

Mind the Light
December 29, 2013

Luke 2:1-20

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. 2 This was the first enrollment, when Quirin'i-us was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. 7 And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. 8 And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. 10 And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; 11 for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!" 15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; 18 and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYCx_7J1MDk

"Dr. Papaderos, what is the meaning of life?"

The usual laughter followed, and people stirred to go.

Papaderos held up his hand and stilled the room and looked at me for a long time, asking with his eyes if I was serious and seeing from my eyes that I was.

"I will answer your question."

Taking his wallet out of his hip pocket, he fished into a leather billfold and brought out a very small round mirror, about the size of a quarter.

And what he said went like this:

"When I was a small child, during the war, we were very poor and we lived in a remote village. One day, on the road, I found the broken pieces of a mirror. A German motorcycle had been wrecked in that place. I tried to find all the pieces and put them together, but it was not possible, so I kept only the largest pieces. This one, and by scratching it on a stone, I made it round. I began to play with it as a toy and became fascinated by the fact that I could reflect light into dark places where the sun would never shine—in deep holes and crevices and dark closets. It became a game for me to get light into the most inaccessible places I could find.

I kept the little mirror, and, as I went about my growing up, I would take it out in idle moments and continue the challenge of the game. As I became a man, I grew to understand that this was not just a child's game but a metaphor for what I might do with my life. I came to understand that I am not the light or the source of light. But light—truth, understanding, knowledge—is there, and it will shine in many dark places only if I reflect it.

I am a fragment of a mirror whose whole design and shape I do not know. Nevertheless, with what I have I can reflect light into the dark places of this world—into the black places in the hearts of men—and change some things in some people. Perhaps others may see and do likewise. This is what I am about. This is the meaning of my life. ¹

Today is the first Sunday after Christmas. I do not about you but our Christmas was wonderful! We had the joy of opening gifts all meaningful to us because they were given to us by loved ones. Some of the most precious gifts are the ones of time together spent as a family. I love technology because we were able to Skype so we could spend some time with our families opening gifts and many of us were or are blessed to have family with us sharing together in worship and praise for all of our blessings. Being together and sharing time and gifts can mean the world.

And although traditionally the Twelve days of Christmas goes from Christmas day to January 6th, the day of Epiphany when we celebrate again the Magi's visit. It, Christmas, anymore gets all rolled up together and is over by today the 26th of December. We have the after-Christmas closeout sales at stores. It is time to start, or we have already began, packing away all the decorations and re-arrange the chaos our houses have been in since we decorated the day after thanksgiving. Our focus shifts too so that primarily we start the New Year right with a clean home and everything put away so we can start 2014 fresh and new and everything can get back to "normal."

We put away the gifts we have received into their respective places, we have repacked those storage boxes until next year. The manger is put away in its special box and we almost heave a sigh of relief that all the Christmas hustle and bustle is done. And yet, as Christians we have grown up with saying that Christmas is not just one day a year but we should celebrate the joy, the hope, the peace, and the love of Christmas every day of the year.

Christmas should not be the abnormal, but should become our normal. We are called by our faith to be more understanding and aware of the goodwill towards all in this season and yet when it ends we tend to go back to...we go back to what...? Not being understanding and patient and aware of others? That seems slightly oxymoronic in our calling as Christians. So what does become our normal? Our everyday?

You see like my earlier story about light reflecting into the darkest corners and our meaning of life being the light reflector to this world we have to consider that Christmas does not end on the 26th of December. The celebration of the Light that was brought into the darkness of the world by the birth of Christ is something that we can learn to reflect in our lives and we can see reflected in the lives of others. We are each a mirror reflecting what we will in any direction we choose to those around us.

We can choose to reflect joy or we can choose to reflect anger, we can reflect peace or we can reflect war, we can reflect hope or despair, we can reflect hate or we can reflect love. We can reflect the darkness of the world that we see all around us or we can reflect the light of God into the darkness that permeates our world. We are called in our faith to let our light shine. You know this as a truth we learn when we are very small...children in fact. This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine...Amen.

¹"The Mirror" submitted by Robert Fulghum in Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul, Health Communications, Deerfield Beach, FL, 1997 pg. 134.