

Jan. 7, 2018

A moral conundrum

I hope you all had a *holy* and jolly Christmas season! It's Jesus's birthday, and if anyone knows how to throw a party, it's Jesus! Water into wine? Loaves and fishes? I bet he had some great appetizers, too!

I don't mean to sound facetious. It's just that it's amazing to think about all the things—the little things, the nuances, those mini-events lost in the atmosphere of the moment—that aren't included in the Bible.

Like the lute player who may have sat near the Savior as the throngs enjoyed their meal of fish and bread. Perhaps the Lord amplified the sound—as he did the loaves and fishes—reverberating the soft tunes across the rolling hills, bouncing off of trees and stones, the lone musician sending his delicate music across the acres.

And maybe, just maybe, at another gathering, there was a person—maybe the Cana bride—who liked to tell jokes. And maybe it was this woman to whom Jesus said, "Tell the one about the tax collector and the Pharisee! *You're gonna love this one!*"

Or the man who came to Jesus asking him to heal his finger: "Okay, Philip, let me take a look. Oh, for goodness sake, it's just a splinter! You don't need an act of God. Let me just give it a little yank. There. All better."

I wonder how long it would take to recite all the words of Christ included in the Bible. I mean, just imagine all those precious words he spoke that the scripture writers either didn't know about, or didn't deem important enough to be included! I'm certain that there were words and stories passed along by people who had a *simple* experience with Christ. *Wondrous*, of course, but simple nonetheless—not earth moving, just memorable to them. Like we all have throughout our lives.

I was thinking about Christ's life on earth the other day when I returned to Spearville after spending Christmas with my folks in Colorado. I thought about all the people who needed healing in the days when Christ walked the earth.

There had to have been times when Christ said, "Man, this is just too much! Help me, Father!"

What drew my thoughts to this subject was that after being away for five days for Christmas, I had in my mail box letters from the following organizations addressed to me, asking for financial help (this is true!): Salvation Army, American Cancer Society, Food for the Poor, Christian Appalachian Project, Homeless Veterans, Catholic Relief Services, Special Olympics, Alzheimer's Disease, Feed the Children, Covenant House, American Cancer Society, Relief for Puerto Rico, March of Dimes, Disabled American Veterans, The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, and Toys for Tots.

That's 16 different organizations!

Many requests included as gifts pages of little adhesive return address stickers (with various spellings of my last name). I once received one here at work for a Mr. Southwest Kansas Register. Yep. I could live to be 150, and I won't run out of little adhesive return address stickers. I'm thinking of papering my kitchen. That way if my house ever gets stolen, they'll know where to return it.

Of course I can't help *all* of these organizations, yet every time I throw an envelope away a little bit of guilt eats away at me. So many people in so much need.

Adding to the guilt is that along with the requests for money *really did* come the following catalogues, all in the same stack of mail!: *Swiss Colony, Daedalus Books, Brussel's Bonsai, Ignatius Press, Acorn, Kansas City Steak, The Vermont Country Store, Blair, Catalog Favorites, Whatever Works, Preferred Living, Dr. Leonard's, Haband, Collectors Chaise Music, Video Collection, Hammacher Schlemmer, PBS, Bas Bleu, Betty's Attic, Victorian Trading, and the SW Indian Foundation.*

I've since realized that many of these catalogues are from the same company, but use different titles so you think you're being given a variety of choices. If you order from one, more will be on their way.

Talk about a moral conundrum!

Did I throw these catalogues away as I did the requests for money? Well, not until I took a look. Just a quick look mind you. Just in case.

Man, I really like that Easter Island head Kleenex dispenser. And the tee-shirt that says, "Never trust an atom. They make up everything." And the DVD collection of old B sci-fi movies, like "The Man from Planet X." Hmmmm. Only \$14 for the DVD...

Considering that Jesus's entire life was predestined to exist for the sake of others, it's probably a given that he would have forgone "The Man from Planet X" in order to help those less fortunate. Plus, they didn't have DVD players back then. Or DVDs. Or the "Man from Planet X" for that matter (although they did have the stage play).

In that little Christ-child born on Christmas day we see the ultimate lesson in giving. Have I gotten the message?

It's a battle we all face. As a Christian, I wish I could help everyone. But as a human being, I have a hard enough time helping one or two.

Fortunately, the burden of helping everyone in need is one we don't have to carry. An act of kindness here, sharing the good Word there, and yes, offering financial help, is within the scope of our everyday lives.

But saving all of human kind? That task has been placed on the shoulders of a tiny babe—an immigrant born in poverty on Christmas Day—a burden He accepted fully out of His unconditional love for each and every one of us.