

✳ Christ amid the Wrappings 🧑

This time of year, everywhere you look, you see red, white, and green, sleigh bells, reindeer, and a big guy in a red suit, and somewhere, between the Animatronic Hula-Dancing Santas and the 30" inflatable Rudolph, complete with 500-watt flashing red nose, you'll find a few small boxes with dolls, one of which is a baby laying in a bed of straw. And the nativity scenes are usually inaccurate as well: the baby is rarely swaddled in the manger, and in the Bible, the Wise Men, whose number nobody but God and the residents of heaven know (There weren't necessarily 3.), didn't actually arrive in Bethlehem until months later, by which time Joseph had moved his new family into a house in Bethlehem, probably to avoid the ridicule they got in Nazareth for Mary's premarital pregnancy.

As a Christian, it's frustrating to see the attention that Santa gets compared to Jesus, and many Christians have boycotted Santa altogether. While I respect that choice and understand the motivation behind it, our family has always welcomed Santa into our home with open arms (or at least a plate of cookies). Why?

Since the flashing lights tend to outshine the Light of the world this time of year, it's easy to overlook the Savior in the manger, and sadly, most do just that. Yet what other time of year do you find a considerable variety of merchandise at Wal*mart depicting one of the greatest messages from the Bible? Under what other circumstances would you hear music on secular radio stations proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God? Even though it's too rare during this season, it's completely absent the rest of the year! A little is better than nothing at all.

While the legend of the candy cane and its symbolism are largely false—it was designed by a Roman Catholic priest to keep kids quiet during church services, shaped like a shepherd's crook to remind them of the shepherds of Bethlehem, but not striped until years later—it still holds Christian symbolism. Christmas trees find their history in medieval Christian theater: the trees used to be hung with apples to represent the tree in the Garden of Eden as well as the cross, and the custom was first introduced to America by a Lutheran pastor who would later become a president of the LCMS. Even Old Saint Nick can be found in Christian history—a pastor with a special love for children.

So in the midst of all the commercialism, He is still there: a little baby-God in a feeding trough—come to die on a cross to take away all of your sin, and He is still "God with us" today. May your Christmas, whether Santa visits your home or not, be one of joy, for "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord."