

## Invitation From a Lonely Jesus

December 26, 2017



Precious Lord, thank you for giving Your life for us, for giving us Your example to live by. And help us to celebrate this season with You at its center. Amen

Forgive me, dear Family, for being silent these last few days. My husband has been very sick, and of course, my children coming to visit does take up necessary time. I wanted so badly for Christmas to be a sweet time of contemplating the birth of our Lord.

Am I the only one that feels the messiness of the world's traditions getting in the way?

Dear ones, how do you feel about how you spent your Christmas? Is something left empty inside or are you fully satisfied? The Kingdom of God is not meat nor drink but righteousness, peace, and joy. And I am not feeling that joy today.

For our celebration, we prepared a simple candlelight dinner with Christmas music playing in the background. Then my husband got very, very sick just before dinner and I asked the Lord, "This is the first time I've shared Christmas with my children in maybe 10 years! Why are You allowing this terrible pain he is suffering?"

And of course, then I felt better of it, because I know that we still have to be making offerings of the things that are going on in our government, which are absolutely intense in this time.

But I didn't have to wait long for an answer. I went to the Bible Promises and got Poverty. Bear with me and I will explain. I knew immediately what the Lord was saying and I felt strong conviction. Everything looked so perfect, but inside I felt a void. The Lord was most definitely trying to get my attention. My mother always made a big deal about Christmas, but not about Christ; and now I recognized compromise in me.

Thank the Lord, just before dinner, my husband's pain finally went away. Even though it was not a huge production, something about the abundance of food troubled my heart. I prayed, 'How can I make this up to You, Lord?'

We decided not to save the leftovers to eat during the week and made several plates of food to distribute to any homeless we could find. Afterwards, we continued our tradition of watching a movie about Jesus' birth. I really love the film "The Nativity," and as I watched it, I was struck by the utter poverty of Mary's parents, and that God the Father Himself had chosen utter poverty for His son to be born into. What dignity that gives to the poor and what a stark contrast to our way of life.

Our youngest guest put baby Jesus in the manger, and we listened to "Adore" by Chris Tomlin, a beautiful, highly anointed song. The immensity of what Christ did for us, after watching that film and listening to the music really caused my heart to over-flowing and I just couldn't stop crying. There was such a sweetness in that simple worship that I didn't want to stop.

But I didn't want to delay the children, and it was getting late, so we moved on to sharing a few small gifts with one another. The elaborate paper and bows again contrasted the simplicity and poverty of Jesus' birth, and I was feeling more uncomfortable by the moment. As I realized my children had visited my wish list and gotten me what I wanted, I felt even more ill at ease...

I wanted Jesus. I wanted to linger and worship. I wanted to hold Him next to my heart!

Oh, how I can relate with Paul, "...For in my inner being I delight in God's Law. But I see another law at work in my body, warring against the law of my mind and holding me captive to the law of sin that dwells within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. Romans 7:22-25

Oh, that Scripture really, really, really hit the mark in my heart! I was caught in a real conflict in wanting to make Christmas a special occasion on the level my children could enjoy, but still keeping the essence of this night and celebrating the true meaning. And the deeper issues in my heart that didn't have anything at all to do with food and gifts, but with the very meaning of life and the tremendous event of His birth.

Every year, we avoid Christmas. Since our children weren't at home, we cringed because we missed them, because they live so far away. Along with this was the desire to truly be present to the Lord through His miraculous birth. So, rather than food and festivities, we would pray, worship and watch a film about His birth—still missing our children.

When everyone left and I looked back on THIS evening, I felt it was compromised. So, Ezekiel and I talked and he had been feeling the same kind of compromise and grief.

For him, the highlight of the evening was being with our family, and seeing how beautifully they have grown up. And when he held Baby Jesus forehead-to-forehead, the Lord imparted a deep sweetness to him. I, too, was very touched by the attentiveness of our family and enjoyed them immensely. For me, the conviction was about wanting, having and focusing on 'things.'

I think, at this point, I should explain a bit about our past. As some of you know, there was a point in our lives when we renounced the world and its comforts and led a lifestyle of self-denial as lay Franciscans. Habited Franciscans. And it was so liberating, I experienced a level of freedom I had never known. And along with that, a level of intimacy and focus on Jesus that was the closest thing to Heaven on Earth.

It was when we came back to town and started mingling with the world that we allowed our hearts and minds to wander on things. Although I have to say, Ezekiel is much better in not allowing that to happen than I am.

Truly, this is spiritual adultery, and the Lord will not tolerate anything in His Bride's life that takes her complete attention off of Him. Sooner or later, He will bring a conflict up that will cause us to choose who we will serve—our flesh. Or Him.

Lord, have you anything to share?

Jesus began, *"Loneliness. Loneliness, Clare. As everyone goes about their celebration, they forget Me. This is a deliberately planned and executed move on the part of our enemies to hijack the true meaning of My birth and make it into an orgy of spending and eating and acquisition.*

*"I call to you, My people, because I want to share the profound sweetness Mary and Joseph felt that night as they held Me in their arms.*

*"I do not want to make you feel condemned, My precious ones, but I do want to call attention to the true meaning of this night and tell you that I have more for you. More and more graces are stored up for those of you who will contemplate My Birth and the lowly estate My Father chose for Me.*

*"All of this was done as an example for you, that the very least person in the world by society's standards would still feel kinship with Me, having no place to rest My head but a simple feeding trough.*

*"Yes, My Body and Blood are true food and so it is significant that I should be laid in a manger in a town named House of Bread: Bethlehem.*

*"There is great significance in the words of the Prophet, 'But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.'"*

That's a quote from Micah, the fifth chapter.

*"It is not too late for you, My dear ones, to take the time to meditate on the lowliness of My birth and reach out to Me for the sweet graces of contemplating My incarnation.*

*"Come then, My dear ones, much of the hustle and bustle of preparation has been completed and now I invite you, in the privacy of your homes, to spend time with Me in the manger.*

*"My heart longs to impart to you the wonder and miracle of My birth. Come and rest a while with Me."*