

The Hiddenness of Christmas **John 1:11-12 & Matthew 13:44**

Christmas is often referred to as a magical time and rightly so. One of the definitions refers to the presence of power that cannot fully comprehend. We mean such things when we refer to the magic of love.

Christmas stories recently made popular by movies refer to such magic. One that has captured the attention of my children is *The Polar Express*. The story begins with a young boy wrestling with whether or not Santa Claus is real and if not then what is the point of Christmas. As he drifts off into dream he is awakened by a great and mystical train, The Polar Express, which rushes him along an exciting and daring journey to the North Pole. While there he is given insight into the secrets of Christmas symbolized by a bell that can only be heard by those who “believe” in the magic of Christmas.

Now that story is fun and interesting, but can it really help us understand something of the “magic” of Christmas? I think it can, at least in one significant way. The essence of the story is simply this: **there is something enduring, something eternal about Christmas, but that something is not apparent to all. It is hidden to all except believers.**

Now, there is a truth that resonates with the Biblical message of Christmas. The apostle John speaks of it in his prologue. Jesus “came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” and so he remained hidden to them. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to be called sons of God.” (Jn. 1:11-12)

Christmas is hidden to hearts whose hopes and fears have not found their home in Jesus Christ. But to those who discover Christmas, it is the treasure that is worth selling all.

Jesus refers to this truth in a brief parable:

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.
(Matt. 13:44)

Christmas is an invitation to life in Christ, a life that is so valuable that it is worth entering at any cost. Yet such value is not apparent to all. It is hidden to many.

We sing of such “magic” in the Christmas hymn, “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” Who would have thought that obscure little Bethlehem would be the birthplace of the Living, Eternal God. Even so, it is for this reason that we can sing “the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.”

My friends, where are you tonight? Has the hiddenness of Christmas come into the light for you so that you are ready and willing to sell all for the sake of Christ and his Kingdom? Has Jesus become so life-dominating so that he has become the fountain of all our hopes and the one who conquers all our fears?

- **Our Hopes:** marriage, future, success, health, children, vocation, test scores, education, finances, forgiveness, restoration, progress, etc.

- **Our Fears:** anxiety, death, separation, divorce, unfaithfulness, addictions present or returning, bankruptcy, joblessness, failure, estrangement of relatives or children

The truth is that the message of Christmas remains hidden to many of us not because we have never heard the story, but because we have not really come to grips with the value that Jesus claims for himself and his kingdom. We don't really take serious his claim that all of life should revolve around him and his purposes. Is he really the treasure for whom it is worth selling all? We are willing and ready to experience a certain amount of Christmas joy, just not the part that requires the cost of self.

But of course that is the irony and the power of Christmas magic. Those who sell all find far more life than they could have ever secured on their own. In Christ is the life that secures every hope and calms every fear.

There will be lots of people that celebrate this holiday season in all sorts of ways: gift-giving, scrumptious desserts, and big family gatherings. However, none of these will be a celebration of Christmas without the discovery of the treasure in the field. It is the Christ that makes our celebrations worthwhile. It is the discovery of what really matters that makes everything else in our lives matter.

This is not a sentimental bell that holds on to fanciful magic about a gift-giver named Santa Clause. Far from it! This is the powerful and true mystery of life revealed in the Lord Jesus—who is the gift and the giver for whom it is worth selling all.

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to be called sons of God. (Jn. 1:12)