

HEZEKIAH AND THE PRIORITY OF WORSHIP
FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD
2 CHRONICLES 299-30

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Two weeks ago I made reference to our visit in early October to Wisconsin where we visited the Hedlund family farm and met my cousin's son who is still in ICU with covid. During this visit we also made a stop at Lambeau Field (PROJECTOR ON--- LAMBEAU FIELD), the home of the Green Bay Packers. Growing up in Wisconsin, it is part of the culture to be a fan of the Packers.

I had never been to the stadium before this visit. On the only occasion on which I attended a Packer game, I played in the game. Many of you don't know about that part of my resume. It was November of 1969 when we were playing the Vikings. The game was actually in Milwaukee at County Stadium. I got to play for about fifteen or twenty minutes. It was a game that happened to be the nationally featured game on network television that Sunday. But that was end of my fleeting fame. ---I played baritone in my high school band. We had a really good high school band, and we did the halftime show. That was back in the era when they actually showed the featured bands on TV during halftime.

In October we had a tour of Lambeau field with my brothers and sons. I came away from the tour feeling like the Packers representatives were a little off in their view of the football team. It was as if they wanted us to treat the Packers as an object of worship. The tour guides (LAMBEAU FIELD 2) had a certain priestly garb and were promoting a worship of the Packers. They showed us the Holy of Holies (LAMBEAU FIELD 3), where there was an image of the Lombardi trophy, the highest award in professional football. We were also shown statues (LAMBEAU FIELD 4) of the heroes of the faith. We were encouraged to utter the sacred words (LAMBEAU FIELD 5), "Go Pack go." We were then shown the place where the saints meet together for services on Sundays. (LAMBEAU FIELD 6) It seemed to me to be a little over the top. Some people do treat sports teams like objects of worship, and games can become like worship experiences. (PROJECTOR OFF)

We live in a world where there are many forces which are vying for our worship, for our ultimate loyalty in life, who, or which, want our time, our money, and our energy. This is the case throughout history. Biblical history, especially, has lessons to teach us about the right focus for worship.

On recent Sundays we have been looking at the kings of Judah (DIVIDED KINGDOM CHART), who ruled between 900 and 600 BC. There was a split in the kingdom of Israel between north and south after King Solomon passed from the scene. The northern

kingdom kept the name "Israel." The southern kingdom acquired the name "Judah," after the dominant tribe in the south.

(DIVIDED KINGDOM MAP 3) Jeroboam introduced a dynasty of kings in the north. All of those kings were labeled by the Bible as evil. Rehoboam and the kings who followed him in the south were all in the line of David. We have seen that they were a mixed bag. Some were described as good. Some were described as bad. Last time we saw that good king Jotham was followed by evil King Ahaz. He promoted idol worship and closed up the temple in Jerusalem. God judged Ahaz and the nation by giving success to Judah's enemies, chief of which was Assyria. (ASSYRIA)

Our story left off in 2 Chronicles #28 with Judah in a weakened condition and a diminished territory. Worship of YHWH, the true God of Israel has been squelched. But good things then begin to happen. Somehow the son of the evil King Ahaz turns out to be a great and godly king. He is Hezekiah, whose name means "YHWH gives strength." He has a key role in beginning to turn Judah around spiritually and physically. He especially recognizes the need of his people to return to worship of the true God.

I.

Thus in vv. 1-15 of 2 Chronicles #29 (which is p. 380 in the black Bibles under many of the chairs) we learn that THE PRIORITY OF WORSHIP REQUIRES DEDICATED WORSHIPERS. (I. THE PRIORITY OF WORSHIP REQUIRES...) The first two verses tell us, **"Hezekiah began to reign when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. 2 And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done."**

Most of the scholars date Hezekiah's reign to 716 to 687 BC. History tells us that the northern kingdom of Israel fell to Assyria in 722 BC. It ceased to exist as a nation and was absorbed by Assyria. Hezekiah is such a good guy that he is compared to his ancestor David. Eleven chapters in the Old Testament are devoted to him and his reign. According to the parallel story in 2 Kings #18 v. 5 there was no other king like him among the kings of Judah.

The story continues in vv. 3 & 4: **"In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them. 4 He brought in the priests and the Levites and assembled them in the square on the east..."**

Hezekiah's first priority is restoring Biblical worship among his people. Thus it is that he gathers the religious leaders in a square just outside of the temple in Jerusalem.

Verse 5: **"... and said to them, 'Hear me, Levites! Now consecrate yourselves, and consecrate the house of the Lord, the God of your fathers, and carry out the filth from the Holy Place.'" If the country is going to get straightened out spiritually, the religious leaders must get their act together. The term "consecrate" means "make holy."** The tribe of Levi, which includes the subset of priests, who are descendants of Aaron, have responsibility for leading worship in the temple. The law of God says that they

have certain responsibilities for maintaining holiness, which includes restrictions on who they can marry, and what they can touch. They were especially expected to observe all of the Jewish laws concerning uncleanness. Now the king wanted them to set about "making holy" the temple.

According to vv. 6-9, **"For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the Lord our God. They have forsaken him and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord and turned their backs. 7 They also shut the doors of the vestibule and put out the lamps and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the Holy Place to the God of Israel. 8 Therefore the wrath of the Lord came on Judah and Jerusalem, and he has made them an object of horror, of astonishment, and of hissing, as you see with your own eyes. 9 For behold, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this."**

Here is an honest reckoning of the true state of affairs. The king's ancestors, including his own father, have been unfaithful to God, they have forsaken Him, and they have done evil. The direct result has been God's judgment through the instrumentality of the Syrians, the Philistines, and most recently, the Assyrians.

The king continues in v. 10: **"Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel, in order that his fierce anger may turn away from us."** This was perhaps a personal commitment on the king's part to follow the Lord. Judah already had a covenant with YHWH by virtue of the covenants with David and Moses. Hezekiah is recognizing the opportunity which he has as king to get his country back on track with God.

Verse 11: **"My sons, do not now be negligent, for the Lord has chosen you to stand in his presence, to minister to him and to be his ministers and make offerings to him."** Spiritual renewal must begin with the religious leadership. The problem with the Western world today is that so many of the leaders of denominations in North America and Europe have turned away from the authority of the Bible and the basic teachings of the historic Christian faith.

Verses 12-15 describe the response: **"Then the Levites arose, Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites; and of the sons of Merari, Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehallelel; and of the Gershonites, Joah the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of Joah; 13 and of the sons of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeuel; and of the sons of Asaph, Zechariah and Mattaniah; 14 and of the sons of Heman, Jehuel and Shimei; and of the sons of Jeduthun, Shemaiah and Uzziel. 15 They gathered their brothers and consecrated themselves and went in as the king had commanded, by the words of the Lord, to cleanse the house of the Lord."**

By Old Testament law the members of the tribe of Levi are the religious leaders. The priests are a subset of the Levites. They are the descendants of Aaron. Fourteen

Levites are identified, several from each of the original three sons of Levi. Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun were all Levites who were appointed by King David to lead music in temple worship. So there is a recognition here that renewed worship must have a musical component. But renewed worship first must have dedicated worshipers and leaders of those worshipers.

II.

Then in vv. 16-19 we learn that THE PRIORITY OF WORSHIP REQUIRES A HOLY TEMPLE. (II. THE PRIORITY OF WORSHIP...) According to vv. 16 & 17, **“The priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it, and they brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord. And the Levites took it and carried it out to the brook Kidron. 17 They began to consecrate on the first day of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the Lord. Then for eight days they consecrated the house of the Lord, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished.”**

(SOLOMON'S TEMPLE) Perhaps the priests initially cleaned out the inner part of the temple, which included the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Then they expanded their cleaning into the outer part of the temple. This project took sixteen days in all. (KIDRON VALLEY) The junk removed included idols and items related to false worship. This material was dumped into the Kidron Valley which lay on the east side of the temple mount.

Verses 18 & 19: **“Then they went in to Hezekiah the king and said, ‘We have cleansed all the house of the Lord, the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the table for the showbread and all its utensils. 19 All the utensils that King Ahaz discarded in his reign when he was faithless, we have made ready and consecrated, and behold, they are before the altar of the Lord.’”** (SOLOMON'S TEMPLE ALTAR) The altar of burnt offering was just outside of the temple proper. The table of showbread and incense altar were inside of the building. This temple in Jerusalem was the place where Jews were required to come three times a year to worship. The priests and Levites were required to maintain the place and lead worship here.

The temptation, perhaps, for us is to draw parallels with our worship meeting places, with church buildings. But Jesus Himself made clear that true worship has a different character after His coming. In John #4 vv. 21 and 23 (JOHN 4:21) He told the Samaritan woman, **“Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.”** (JOHN 4:23) **“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.”** The meeting place for worship is not as important as it was in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament the body of individual believers is described as a temple. (1 CORINTHIANS 6:19) In 1 Corinthians #6 v. 19 the Apostle Paul says this to individual

Christians: **“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own...”** From this we might properly draw applications about the importance of maintaining our physical bodies. In the immediate context Paul was talking about avoiding sexual immorality.

In Ephesians #2 Paul describes Christians collectively as a temple. (EPHESIANS 2:21) In v. 21 he writes, **“... in whom [Jesus] the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.”** So keeping this temple, the church of true Christians, clean means promoting spiritual growth and accountability. In this sense the priority of worship requires a holy temple.

III.

In vv. 20-24 and 31-36 we find that THE PRIORITY OF WORSHIP REQUIRES SACRIFICE. (III. THE PRIORITY OF WORSHIP...) We read in vv. 20-24, **“Then Hezekiah the king rose early and gathered the officials of the city and went up to the house of the Lord. 21 And they brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for Judah. And he commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron, to offer them on the altar of the Lord. 22 So they slaughtered the bulls, and the priests received the blood and threw it against the altar. And they slaughtered the rams, and their blood was thrown against the altar. And they slaughtered the lambs, and their blood was thrown against the altar. 23 Then the goats for the sin offering were brought to the king and the assembly, and they laid their hands on them, 24 and the priests slaughtered them and made a sin offering with their blood on the altar, to make atonement for all Israel. For the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel.”**

The partial purpose of this sacrifice may have been to rededicate a restored temple, including the altar upon which sacrifices were made. But the main purpose was to make an atonement for all Israel, for the northerners and the southerners. This temple was the place where people from the northern kingdom of Israel were expected to come to worship also.

The Hebrew word for “atonement” in v. 24 means “to appease, pacify, avoid punishment by the payment of a ransom.” The procedure which the Lord required in these times to do this involved animal sacrifice. The main problem was sin. To have a holy people and to have proper worship a blood sacrifice was required. For sin is serious. Its ultimate penalty and consequence is death. Thus there was a need for sacrifices.

The Book of Hebrews in the New Testament recognized this problem and the Old Testament solution. (HEBREWS 10:11) In #10 v. 11 the author wrote, **“And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”** Jesus became the final sacrifice for sin. In v. 14 of the same chapter (HEBREWS 10:14) the author wrote, **“For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”** The single offering was the body of Jesus. Because He was both God and man, His death provided the final

sacrifice for sin. By trusting in Him and what He did for us, we receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. It is this trusting in Jesus, this inviting Him into our lives, that makes us Christians.

Back in our text we skip down to v. 31 (PROJECTOR OFF): **“Then Hezekiah said, ‘You have now consecrated yourselves to the Lord. Come near; bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the house of the Lord.’ And the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all who were of a willing heart brought burnt offerings.”** Verse 20 spoke of the princes of Jerusalem being present in this assembly. Earlier in the chapter reference was made to priests and Levites. Perhaps the residents of Jerusalem are also included in this mix. Now these people are invited to bring voluntary offerings.

Verses 32-36 tell us, **“The number of the burnt offerings that the assembly brought was 70 bulls, 100 rams, and 200 lambs; all these were for a burnt offering to the Lord. 33 And the consecrated offerings were 600 bulls and 3,000 sheep. 34 But the priests were too few and could not flay all the burnt offerings, so until other priests had consecrated themselves, their brothers the Levites helped them, until the work was finished—for the Levites were more upright in heart than the priests in consecrating themselves. 35 Besides the great number of burnt offerings, there was the fat of the peace offerings, and there were the drink offerings for the burnt offerings. Thus the service of the house of the Lord was restored. 36 And Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced because God had provided for the people, for the thing came about suddenly.”** We don’t have the time to examine this in detail. But notice that this worship comes together quickly, and the people are generous in their giving. The result is rejoicing.

The best sacrifice was that offered by Jesus Christ. The appropriate response from God’s people is thanksgiving. That thanksgiving is demonstrated in rejoicing and in generosity in the giving of our time and money and energy to the Lord’s work in whatever form that might take.

IV.

In vv. 25-30 we learn that **THE PRIORITY OF WORSHIP REQUIRES WORSHIP MUSIC**. (PROJECTOR ON--- IV. THE PRIORITY OF WORSHIP...) Verse 25 says, **“And he [the king] stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David and of Gad the king's seer and of Nathan the prophet, for the commandment was from the Lord through his prophets.”**

While the subset of priests was responsible for managing the inner temple and being in charge of the sacrifices, the Levites were in charge of music. Worship that is fully pleasing to the Lord requires music. Notice the variety of music which is reflected in these verses. We have strings and percussion instruments represented here.

Reference is made in this verse to David and Gad and Nathan. Gad and Nathan were prophets and advisers to King David. First Chronicles #15 & 16 describe how these three men, under the direction of the Lord, established music in the temple. King Hezekiah is returning to these musical roots.

Verses 26 & 27: **“The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. 27 Then Hezekiah commanded that the burnt offering be offered on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song to the Lord began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of David king of Israel.”** Here is reference to the brass section.

Verse 28: **“The whole assembly worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded. All this continued until the burnt offering was finished.”** Here are the vocalists.

Verses 29 & 30: **“When the offering was finished, the king and all who were present with him bowed themselves and worshiped. 30 And Hezekiah the king and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshiped.”**

Notice that the author speaks of the words of David and Asaph. What words of praise did they write? The Psalms. This was a key part of their music. In some parts of the early and Middle Ages church only the Psalms and a few passages in the New Testament were allowed to be sung in church. This music is also accompanied by gladness. It would seem to me that we find a Biblical basis here for investing in a music leader. For true worship requires a focus on worship music.

V.

In the first twelve verses of #30 we discover that THE PRIORITY OF WORSHIP REQUIRES OUTREACH. (V. THE PRIORITY OF WORSHIP...) Notice v. 1: **“Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem to keep the Passover to the Lord, the God of Israel.”**

Most Old Testament scholars date Hezekiah’s ascendancy to the throne to 716 BC. Six years earlier Assyria overran the northern kingdom of Israel. The capital city of Samaria was destroyed. Many Israelites were killed. Many were removed to other parts of the empire. There were no more kings to rule in this part of Israel. This situation provided an opportunity for spiritual reunification with the south. The invitation to the remaining northerners, dominated by the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, was to come again to worship in Jerusalem.

We read in vv. 2-4: **“For the king and his princes and all the assembly in Jerusalem had taken counsel to keep the Passover in the second month— 3 for they could not keep it at that time because the priests had not consecrated themselves in**

sufficient number, nor had the people assembled in Jerusalem— 4 and the plan seemed right to the king and all the assembly.”

In the Old Testament law the one day Passover was followed by the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Passover was to take place on the fourteenth day of the first month in the religious calendar. But we saw in #29 that the king and the religious leaders spent the first sixteen days of the first month in cleaning up the temple. There was a precedent established, however, in Numbers 9:10-11 whereby Jews who were unclean at the time of the Passover in the first month could celebrate it on the fourteenth day of the second month. So that is what happens here. The delay also gives time for Jews from the north and even more remote places to come to Jerusalem for the feast days.

Verses 5-9: **“So they decreed to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that the people should come and keep the Passover to the Lord, the God of Israel, at Jerusalem, for they had not kept it as often as prescribed. 6 So couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with letters from the king and his princes, as the king had commanded, saying, ‘O people of Israel, return to the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that he may turn again to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. 7 Do not be like your fathers and your brothers, who were faithless to the Lord God of their fathers, so that he made them a desolation, as you see. 8 Do not now be stiff-necked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the Lord and come to his sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever, and serve the Lord your God, that his fierce anger may turn away from you. 9 For if you return to the Lord, your brothers and your children will find compassion with their captors and return to this land. For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him.”**

Here is an opportunity for worship of the true God, for spiritual renewal, for repentance, for national reunification. All of this requires a recognition that the people of both Israel and Judah have sinned greatly. They have been disobedient to the true God, and they have worshiped false gods.

According to vv. 10 & 11, **“So the couriers went from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun, but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them. 11 However, some men of Asher, of Manasseh, and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.”** Such is the way it usually goes with evangelism. Some laugh and mock. A few respond.

In our own community outreach with three other churches here in town we have contacted a lot of homes. By my count our church alone has left tracts, Jesus DVDs, and church invitations to over 1100 residences. We know of one person who responded so far. There may be other things happening spiritually that we just don't know about yet.

Verse 12: **“The hand of God was also on Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the princes commanded by the word of the Lord.”** There is spiritual benefit to the people doing the outreach. The God of the Bible is always pleased when we reach out to tell other people about Him. The priority of worship requires outreach.

VI.

In the remainder of #31 we find that **THE PRIORITY OF WORSHIP REQUIRES CELEBRATION.** (VI. THE PRIORITY OF WORSHIP...) Let's look at vv. 13 & 14: **“And many people came together in Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month, a very great assembly. 14 They set to work and removed the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for burning incense they took away and threw into the brook Kidron.”**

So there is a great response to this call to worship. These worshipers are motivated to get rid of the other idols which are still present in Jerusalem. These Jews are present for the Passover and the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Verse 15: **“And they slaughtered the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the second month. And the priests and the Levites were ashamed, so that they consecrated themselves and brought burnt offerings into the house of the Lord.”** The shame probably comes because of the recognition that these religious leaders have been neglecting their responsibility to promote the Jewish feasts.

Verses 16-17: **“They took their accustomed posts according to the Law of Moses the man of God. The priests threw the blood that they received from the hand of the Levites. 17 For there were many in the assembly who had not consecrated themselves. Therefore the Levites had to slaughter the Passover lamb for everyone who was not clean, to consecrate it to the Lord.”** Normally it was the responsibility of the people to kill the Passover lambs. But so many of the people are unclean according to the law of Moses that the Levites step in to do the job.

We continue in vv. 18-20: **“For a majority of the people, many of them from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than as prescribed. For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, ‘May the good Lord pardon everyone 19 who sets his heart to seek God, the Lord, the God of his fathers, even though not according to the sanctuary's rules of cleanness.’ 20 And the Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people.”** In this context the healing of the people seems to refer to forgiveness for the technical violation of the law. They are celebrating the Passover in the second month, and many of the worshipers are having Levites step in to sacrifice the lambs for them.

Verse 21: **“And the people of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness, and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with all their might to the Lord.”** Clearly this is a celebration. There is great joy and loud music.

Verses 22 & 23: **“And Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites who showed good skill in the service of the Lord. So they ate the food of the festival for seven days, sacrificing peace offerings and giving thanks to the Lord, the God of their fathers. 23 Then the whole assembly agreed together to keep the feast for another seven days. So they kept it for another seven days with gladness.”** The joy of this celebration overflows such that there is popular desire to extend it for another seven days. The Passover, remember, was designed to remind the Hebrews of their escape from slavery in Egypt. Blood from sacrificed lambs was applied to the doorposts of the Hebrews so that the firstborn son in these families would not be killed by the angel of death. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was designed to remind them of that hasty escape and of their dependence upon YHWH in the desert.

Verses 24-26 tell us: **“For Hezekiah king of Judah gave the assembly 1,000 bulls and 7,000 sheep for offerings, and the princes gave the assembly 1,000 bulls and 10,000 sheep. And the priests consecrated themselves in great numbers. 25 The whole assembly of Judah, and the priests and the Levites, and the whole assembly that came out of Israel, and the sojourners who came out of the land of Israel, and the sojourners who lived in Judah, rejoiced. 26 So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.”** How sad that this basic observance of a worship requirement in Israel had gone so long without being held.

We need to keep in mind that the circumstances facing these Jews were not great. The northerners had lost many relatives to the Assyrians. Some had been killed. Some had been removed to other parts of the empire. The Assyrians were ruling their part of the country. The economy was probably pretty bad.

The people of Judah were also threatened. The Philistines and the Syrians and the Assyrians had all made incursions into their territory. The administration of Hezekiah was coming out of a very dark time when Judaism had been attacked. But the leadership of Hezekiah forced the people to have a right focus, a focus upon their God. This opportunity to have fellowship with other believers from other parts of the world and to join together in worship provided great joy. There were generous sacrifices, and there was great rejoicing.

Verse 27: **“Then the priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard, and their prayer came to his holy habitation in heaven.”** God was pleased by their worship. This is the real test of worship. It is not so much about what we get out of it as it is about what He gets out of it. The fact that their prayer was heard confirms that this priority upon worship was pleasing to Him. It was a great celebration.

There are reasons that we likewise have for celebration in this Christmas season. It has been a difficult year for some among us. We are still living with the corona virus. Some of us have lost loved ones this past year. Christmas always has a secular slant and a crass commercialism about it. We can't focus on Jesus like we once may have done in

public schools. But still it is hard to escape the real meaning of Christmas. If our focus is upon Jesus, we have reason to celebrate.

Harry Reasoner observed in a commentary back in 1973, **“...it comes beyond logic. It’s what a bishop I used to know called a kind of divine insanity. It is either all falsehood or it is the truest thing in the world. It is the story of the great innocence of God the baby. God in the power of Man. And it is such a dramatic shot toward the heart, that if it is not true, for Christians, nothing is true.**

“So even if you did not get your shopping all done, and you were swamped with the commercialism and frenzy, be at peace. And even if you are the Deacon having to arrange the extra seating for all the Christmas Christians that you won’t see until Easter, be at peace. The story stands.

“It’s all right that so many Christians are touched only once a year by this incomparable story. Because some final quiet Christmas morning, the touch will take.”