



Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church *Terry's Treasures*

Miracle in our Messiness!

What in the world is going on? Sale upon sale upon sale; extra “black” days of sales; stores opening up on Thanksgiving Day for Christmas shopping; Christmas trees lit up before Hallowe’en; and Advent. Huh? Advent!

Back in my even more cynical days one of my favorite singers/comedians (also cynical) inserted stuff in his program for Christmas: Angels we have heard on high tell us to go out and buy; God rest ye merry merchants may you make the yuletide pay; oh let the raucous sleigh bells jingle, hail our dear old friend, Kris Kringle. Obviously that’s not the whole song, but you get his point. The Christ of Christmas has been lost amongst all the “I wants” of the season.

I know we can’t change the world but we can try to bring our own lives into order. With all the noise and delights(?) that are raining down around us, we need to give ourselves a time of contemplation and preparation.

Try to imagine – unless you remember it well – what the pre-Christmas season must have been like in 1941. War was raging in Europe and we, as a country, were trying to remain neutral, although many of our citizens traveled abroad to join in the battles. And then came December 6th (in Hawaii), the 7th on the mainland. Shock, the war had come “home”. The peace and quiet we had tried to maintain had come to an end. As a country we had to pick ourselves up and start all over again. The attack on Pearl Harbor had happened.

We certainly don’t want another equivalent of that horrid day, although September of ’01 came as a similar shock and really sent us into war again.

I believe there are some things we need to do and one is to remember that God is with us in this world. There are times, I’m sure, when we all wonder about that, but we really know it’s true. Horrible things happen, but somehow we survive as a nation.

Also, when horrible things happen, we really can’t shut our lives down completely. Things will change for us, but, as the saying goes, life goes on.

So, we give gifts because of the great gift God gave us – and let's not forget that's the reason. One of our missions as adults is to somehow – and this will be different for each of us – teach children that Christmas is not first of all for toys. Christmas is to celebrate the wonder of God's gifts to us! The whole world tells us to shop 'til we drop, so it's a difficult message to get through.

Here, in this place, we try to offer some peace and some quiet. Here, in this place, we try to counter the screams of the world and bring to the fore the true joy of the season. But even here we get a bit insane with concerts and programs and "greening" and Advent dinners and the like. But we also enlarge our worship times with the hope that all of us will appreciate the quiet goodness of creation and the silent infiltrating of God's goodness and gifts into our lives.

It's Advent. Light the candles. Take time to rest and remember, meditate and give thanks. Pray for each other and the world. Give gifts out of thanks, not out of a feeling of necessity or because of the constant harping of sellers or "wanters". Find meaningful gifts for meaningful places. Christ is the greatest gift – don't forget!

TMK

-- *Week of December 4, 2011*