



# NightLight

A NEWSLETTER OF McLEAN MINISTRIES

"take heed....as to a light that shines in a dark place." II Peter 1:19

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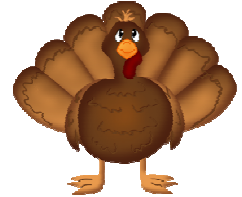
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## Dear Friends,

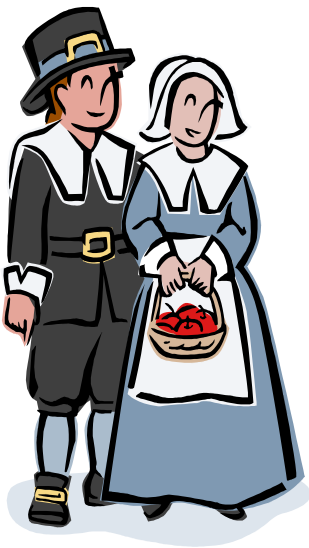


The ancient church never separated the celebrations marking specific events in the life of the Lord Jesus. They would not recognize a manger without a cross. The very core meaning of the Incarnation was that God had become Man, in order to die for man, to bring man back to God. Our spiritual forebears would not recognize Christmas (which the very word invokes within it the death on the Cross) apart from Good Friday and the Resurrection.

I am not sure which is more life draining; a mindless embracing of the current cultural mix, or a tedious rebuke of it. I don't want to play either Santa or Scrooge. The celebration of Life and Love which the season provides for, is a time for giving and receiving. That is simply a good pure thing. Remember the White Witch in **The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe**, when she came upon the little animals celebrating around their table because Aslan was coming? She turned livid with rage and screamed at them, "And what is the meaning of this waste? This indulgence?" Satan hates life and love and joy.

Celebrating life, love, and joy is always a godly thing. God is honored in it even among those who may not fully grasp all the meaning. That is why as a boy I could not help but notice and be moved by the way the Christmas season seemed to make people I loved love each other more. Sentiments are the God-given human means of sharing, communicating, and commemorating the things in life that are most precious, that make life worth living. I enjoy how often I hear men confess (as if it is a big surprise) that certain movies, songs, or even Hallmark Cards have been known to make them cry. Welcome to the human race!

I once stood in a department store many years ago and was suddenly gripped with emotion the



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first time I saw the now well-known image of Santa bowing at the manger on his knees, hat in hand, with a worshipful expression. It made me cry. But when I told it to a group of Christian friends expecting them to be at least somewhat positive, one well-meaning but intense person said, “I don’t care what it was trying to say. If it had Santa in it, then it’s all from the devil!” She went on to explain that the spelling of Santa and satan were proof of... well, you get the idea. I didn’t argue with her. Thankfully, I did not have to refuse the good of what I felt and drown in the negative of her words. I recognized her concern without it tarnishing the truth that shone into my heart.

A religious spirit can turn every joy into a waste, an indulgence. But where is the danger in my positive point of view? Is there one? I would say yes, and it is whenever we focus on ‘sweet baby Jesus’ as if His humanity is all that really matters. It becomes merely an emotional warm and fuzzy exalting of human relationships – mother and child, friends and family, and childhood dreams. We celebrate Christmas for the sake of the children, we say. These are all valid good things that certainly should evoke our best responses. But the moment we let the goodness of it all consume us, we have no need of a Savior to die for us. We downplay the Cross to avoid facing the terrible cost God had to pay to save that very goodness. Any time we separate the Cross from the manger, we move from good sentiments to sentimentality. There should be the presence of the Cross always shadowing the birth of our Lord. This is the full Redemption Story – the Incarnation, the birth and life Jesus lived on earth, His death, His Cross, His resurrection – all to bring us home to the Father, redeeming all creation in His wake.

What is dangerous about mere sentimentality? It may be the most dangerous weapon in satan’s current arsenal against reality. Sentimentality is the offer of a heaven without the Cross. It seeks to celebrate victory without any battle. Sentimentality is not a form of sentiment that has been taken a bit overboard. It is an antichrist counterfeit of good sentiments. The two can no more be reconciled than a straight and crooked line could be made one. Just as the religious spirit is the counterfeit of standing for truth, so sentimentality is the counterfeit of reality which only the Cross could save. Sentimentality wants warm fuzzy feelings, but it abhors facing truth that brings conviction that leads to deep repentance and godly sorrow. It has no interest in God’s heart, only its own emotions. It is why some go on and on about the loving God who would never judge. Such a non-judging God cannot be a loving one, for he would be unable to tell the difference between good or evil. Such a god would be a devil.

Is sentimentalism in reaction to a too overbearing harshness in some preaching? Certainly it can be in some cases. But mostly I believe it is the product of a culture that is simply far too indulged; too adept at amusement and self entertainment. Our generation in the West is overfed and underworked, and geniuses at avoiding the acknowledgement of the true suffering of the rest of the world and the sin which causes that suffering. Such a people who can hide from the evil of sin will then easily hide from

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the reality of the Cross also. We deny both the condition and its only cure, so we have larger and larger churches with less and less truth.

I always have HOPE. This can turn around. I think maybe evidence that it already is might be heard in the lyrics of the relatively new Christmas song, *Mary Did You Know*. It has thankfully been played on both Christian and secular stations, by both Christian and non Christian artists. And its message is full of deep meaningful sentiment that is far from sentimental. It does not exalt the best in the human spirit while ignoring the worst of man's need. In one succinct phrase, Mark Lowery sums it up: "*Mary did you know this baby boy has come to make you new... this child that you've delivered will soon deliver you.*" How will He deliver her? Through the blood of His Cross. Let our Thanksgiving begin and continue always here: **Glorious now behold Him arise, King and God and Sacrifice. Alleluia, Alleluia, Heaven to Earth replies...**



## Your Audio Message

Your audio message this month, *The Great Thanksgiving*, was originally recorded for this season of the year back in 2006. It, along with two other coming messages, are ones we believe need to be reencountered. We never send you a mere filler. So please listen with an open heart. We believe the Holy Spirit wants to speak new things through this older message.



## Closing Thoughts...



You, our *Nightlight* family, are the dear folks who keep our ministry vibrant. Thank you from our deep hearts for listening and obeying the Lord in your prayer and financial support. Every day, every week, every month, every year, is because of His faithfulness through you all that enables us to carry on spreading the truth in love as God leads. Thank you for sharing the work of this, His ministry, alongside us. So often, we both sense you holding up our arms when we are weak. May His Name be adored and magnified in all we are, in all we do, and in all we say. Have a blessed and holy Thanksgiving season.

*Giving Thanks,  
Clay & Mary*



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