

Christmas Eve meditation Knox 2023

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Why was Jesus born? What was his mission?

Christmas time is all about our families getting together, all across the world. It is a time of joy and laughter, of random acts of kindness, its Scrooge transformed and Tiny Tim healed, it's the Christmas truce in no man's land in middle of the Second World war. It's a humanitarian ceasefire in a war zone.

Locally, its also about giving to those who are in need and delivering Christmas hampers to food banks for those who cannot deal with 8% inflation. It's the time to sing carols and remember the birth of the One who changed the world for the better.

But it is also a time that is hard for people who have no family, through divorce or loss or sickness or alienation. They feel alone most keenly at this time of year. It is not their fault that they are sick or feel kicked to the curb.

In the middle of Jesus ministry on earth his mother and brothers appear and are anxious to have a word with him. They expect priority because they are family.

So, a man goes into the house where Jesus was teaching and tells Jesus that his mother and brothers are outside and want to speak with him. But Jesus replies "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?"

And stretching out his hand to his disciples he says: "Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother."

Now why on earth did Jesus say that?

Because Jesus came to bring the whole of humanity together. That was His mission! He blurred the divisions we have made between people.

That is why he taught us to forgive one another, however hard that would be. That is why the angels at his birth taught us to love our enemies as the only way to bring about peace on Earth and goodwill amongst human beings.

Jesus blurred the lines. He blurred them between neighbours and friends, between relatives and strangers, nations, religions and peoples. He deliberately blurred the lines between friend and foe. He wanted to bring us all together into loving relationships, a deep loving unity within our diversity.

In our day we have seen the lines made deeper between people. The divisions politically are deeper. In Canada, instead of policy discussions, we are treated to personal attacks and blaming.

The deep hostile lines in Palestine and Israel are incredibly tragic with civilian deaths soaring. Russia has deepened the lines by bombing cities out of existence in their illegal invasion of Ukraine. The political chasm between Democrats and Republicans in the Not so United States is splitting the country. Lies and falsehoods dominate the scene and a former President intentionally uses personal attacks to deeper divide the country.

On the world stage historically, none of this is new behaviour.

Jesus was born in Palestine at a time when Rome was busy oppressing the world and making the lines between people deeper. Into this oppressive context the Great One was born.

But I have come to believe, that there was a magic to the original Christmas. But it was also an ancient magic.

In fact, I believe that the magic of Christmas is the original magic of the universe itself. At the dawn of creation, it was the magic that spun the planets into existence and created the earth at the goldilocks distance from the sun- not too hot , not too cold, that made life possible here.

It is the same creative magic that once a year makes the hard hearts of men and women soften at Christmas Time. For the original magic and the magic of Christmas are one and the same- it's Love.

As the Beatles sang: There's nothin' you can know that isn't known
Nothin' you can see that isn't shown
There's nowhere you can be that isn't where you're meant to be
It's easy

All you need is love
Love is all you need.

I have come to believe that Love is the master key to the Universe and everything in it.

Susan was a nurse who was single. People would ask her to work their shifts for them on Thanksgiving and Christmas because "You don't have family." She did have family but they were some driving distance away.

So, she always had worked holidays year after year after year! She did it so people could be with **their** families. She would work Christmas Eve so that folks could see their children in the Christmas pageant. She would work Christmas day so that parents could see the wonder in their children's eyes on Christmas morning. That was Susan! She was incredibly kind!

But she did admit that these kinds of shifts were difficult to work, because many of the patients left in hospital were the sickest of the sick.

She said that Christmas shifts could be a time of great communion with people, but after the shift was over it could also be a time of great sadness. Going home to her empty house on Christmas morning was often a desolate thing.

But one Christmas Eve the magic came back for her!

She was scheduled to work the night shift from 7 pm to 7am.

That night the wind was very cold and whipped into her face and bit through her clothes, as she made her way into the hospital. The parking lot was nearly empty, the corridors revealed a somber mood. But when the elevator doors opened on her floor, she could sense excitement in the air. All the nurses were milling around the nurse's station. That was unusual for a shift change time, it tends to be busy and here they were standing around waiting.

After she had clocked in, Susan rounded the corner to find out what was going on. All of her coworkers were waiting for her with big smiles! Susan guessed that something big was up and that they were waiting for her to be a part of it. Then she suddenly realized that she was not just a part... **she was the reason!**

Susan said that a kind and gentle person who she had not felt close to had done an amazing thing. This co-worker had celebrated Christmas Eve early with her daughter, so that Susan could have the shift off and be able to go home to be with her family. Another co-worker had taken her shift and two others had split that person's shift for Christmas day as well so that Susan could be free.

Susan wrote at the time: "**My coworkers, my friends, my family, the lines between them were shifting, magically, irrevocably and the definitions were melding together at that moment.**" Happy tears filled her eyes as they lead her back to the elevator and offered her their best wishes.

By the time she reached her car she was crying in earnest. As she sped along the deserted roads towards home that night the stars twinkled in the sky as she sang along with the carols on the car radio. But for the first time she did not feel alone. Instead, she was filled with gratitude and wonder.

Her coworkers had given her the greatest Christmas gift she had ever received, the gift of their friendship and understanding and insight into her world. She wrote at the time "Because of that gift and the sweet memories of that night I would never feel alone again at Christmas."

Susan had discovered why Jesus, the One who blurred lines between people and roles had come. "Who is my mother and my brother and my sister?" he had asked.

Answer?

We all are!

Jesus came so that the lines between who was friend, who was family, who was neighbour, who was enemy would shift forever with the possibility that all the definitions of separation would one day meld together. That is still the Christmas dream for the future of the world...

Once we realize this truth and practice it individually, we will be merry tonight and all year long, for we will have discovered the original powerful magic of the universe that created all things so long ago. Love!

On behalf of Knox Stratford Session, the staff, volunteer staff and choir, and all those who have worked so hard to bring Christmas here to Knox, we wish you to have the best Christmas you have ever had and the Happiest New Year of your life, filled with the magic of unconditional love! May God bless you, and a Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night !