

**Advent 2, 2006, December 17
St. John's**

Preparations for my sermon, believe it or not, begin on Mondays. I read the lessons carefully and then allow them to kind of mull over for a few days and then on Thursday morning the attempt to write a sermon is made. This week was no different.

On Tuesday just when I was thinking we had got by this year I heard the story on the radio. It was the same old stuff. Christmas trees that had been placed in an airport were taken down because somebody got offended. And then of course there was all the talk about communities that forbid nativity scenes, communities that forbid live nativity scenes because some consider it unfair to the animals, and some stores that will not allow employees to say the words, Merry Christmas.

And I thought back to the words of our lessons. Whatever is honorable whatever is pure, what you have learned and received and heard in me, do. He who has 2 coats let him share. He who has food, do likewise. Collect no more than is appointed to you. Be content.

On Tuesday afternoon I was sent an email that was a letter from God. Somebody obviously wrote it and so I would like to read it to you with a couple of changes.

Dear children,

It has come to my attention that many of you are upset that folks are taking my name out of the season. Maybe you've forgotten that I wasn't actually born during this time of year and that it was some of your predecessors who decided to celebrate my birthday on what was actually a pagan festival. Although I do appreciate being remembered anytime, how I personally feel about this celebration can be most easily understood by those of you who are blessed to have children or know children. I don't care what you call the day, but please remember me each day. If you want to celebrate my birth celebrate it each day.

Now having said that let me get on. If it bothers you that the town in which you live doesn't allow a scene depicting my birth, then just get rid of a couple of Santa's and snowmen and put a small nativity scene in your yard. If all my followers did this there would not be need for such a scene in the town square, because there would be so many of them around town.

Stop worrying that people are now calling the tree a holiday tree instead of Christmas tree. Did I not make all trees? You can and may remember me anytime you see any tree. Why don't you be different and decorate a grapevine instead. I actually spoke of that one in a teaching explaining who I am in relation to you and what I ask of you as my child.

If you want to give a present in remembrance of my birth here is my wish list. I do not need for you to do all of it but I would like for you to choose from it.

1. Instead of writing protest letters objecting to the way my birth is being celebrated or ignored, write letters of love and hope to soldiers away from home. They are terribly afraid and lonely this time of year. I know. They tell me all the time.

2. Visit someone in a nursing home. You don't have to know them personally but there are many that have nobody and they need to know that someone cares for them.

3. Instead of writing George complaining about the wording on the cards his staff sent out this year why don't you write and tell him that you'll be praying for him and his family this year. Then follow up. It will be nice hearing from you again.

4. Instead of giving your children lots of gifts that you cannot afford and they don't need, spend time with them. Tell them the story of my birth, and why I came to live with you down here. Hold them in your arms and remind them that I Love them.

5. Pick someone who has hurt you in the past and forgive them.

6. Did you know that someone in your town will attempt to take their own life this season because they feel so alone and hopeless. Since you do not know who that person is, try giving everyone you meet a warm smile -it could make the difference.

7. Instead of nitpicking about what the retailer calls the holiday, be patient with people who work there. Give them a warm smile and a kind word.

Even if they are not allowed to wish you a merry Christmas you can still wish them it.

8. If you really want to make a difference support some kind of mission, especially one who makes my good news real to people.

9. Hears a good one. There are individuals and families in your town who not only will have no Christmas tree but neither will they have any presents to give or receive. If you do not know them, and I suspect you do not, buy some food and a few new gifts and donate them to the marines, the salvation army, the community action center, or any other organization that believes in me and they will make the delivery for you.

10. Finally- if you want to make a statement about your belief in, and your loyalty to, me then behave and act like a Christian. Do not do things in secret that you would not do in my presence. Let people know by your word and actions that

you are one of mine.

P.S. Don't forget I am God and I can take care of myself. Just love me and try to do what I have asked of you. I'll take care of the rest. Check out my wish list and let's get to work. I will help you but the ball is now in your court. Have a most blessed Christmas with all those whom you love and you remember.

I love you. And the love I showed to you on the first Christmas morning is no different to the love I show to you every day of the year. Please remember that.

Love,

God.

Amen.