

Christmas Eve
December 24, 2019
Church of the Holy Cross
The Rev. Jamie Samilio

Perspective

Earlier this evening, I read the lyrics to The Little Drummer Boy to the children. We usually sing the song almost like a dirge—“Come they told me *parumpa papum*. A newborn king to see, *parumpa papum*.” I was in my car a few weeks ago and the song came on the radio. The words “Come they told me” walked out of my mouth with some excitement, and changed the whole attitude of the song. For the first time, I heard the words as they may have been said by children, excited about getting to see a new baby, and a king at that. “Come they told me *parumpa papum*. A newborn king to see, *parumpa papum*.” I looked up the lyrics, and today I told the story with a very un-dirge like tone. Imagine the excitement of that first Christmas. The word spreads from the young shepherds, to the kids in the town. One runs past the little drummer boy, and tells him, “We are bringing gifts to the newborn king, come and see, everyone is coming to see.” The thing is, the poor drummer had only his gift of drumming to give, he had no hope of bringing something of value to leave with the King. It turns out, this newborn King has no need of any earthly gift. In fact, all that we are and all that we have was given to us by Him. Truly, the best gift we can give to Jesus, is the gift of ourselves, and we give of ourselves to each other. We feed, clothe, comfort, and love Jesus when we share ourselves and our gifts with each other. We are the greatest gift we can give to God, and to the world.

When I was a child, I remember asking my mom what she wanted for Christmas, and she always had the same answer—cooperation. For years we got her Shalimar cologne, sweaters, and things for the house. But, one year, after getting the same answer to my “what do you want for Christmas” question, my sisters I planned a day to spend cleaning and decorating the house, and then wrapping gifts and having dinner together. My mom was so happy, we all had a great time. At the end of the evening, we told my mom that this day was her early Christmas gift—she finally got the cooperation she had been asking for for some thirty years. Really, we simply gave each other the gift of ourselves, our time, our effort, our talent—it became a new Christmas tradition.

I do like getting earthly gifts as well for Christmas, and one of my favorites of all time, was a kaleidoscope. They are fascinating devices and provide the viewer with a brief escape from their view of reality. You point them toward the light and slowly turn them to reveal a spectacle of colorful, beautiful, unique, and wonder-filled images that dance through the lens. The view is truly eye candy, and for just a moment the world drops away. It is a multi-faceted lens that reflects back what is actually in front of you in imaginative ways—you just need to stay pointed toward the light, and watch the world move and change before your eyes.

During Christmas, I am often reminded of the words from the Gospel, “Unless we become like little children, we cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven.” Like hearing the words of The Little Drummer Boy in a different way, and seeing the light reflected in a new way through a kaleidoscope, opens our minds to new possibilities—the world is too large to be seen from only one point of view.

Living into the wonder of creation, staying pointed toward the light and allowing all of the changes in the world to be filtered through the lens of love—this is what I think is meant by the line from the Gospel to become like little children. I hope I never lose the wonder, the magic, and the feeling I get at Christmas—the feeling that comes with giving, with spending time with family and friends, with helping others. The feeling that comes when you simply remember to smile at people because it is the season for good will.

It should always be Christmas in our hearts. We should always be pointed toward the light that is Christ, and we should always have goodwill on our minds and love for each other. We need the message of hope

and love that comes to light at Christmas, and we need to carry that message to the world, because God knows, and I mean literally God knows that world needs a message of hope and love.

One year, without meaning to do it, I found myself one of the instruments that God would use to restore hope to someone, and I did not even plan to do it—it involved a random act of phoning a friend, that changed two lives forever.

I was the manager at American Airlines, and one night a couple of weeks before Christmas, the break room was empty except for one of my employees. The rest of the crew was working the flights. Steve and I were watching one of those Christmas shows where Santa makes everyone's biggest wish come true. I asked, "Steve, what do you want Santa to bring you this Christmas?" He said flatly, he was sure Santa would not be bringing him what he really wanted, there was no hope in that. I pushed a little, I said, "Come on Steve, surely you remember believing in Santa as a kid, there must have been some time when you asked for something you thought was impossible and got it? Steve smiled, he told me about a childhood Christmas wish come true, as he spoke, for just a moment, I swear I saw this 40-something man, turn into a 10-year old boy, smiling and full of hope. (I actually did a double take.) I asked, "So what do you really want that you think is impossible? Steve told me when he lost his job the prior year, he also lost his car, and without it, caring for his family and getting to work was really tough. "I want Santa to bring me a car," he said. We both fell silent, and went back to watching the TV Santa do the impossible.

I could not shake our conversation from my head, and the next day I started asking people if anyone was getting a new car and donating the old one. I posted on Facebook, no response. Then, a week later, my sister-in-law told me her neighbors were getting a new car and would give Steve the old one. I did not expect this call. I had done everything in my power to make this happen to no avail. Clearly, there was a greater power at work. When I told Steve, "Santa must have been listening—you are getting a car for Christmas," he was speechless. I am not sure who was more surprised, Steve or me. I did very little, I just asked a question on behalf of Steve. An unplanned conversation, a random phone call with an unlikely request, yielded an outcome that changed both of our lives. This experience taught me that what we do, especially when we are trying to restore hope for another, matters. I also learned that living into the wonder of God's love, most often yields positive outcomes.

We are the light of the world. You are the light of the world. Do not stay in the moment, but carry the light of Christmas with you today, tomorrow and all the days of your life. The "perfect moment" is now, so let your light so shine.

With awe and wonder, come worship the King of kings, and Lord of lords, our God incarnate. Come and let us adore Him, and let us bring gifts, and share our hope, our joy, and our love with each other. Give "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" Live into the wonder of all creation. This Christmas and always, remember to point your lens toward the light, and behold the beauty of the love of God. Happy Christmas!

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Isaiah 9:2-7, Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-14(15-20), Psalm 96

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