



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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Dear Friends,



A wise farmer had a son, a horse, and a neighbor. One morning the son rode off on the horse to market in the city, but in the hills the horse threw him and wandered off. So the son went back home by himself. The neighbor said, "What a misfortune!" "How do you know?" the farmer replied.

The next day, the son set off to look for the lost horse. He found it, and in addition brought back a splendid wild stallion, proud at his skill in catching him. The neighbor exclaimed, "What good fortune!" "How do you know?" said the farmer.

The next morning the son began breaking in the stallion, but it threw him, and the son broke his arm. "What a misfortune!" said the neighbor. "How do you know?" said the farmer.

The next morning the king's recruiting officer came to the village to conscript the young men for war. Because of his temporary incapacity the son escaped military service. "What good fortune!" said the neighbor. "How do you know?" said the farmer.

The next morning... The next morning... The next morning...



This ancient Chinese parable points to the reality that is true to all human experience. We cannot accurately judge events from this side of heaven. Sitting on their own, events can tell us nothing. Judging only based on a present occurrence leaves God's providential care and wisdom out of your life, making room for evil to order your affairs.

Just a moment, now, you who say: "We are going to such-and-such a city today or tomorrow. We shall stay there a year doing business and make a profit!" How do you know what will happen even tomorrow? What, after all, is your life? It is like a puff of smoke visible for a little while and then dissolving into thin air. Your remarks should be prefaced with, "If it is the Lord's will, we shall still be alive and shall do so-and-so." As it is, you get a certain pride in yourself in planning your future with such confidence. That sort of pride is all wrong. (James 4:13-16 - Phillips translation)

To assume we can choose and determine our future is not a current trend. It is a human one. This way of false reasoning contributes to our anxiety of the moment, and greatly hinders our ability to rest in God. Jesus instructed us: **Don't worry at all about tomorrow. Tomorrow can take care of itself! One day's trouble is enough for one day. (Matthew 6:34)** Once you begin to seriously examine patterns of presumptuous control over your day to day existence, your mind will begin to clear. You will begin to see how anxious thoughts over the many things you have no control over have been ruling you. And you will begin to see the one and only thing you do have in your hands is this present moment! You cannot wield much control over the present moment because the time it takes to observe it vanishes as you are observing it! So on the one hand, it is the only thing you have control over, and on the other, it is instantly out of your reach! So why not stop allowing anxious thoughts to dominate you in the present moment? And, instead, **LIVE FULLY**, moment by moment! Pull aside with God, and rest with Him. There with Him, you will begin to discover yourself. You will find how much of your moment by moment energy is being wasted on things you cannot control. And better yet, you will begin to hear His Voice. He is the only One who is outside of Time who speaks the living words of LIFE, and enables you to simply BE content in all the present moments of every day. Out of this new way of living you begin to live **NOW**. It is living in this timeless realm called NOW, where God-given creative direction produces fruitfulness that is free from anxiety. Because we are human, this kind of living takes practice. We must all learn to practice His Presence in and with us, every day, even every moment. Don't be discouraged when you forget Him, or when you fail. Rather, be glad that you remembered! And as we adopt this practice in our lives, an incredible joy and simple humility will grow and flourish as we love and obey Him day by day, until Home.



Greetings from our family to yours!





Movie Review: **The Best Christmas Pageant Ever**

The title may not have caught your eye since it has been years that such a holiday film was worth your interest. This one is! Many of you may remember this story line from its original book debut of the mid 1970s. It has taken all this time to reach the attention of film makers. Thankfully, it landed in the hands of trustworthy and capable creative hands. And they have produced a rare combination: a really well made, funny, and non-religious message that is certainly worth your attention and support.

The story line concerns the small town of Emmanuel, which has one claim to fame: a seventy-five year record of producing the regional church Christmas pageant. It is the exact same format every year with special privileged people in control. And it looks to be the same this year. But unexpected events open the way for the most feared, rejected, and uncivilized invasion of young sibling interlopers to take over the production.

The unfolding events pave the way for an exposure of self righteous churchiness, which leads to the revelation of the real Christmas story to everyone, both the church members and the unchurched. The conclusion is that everyone who watches gets a clear convicting picture of our American pseudo Christian failure to present Christ to the ones He primarily came to reach with His love.

It is very funny! Even the humor further underscores the gentle rebukes. It is moment by moment convicting. It is ultimately deeply moving, as the Real Presence descends, resulting in what turns out to be **The Best Christmas Pageant Ever**.

Do yourself and your family a favor, and make seeing this film a new holiday traditional event for all of you. Even now in the New Year, take time to watch this wonderful story. It will be a great conversation starter and may become a source of healing to unpack what is true and good from what is only religious legalism and fluff, not only in our own heads, but in those of our loved ones as well.

Closing Thoughts...



Another holiday season is coming to a close. Do you question how much of our holiday activity is a meaningful expression of real love for God and for others, and how much is still a carried over expression of our own over-focused self centeredness? I am not prodding. Rather, I am honestly self questioning. This current national atmosphere is a good season for such self examination. Lord, help us see things through your eyes, as You grow us up in love.

*With thanksgiving and blessings in the New Year of our Lord,
Clay and Mary*



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