it is ignored, replaced by plastic obligation.

The joy is that God sent a savior. God sent him to the place on earth where he would be most accepted because he was most needed. God sent him to those who are a bit late, a bit broke, a bit in the shadows, a bit misunderstood. The savior is there. The gift arrived. But lights and noise will have to be toned down to see and hear what's going on out near the animals that have not yet been roasted. Out among cows and pigs and sheep that smell more like feces than feasts is where the Christmas gift was delivered. Among shepherds who smell like sheep and later kings who smell like camels, there's where the gladness of Christmas can banish sadness. It can't be done in a banquet hall. There, too often, our gladness ignores sadness.

This essay is not meant to hang guilt on family Christmas trees or to dish it out to friends who have gathered for a Christmas meal. Rather this essay, spurred on by this hymn is an invitation to trim trees and spice meals with humility and generosity and perspective. Christmas gladness can banish sadness when it is a gift that keeps on giving. Christmas gladness can banish sadness when hearts are strung together with the Light of Christmas glowing in series, soul to soul across barriers of every sort, even the barrier that differentiates the joy of Christmas and the joy New Year.

Our gladness can banish sadness when both are properly understood in the light of scripture and the birth of Jesus.

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