

***Make My Christmas***  
A Message for Christmas Eve

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*My getting ready for Christmas...*

At least, my getting ready for this moment on Christmas Eve, began on Thanksgiving. But not in the way it did for so many others - at the mall or shopping for that *Black Friday* special. Instead, it started as I walked down the hallway to my father-in-law's apartment. In front of his neighbor's door I saw a copy of the local paper. Glancing down at it, I was caught off guard the main headline which read: "*Let The Shopping Begin!*"

"Really?" I thought.

Not, "*Its Thanksgiving*" and reminding its readers of those things they should be or could be thankful for? Or, not of the ceasefire had just been negotiated between the Palestinians in Gaza and the Israelis with that the reality that innocent women and men and children, in that volatile part of the world, might live to see another day? Instead of either of those options or anything else the editors could have chosen, it was decided that the most important news of the day was

"*Let The Shopping Begin.*"

I took a picture of the paper and posted it on Facebook with my somewhat sarcastic comment.

But, the *Christmas Spirit* on Thanksgiving Day did not end there.

In fact, it was just getting started.

A little while later, we were watching the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. And even before Santa arrived at the end of the parade, a commercial came on featuring a person rushing from store to store juggling an arm full of shopping bags. The commercial ended with the person looking directly at the camera...and directly at me saying, "*Make my Christmas.*"

I went for my run that morning thinking about the newspaper headline and the commercial I had seen and asking myself, if it wasn't a shopping spree and an arm full of shopping bags, what would *make my Christmas*.

And, that is what I want to ask you tonight.

In all seriousness...

Here on Christmas Eve...

What will *make your Christmas* this year?

Maybe some of that has already happened in the weeks and days just past, but I wonder...

Is there something else?

Something in these few moments here in this place?

Or something in the next 24 hours that you need to do or want to do that will touch or renew or deepen your spirit? What will help Christmas move from frantic expectations and doing your best to make everyone happy to that deep breath that settles into the depths of your heart and mind and soul and turns you in the direction of that which is truly the most important?

I know there are multiple layers to what Christmas means and to what makes it meaningful.

Some of it has to do with friends and families who make the time to be together again.

Some of it has to do with watching our children or grandchildren in their excitement and wonder.

Some of it has to do with family traditions which link one year to the next and one generation to the next.

But here is what I have found myself thinking about in that space of time between Thanksgiving and now. Is there something in these moments here this evening that might help you *make your Christmas*? Something about this gathering of family and friends, neighbors and strangers who, like you, have intentionally stepped out of the darkness and into this sacred space, and away from family gatherings or from wrapping or unwrapping gifts to be...here...together?

Maybe there is something about this age-old story about the birth of a child, whom Scripture claims, comes to be *God with us* that you long to hear again.

That you need to hear again.

Because for you it is that reminder that that which we know and name as God is not God above you or God looking down on you or God judging you, but *God with you*.

Just as we are today.

Just as you are today.

With whatever combination of heartbreak or hope you feel.

With whatever mixture of certainty and searching that makes up your life.

Maybe there is there something in that age old message;

Something about the promise and possibility that your very human, very ordinary, everyday life, however it is, is interwoven with the Holy, and that it matters and has purpose and can make a difference. Maybe there is something in all of that, that you long to hear again that, this year, will help *make your Christmas*?

I wonder...

Or, maybe this...

Especially with the headlines in the news and the heaviness we have all felt in recent days...

Maybe there is something...

Some hope we can hang on to...

Some conviction and courage that gets stirred up within us...

When we hear again the unbelievable proclamation of that long ago angel who dared to say...

*Peace on Earth. Good will to all.*

Reminding those *in the field shepherds*;

And reminding us today...

That the ultimate intent of that which we know and name as God is *Peace*;

And not violence or hatred or suffering or bloodshed.

And, that our job, if we dare, is to find our way, like those long ago shepherds, from where we are now towards that promised peace. I am not smart enough to know exactly how we get from here to there other than to stubbornly take that heavenly host at its word and to do our best; do our part to be peace and to build peace wherever we can and in whatever way we can.

Maybe there is something in those angel words and that stubborn hope that you need to not just hear, but to know and to feel deep within you that will help to *make your Christmas*.

Anyway...

Here we are poised, again, on the precipice of Christmas.

And you are here in this place with this gathered community...

To hear and to remember that age old story told anew again this night.

And, if I were to ask, what would you say?

What is it that will *make your Christmas* this year?