

“Words of Wisdom”

“Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Luke 2:49b

A few days before preschool dismissal for Thanksgiving recess, my grandson Wyatt learned something very, very important about Santa Claus. On that memorable Friday, Miss Tammy had told the whole class that Santa Claus comes down the chimney when he delivers Christmas presents. Now when Wyatt heard this surprising news he had a whole lot of trouble containing his desire to get home and check out his chimney. So when he finally did get home he burst open the door and ran over to the fireplace to see how this thing that his teacher had told him could be true. Slowly, he knelt down on the hearth, fearfully poked his head through the mouth of the darkened fire monster, and cautiously raised up his eyes to the chimney’s top. “Hell-o Santa. Are you up there?” he softly inquired. When no one answered back, confounded but not defeated, he went to plan B. “Henry, come, quick!” he called with great urgency to his cousin. “Miss Tammy said that Santa Claus comes down the chimney! Is it true? How does he do it?” he asked. Since Henry didn’t know, the two three year olds put their heads together, examined the fireplace, and talked about it for a full half hour. “Does he live up there?” “Does he slide down? “What does he say when he comes out?” “Ho, Ho, Ho,” said Henry.” “No he doesn’t,” exclaimed Wyatt, “he says, boo!”

During Christmas the church has a different, very, very important story to tell. We tell the Christian story of faith about Jesus. On Christmas Eve we put our hearts and heads together and wonder about the Mystery of the Incarnation. With the shepherds we bow in humble adoration and look upon the radiance of the infant Jesus’ face. With the light of the star, we beam with nature’s wisdom that Jesus is Emmanuel, God With Us. With the angels we proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God. With the ancients we write poems about what God coming down from heaven into earth in the person of Jesus means for us today.

Rejoice, my soul!

The Savior came, the ancient promise to fulfill  
That God in mercy would redeem lost sinners,  
For He loved them still.

Rejoice my soul!

The Savior comes,  
Whom time and space cannot contain,  
And lives in humble hearts today  
To gladden, strengthen, and sustain.  
Rejoice, my soul, in sacred awe!  
For he in might will come again,  
The might of Truth, the might of Love---  
The Truth, the Love that judges men.

Victor Beck

On the first Sunday after Christmas the church tells an identity story of a different kind. We remember the time when the boy Jesus who had descended from his Father’s home in heaven ---through the house and lineage of David--- ended up in his Heavenly Father’s home in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. In a growing up report of Jesus’ separation and individuation from Jesus’ family of origin, Luke has Jesus acknowledge that he is God’s son. “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” In this coming of age account, the gospel writer also confirms the church’s belief that Jesus was filled with best of Jewish wisdom of God. More importantly, in this lost and found story of claiming his identity as God’s son, the church proclaimed that Jesus lived his life in perfect obedience to the reign of God.

In their short essay, **The Fulfillment of God’s Promise**, Biblical scholars Paul and Elizabeth Achtemier wrote: *Through every book of the New Testament, the fulfillment in Christ can be traced. He is the new Israel and the new Messiah upon whom the spirit of God is poured out. He is the descendant of David, ruling over a universal kingdom. He is the Messiah of peace, bringing justice, righteousness, and faithfulness to His people in the strength of the Lord. In infinite detail, the New Testament proclaims that He is the One expected, on page after page, it testifies that God has kept his solemn promise.*

*Perhaps first and foremost, however we should understand Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the obedient Son. Through the course of the Gospels we can trace His obedience: His refusal in His desert temptations to serve any other ruler but God, His rejection of even the closest human ties as more important than His relationship with His heavenly Father, His total subjection of man's life with man to God's will and purpose for the community, His constant refusal in His dealings with the scribes and Pharisees to conform to merely human standards of morality and religion. In every deed and word, Jesus acknowledged the sole lordship of God until His obedience brought Him finally to a dark garden called Gethsemane, where in sorrow and agony He sweated out His final SURRENDER, "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). Here was the true Son of God. Here was the descendant of Abraham and of David who perfectly followed His heavenly Father. Here was the new Israel, the One of unshakable faith. Here was the obedient Israel whom God could use for His purpose (O Holy Night, p. 24).*

"Thy will be done." That's what the obedient Son of God says when Christmas wisdom comes to enlighten our hearts and guide our way. **Christmas Comes**, writes poet Ann Weems,

Christmas comes every time we see God in other persons.

The human and the holy meet in Bethlehem or in Times Square.

For Christmas comes like a golden storm on its way to Jerusalem---

Determinedly, inevitably . . .

Even now it comes in the face of hatred and warring---

No atrocity too terrible to stop it,

No Herod strong enough, no hurt deep enough,

No curse shocking enough,

No disaster shattering enough.

For someone on earth will see the star,

Someone will hear the angel voices,

Someone will run to Bethlehem,

Someone will know peace and goodwill:

The Christ will be born!

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.