

Mid Week Letter 12-19-23

Well, Merry Christmas, church family! The rush of Christmas activities has slowed down, at least where church and school are concerned. I only have a couple of brief announcements and then a Christmas message from Pastor Kevin.

**THIS SABBATH:**

- Pastor Kevin will be bringing us the Message of Hope, "Not So Silent Night."
- The Haslam/Griswell family will be leading us in praise (just like old times!).
- The Offering emphasis will be for Texas Vision

**END OF YEAR GIVING:**

Many of you take part in the tradition of charitable giving at the end of the year. You may already have your favorite charities in mind, but if not, here are a few that doing a fantastic work sharing the hope of salvation through Jesus and easing the physical needs of despairing people all over the world:

- Adventist World Radio – [awr.org](http://awr.org)
- Hope International – [hopeinternational.org](http://hopeinternational.org)
- Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) – [adra.org](http://adra.org)

**MEN'S MEETING:**

The Men's Meeting scheduled for this Thursday, the 21<sup>st</sup>, has been postponed to the 28<sup>th</sup>. The schedule for 2024 will resume on January 4<sup>th</sup> and continue every other Thursday at 7:30 thereafter. We want guy time to be meaningful to you men, so please give David Adams or Rick Beaulieu your feedback and suggestions for activities/format for 2024.

**WEDNESDAY IN THE WORD:**

Our Wednesday morning Bible Study/Prayer Meeting is cancelled for December 27<sup>th</sup>. It has not been determined if the group will meet on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. Please contact Larry Schneider if you have any questions as Pastor Kevin will be out of town.

## **CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR:**

“The Reason for the Season”

Tis the season to be Jolly...or is it? I was getting my haircut the other day when a very curious conversation took place. My barber started to share with me his distaste for the Christmas season. All of us are familiar with the preverbal “Grinch” at Christmas but I would venture to guess that few of us have ever actually met him. I certainly hadn’t, until now, and he was cutting my hair.

He went on to explain how he hated the Christmas season. In fact, he said that it was his least favorite time of year. He shared with me how everywhere he looked all he could see is happy people and it just drove him crazy and he just can’t wait for it to be over.

I listened to his ranting, and I appreciated his honesty, but of everything that he said, what I struggled with most is seeing the joy all over Christmas that he says he can’t miss. I left that haircut wondering, “Am I missing something”? “Do I see joy; do I see happy people?” I don’t mean to be cynical, in fact I believe I am a very optimistic person, yet when I look around, I see a lot of pain, a lot of loneliness and a lot of messed up priorities.

Why is it that my barber sees happy people everywhere he looks, and I see something totally different? I see people fighting over this year’s number one toy at the toy store. I see people arguing over parking spaces at the mall. I see people spending money they don’t have to buy things that they don’t need. I see stress, unmet expectations, and anxiety.

Where is Jesus in all of this? When we say things like, “Remember the reason for the season” are we referring to going bankrupt just to bring a few fleeting smiles to our family members and friends? I am not sure where the tradition of giving all of these gifts comes from. I have heard that we give gifts because the wise men came to Bethlehem and gave gifts to baby Jesus.

The gold, the frankincense, the myrrh.

But I don’t think that it is the reason, because if it were, then we would give gifts to Jesus and not to each other. So why do we give all these gifts? I think it is because we think that that is what will bring us joy. But if that brings us so much joy then why, just a few days after Christmas, are we already working on next year’s Christmas wish list?

I love Christmas! I love the traditions that my family has around this holiday. I love the songs, the movies and TV programs. I love the recitals, plays and church programs. And I even love buying a little something for those that I love. But most of all, I love the “real” Reason for the Season. Of all the gifts that are bought and given this holiday season, none can compare to the gift that God gave to us. “For God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16”.

The real gift this year isn't the iPhone, a new Android tablet, a Mercedes-Benz, or whatever else may be on your wish list this year; those gifts don't bring joy, peace or happiness. The real gift is Jesus. He is the gift that keeps on giving. He is the gift that never gets old, He is the gift that actually delivers on its promise of joy, peace, and satisfaction.

What would Christmas be like if people clamored over Jesus instead of an iPad or the most recent Baby Yoda doll (or whatever his name is)? What would happen if people sought Jesus like they do for that last parking space or for the new Barbie doll? Only then will I see the happiness and joy that my barber claims he can't miss.

Have you received the gift of Jesus; forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life? Have you received the gift that brings joy and peace? If you haven't, you can right now. Accept Jesus in your heart. Ask Him to be your Savior and experience real joy this Christmas.

If you have, then share Him with others. Because not only is He the greatest gift that we can receive, but He is also the greatest gift we can give, as well. The real gift this Christmas is Jesus. He IS the reason for the Season!

May you and your family receive and share this greatest gift every season of your lives.

Your Pastor and friend, Kevin

**GRACENOTES:**



Grace  
calls us first  
to see, and then  
to wonder,  
then to follow  
with our lives.

**g** GraceNotes

**Our fascination with the stars is as old as . . . one gorgeous night in Eden. As darkness first descended on God's rich, untrammelled world, there was no fear, no threat, no shying from the shadows. A dazzling panoply of stars entranced the first two humans ever subject to their brilliance, mystery, and power.**

**We name them just to tame them—just to counterfeit some ownership over what we never can control. We search for patterns, figures, shapes. We stare as fragments of their shining streak across our sky.**

**But only once in all the history of the world did those the world counts wise pick up, strike tents, and follow what they couldn't grasp or own. "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw His star as it rose, and we have come to worship Him" (Matt 2:2).**

**What grace is this that leads us on to Jesus? How much like God to hang a symbol in the night that brings us to His Son! "'I will be found by you,' says the Lord. 'I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes'" (Jer 29:14).**

**Grace calls us first to see, and then to wonder, then to follow with our lives.**

**Journey to the Child this Christmas, and discover once again how hope is rising in your night.**

**And stay in grace.**

**—Bill Knott**