

The Word's Eye View

The Word's Eye View is a newspaper column written by
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"What America Needs... More Christmas" (Article 25)

For years my wife has maintained that I am Ebenezer Scrooge's first cousin, but I now choose to take advantage of this public forum to repent. I have come to the conclusion that what America needs is more, not less, Christmas. Santa Claus, jingle bells, the merchandising of gifts, trees, lights and music are not the part of the story that is desperate for compounding, but rather the original narrative should be told and retold.

The angel appeared to Joseph with the message, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matt.1:21)

It's reasonable to assume that Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich presided over a variety of events that emphasized the secular aspect of the holidays, but the mounting evidence indicates he missed the sin message. To evaluate one's own sin is unpopular because the associated feelings bring an immediate sense of negativity that most attempt to avoid. The warm fuzzy feelings of gift exchange are far more welcomed---or at least until one hears the steel doors of prison shut behind them. Quite possibly, the governor would have greatly benefited from a direct confrontation of his sins. Illinois has a long and storied history of political chicanery which includes bribes, payoffs and courtroom fixes. Perhaps the state legislature should order a nativity scene to be constructed on every courthouse and public school property with the "sin" verse displayed in large letters.

According to FBI statistics more that 1800 federal state and local officials have been convicted of public corruption nationwide in the last two years. Washington State's Governor Christine Gregoire has allowed an atheist group to place a sign denouncing the idea of God next to a nativity scene in front of the state capitol. Which display do you suppose would better serve the purpose of curtailing crime? The suggestion of the infidel is there is no God, consequently, no judgment for sin. This philosophy led Gov. Blagojevich to conclude the end justifies the means. To ponder the real Christmas leads to the inevitable question "Why did Christ come?"

According to a December 1st Associated Press release a recent survey revealed that 30 percent of U.S. high school students have stolen from a store, and 64 percent have cheated on a test. In addition 83 percent admitted to having lied to a parent about something significant, and 36 percent have used the internet to plagiarize an assignment. Despite such responses, 93 percent of the students said they were satisfied with their personal ethics and character, and 77 percent affirmed that "when it comes to doing what is right, I am better than most people I know." Michael Josephson, founder and president of the Josephson Ethics Institute which conducted the survey of 29,760 students, expressed dismay at the findings and wondered out loud if Americans are too apathetic about ethical standards. A strong dose of the genuine Christmas may serve our society well in shrinking our "self esteem" that appears to be so askewed.

Several years ago I pastored a church that supported a missions organization working in eastern Siberia. Repeated attempts were made to wire funds through Russian banks to the missionaries, but the money was consistently pilfered or "misplaced." The final solution was to send it via a

personal courier which was expensive in itself. About that same time the Weyerhaeuser Co. brokered a deal with the Soviets to build a large lumber operation in that same area. The contract called for the large percentage of workers to be locals. The natural resources were abundant, and the opportunity was tremendous but tragically the plant closed in a relatively short time. Why? The employees were stealing the company blind when they weren't loafing. It seems one of the few things the Russians have worked hard at over the last 100 years is to secularize their culture. The results are obvious. America seems to be incapable of simple observation for by all indications we are determined to travel the same path.

A secondary but important aspect of the Christmas story is the appearance of the wise men. "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him;" (Matthew 2:11) Without any introductory explanation God's Word simply declares these gentlemen to be wise, leaving it up to us to discern why. Clearly, these men had spent countless hours if not years researching the Old Testament passages to learn about the sign of the star (Numbers 24:17), and the timetable of its appearance that the prophet Daniel predicted. The Bible gives us, as it did them, accurate looks into the future that are ignored by the majority. The chief priest and scribes (the religious heavyweights) knew the Messianic scriptures and rehearsed them for Herod but refused to travel the five miles to Bethlehem to investigate. This nation is still occupied by plenty of churches that will communicate these blessed truths next Sunday, but most of our citizens will opt for football or some other replacement therapy all the while wondering why Junior is heading for jail.

Could it be that the good old USA has become an insane asylum run by the inmates? God, give us more wise men and more Christmas!