

Holy Family B 2017

It Is Jesus!

The great philanthropist Stanley S. Kresge was often in the company of college presidents or other fund-raisers asking for endowment or financial aid. During the course of discussion, Mr. Kresge would always ask one question, "Do you think the world is better today than it was 2,000 years ago?" I'd like to ask you that question today. Is the world any better after 2,000 years since Christ came? I say to you on this closing Sabbath of the second millennium, that it is Jesus Christ and his teachings that lie behind all the efforts at social reform. It was he who put an end to slavery. It was Jesus who abolished the gladiatorial shows of ancient Rome. It was Jesus who elevated the status of women. It was Jesus who sanctified childhood. It was Jesus, who by his emphasis upon the worth of human personality conferred on us our liberty. It is Jesus who has given us a new way of life, a new standard of conduct, a new power for living. Christ can save our world when Jesus is born again in the hearts of men and women. [by William K. Quick from *Seeing and Believing* (Luke 2:22-40), on *The Protestant Hour*]

The Coming of Christ Was to Simple Folk!

I have an embarrassing confession to make. I realized only a few days ago what Luke is trying to do in this text. For years I had read it and made the unwarranted assumption that old Simeon was a priest. Anna is described as a prophetess so I assumed Simeon a priest -- good balance and symmetry. But something about the text kept nagging me. And then I realized what it was. Simeon was not a priest at all. He was a simple old man -- a layman -- an ordinary person. And Anna was not an official prophetess. She was merely a devout old woman who came to the temple a lot. Luke was only underlining a point he had begun to make by telling about the shepherds who were called from their fields and flocks to worship Christ: The coming of Christ was to simple folk! Luke, did you notice, doesn't even tell the story of the wise men; that's Matthew. Luke's whole concern, in the stories surrounding the birth of Jesus, is to emphasize one thing: Christianity is based on the faith of simple folk. Come to think of it, that's what Luke's whole Gospel is about. It's what the book of Acts is about. Luke wrote the book of Acts. It wasn't the priest and Pharisees who received the Kingdom of God, it was the laypeople, the untutored, the untrained, the unsophisticated. It was simple fishermen like James and John and Peter. It was unimportant public officials

like Matthew. It was women like Mary and Martha and Mary Magdalene. Christianity my friends, has never been a religion of Priest and theologians, minister's and teachers; from the very beginning it has been a religion of devout men and women with no claim whatsoever to professional expertise about their faith. This is important to remember. God never intended the church to be an organization of ministers. What he did intend it to be is an organization of laypersons, all "righteous and devout" like old Simeon, all devoted to fasting and prayer like old Anna, and all ready, in simple faith, to receive his Kingdom and rejoice in it. Ministers, in Christianity, are expendable; good, simple folk are not! (by James W. Cox from *The Minister's Manual 1995*, New York: Harper, 1994, p. 275.)

Once upon a time there was a family which decided that it wanted to go away for Christmas to some place warm - the family lived in one of the snow belts. Actually it was only the mother who wanted to go. The kids objected because they wanted to spend Christmas with the friends. The father objected because he liked to shovel snow with his power-driven snow plow. The dogs didn't get to vote because they wouldn't go to a warmer climate anyway but to a kennel (where they would make themselves right at home with the other Christmas orphan dogs). Anyway the mother wanted to go away more than the others didn't so she won the argument, though neither side was completely gracious. WELL, they left in plenty of time for the airport, but got caught in a traffic jam and missed their plane by five minutes. They had to sleep at the airport and catch a plane the next morning. Unfortunately the morning plane was cancelled and they had to wait stand-by for the afternoon flight on which they all got on (though spread out all over the cabin) at the last minute. The plane was late in landing at the warm place, because of thunderstorms and high winds. They got to their hotel to find that their reservations had been cancelled because they had not show up in time. They were put in another hotel with a skimpy and unheated pool, but that didn't matter because the weather was so bad that swimming was impossible. They played Jeopardy in the lobby of the hotel. Only on the last day of their Christmas vacation did the weather warm up and golf and tennis became possible. The mother felt terrible, but the others said they didn't mind because it had been a fun trip anyway. (Andrew Greeley)