

Day Twenty-five

Scripture:

Luke 2:1-7; John 1:14; John 3:16; Galatians 4:4

Reflection:

Charles Schulz wrote a popular comic strip, "Peanuts," that led to the production of A Charlie Brown Christmas for the ABC television network back in 1965. What may be the best-loved moment in the half-hour animation comes near the end. Charlie and Linus go off in search of an aluminum tree, only to have Charlie Brown picking the one sad little real tree that no one wanted. Of course, none of the other children likes the pathetic little tree, and everyone starts laughing at Charlie Brown. Finally, he shouts out in frustration, "Does anybody know what Christmas is all about!?"

Stepping out on to the empty stage with a spotlight shining on him, Linus begins reciting Luke 2:8-14. It is the moment in the show many of us wait for, year after year. It's what makes the show a classic. Interestingly, it wasn't supposed to be in the show at all.

Executives at ABC had vetoed the idea of quoting from the Bible in a cartoon show about Christmas. They were convinced it was too religious. And, on top of that, the old King James English would turn off the children who were watching it. Schulz, who was an active Christian and Sunday School teacher, stood his ground and insisted the scene had to stay or the whole thing would be canceled. ABC reluctantly agreed and the rest, as they say, is history.

Taking Jesus out of Christmas is not just a modern problem. It was a problem in the 1960s or the 1860s or the 1760s. People might like good food and pretty trees and giving toys to children. But Jesus, just as much now as ever, is often an unwelcome intrusion of religion into what ought to just be a good time. Government buildings, school music concerts, and many businesses prove that the mindset of those ABC executives in 1965 has become the standard mindset of many Americans.

Today's final passage in the Jesse Tree readings is not a passage we can add into Christmas, it is Christmas. Like Charles Schulz realized more than fifty years ago, take out this story and you have no story to tell, at all.

This passage is the good news (of "gospel") of great joy for all people. In the city of David, a Savior has been born. This is Christ the Lord.

Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing,
Come, adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo
Gloria, in excelsis Deo

Family:

Materials: If you have internet access, go to YouTube and do a search for A Charlie Brown Christmas (Full movie, 1965). You do not need to watch all of it. The scene with Linus reading from Luke 2 comes just about 20 minutes into the video. You can back up 3 or 4 minutes before that, to the place where Lucy takes over the production as Charlie and Linus go out looking for a Christmas tree.

Who is the most important person at a birthday party? Let's see. Maybe it's the person who puts up all the party decorations? Or, maybe it's the person who makes the cake? Or, maybe it's the person who brings the best present? No, it isn't any of those people. It's the person who is having the birthday.

Even though they didn't bake the cake or put up the decorations or buy any of the presents, they are the most important person at the party. Why? Because it is their birthday party. It is all about remembering when they were born and how old they are.

Whose birthday is Christmas? So, who is the most important person on Christmas? Is it the person who makes the food? Puts up the tree? Buys the best presents? No, it's Jesus, because this is His birthday party. That's why the Jesse Tree ornament for today, Christmas Day, is the baby Jesus all wrapped up and lying asleep in the hay.

Wouldn't it be very sad to go to a birthday party and not remember to invite the person who is having the birthday? Everyone is there. The cake is there. The presents are there. But, the person with the birthday is not there because no one invited her or him.

Let's watch an old cartoon movie about kids getting ready to put on a Christmas show, but they do not seem to remember what Christmas is all about. That is, until Linus decides to tell them the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke.

[play video – or, alternatively, just tell the story of a group of children only talking about getting gifts and not

remembering until one of them remembers Bible verses they learned at church and then read from Luke 2:8-14]

Prayer:

Thank God for the gift of Christmas. Take a few minutes to think of all the blessings that seem to come to families this time of year. People getting together. Making children happy. Warm houses and good food. And more people taking the time to go to church and worship.

Now, thank God for the great gift ever given on Christmas: The gift of Jesus, Himself.