

Christmas

by F.B. Meyer

Christmas is a time for family gatherings, love, kindness, and generosity, reminding us of the importance of connection and community.

Scripture: Luke 2:10

Topics: "Generosity", "Christmas Spirit"

Description

F.B. Meyer reflects on the joy and warmth of Christmas, emphasizing the significance of family gatherings, the spirit of giving, and the importance of including those in need during the festive season. He highlights the beauty of the Yule-log as a symbol of home and togetherness, encouraging families to share their lives and love with one another. Meyer also stresses the need for generosity, not just among family but towards the less fortunate, reminding us that true Christmas spirit is rooted in love and compassion. He concludes by urging everyone to keep the light of the Yule-log in their hearts and to remember the divine gift of Jesus during this season.

Transcript

HERE again I Welcome, thrice welcome! The darkest, shortest days of the year are an appropriate season to select for the Yule-log, the good cheer, the home-gatherings, the presents and gifts of young and old, which Christmas brings!

The Yule-log! How we love it! For ordinary days the coal-fire is good enough; but, oh, the spluttering, the crackling, the blue elfish flame of the Christmas log! We need no candle or gas-light, when the flame has caught it in its lambent arms, and creeps along its edges, and eats into its heart. How hard that knot is fighting! What a flare that resinous oil makes! How sweet the scent, and fitful the light which rises and falls and flickers! Now is the time to gather round for one brief hour of blessed, happy home-talk, between the lights, the light of the short winter day and the artificial light that must soon be brought in for the evening's work.

There should be no secrets in the family circle. The interests of each are those of all, and in the happy intercourse of the circle gathered round the flickering log, the common life gets illustrated and illuminated by quip and crank, by joke and tease, by the original saying of the little child, and the wise counsel of the father. It reminds me of those old missals, whose stern black letter-press is accompanied by the gorgeous margin, with faces and figures, flowers and fruits, dogs, monkeys, birds, and animals, friars and monks, kings and queens, babes and angels.

Happy are the children who are born into large families. It is rare that an only child reaches its fullest development. There is a play, a reciprocal influence, a chipping-off of corners, a balancing, a taking-off of peculiarities, a taking-down of pride, in a large family, which are priceless. The children are sure to pair off in twos, who will fight for one another against the rest, and exchange endless confidences; but, nevertheless, the interchange of repartee and badinage between each with all will go freely forward, and each member of the family will appropriate spoils from the rest. Such free trade in one another's characteristics prospers best in the light of the Yule-log.

The Good Cheer! You tell me that there is waste and over-eating, and ask me to rebuke the busy housewives with their market-baskets and bargains, their turkeys, geese, plum-puddings, and mince pies. Well, of course, there should be no extravagance; and we have no right to surfeit ourselves when the poor are starving at our doors. Before we sit down to our Christmas meals, we must provide portions for those that are without. Materials for good dinners must be sent to poor families who live in our immediate neighborhood, or our less prosperous relatives; the charwoman that comes once a week, the widowed mother of the boy who brings the daily paper, the family of the poor crossing-sweep, the respectable old couple that are trying to keep themselves respectable and to avoid as long as possible the workhouse, or the struggling needle woman whose customers will not pay what they owe. Do not be content with giving your guinea to the church or parish fund, but find out the needy and distressed, and with your own hand minister to their need. And then, with an easy conscience, you may sit down to your well-spread board.

For my part, I like to see the butchers' shops with the prize-meat, the poulterers' with turkeys, geese, and chickens, hanging in rich profusion, the pastry-cook windows with their frosted cakes, and the grocers' with their dried fruits and candies, their teas and sugars, and all the cunning enticements to mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters, to provide Christmas cheer. And then that great event in the housewife's year, the Christmas dinner! I like it, not of course for the rich and tempting dainties that resemble the fruit of the forbidden tree, in being pleasant to the eye and good for food; but because of the pleasure it gives the women of our homes in preparing it!

Such a vision of arms white with flour, and faces toasted by the fire, and whisperings over new recipes, and mysterious disappearances for hours together in the kitchen, of peeling, mincing, chopping, roasting, mixing, boiling, tasting, here comes over me, that I can but give myself up to congratulation for the opportunity that Christmas brings. Imagine the chance given to so many housewives for planning, scheming, arranging, purchasing, cooking, and serving, which are purely altruistic, of course. Free scope is given to so many unselfish qualities in the preparation of that great event of the year, the Christmas dinner!

The Home-Coming! The boys and girls have come back from boarding-school; and those who were fortunate enough not to go away to school have holidays. But this is not all. The eldest daughter, who has been absent the whole year in the distant town, is leaving by the night train, and will be here in the morning; and the grown-up sons will bring their wives, and perhaps their babies; and the little midshipman will be back from the long and weary voyage; Oh, blessed festival of home, when the broken circles are formed again, and olden memories of the golden past are renewed. How many a life is kept sweet and pure amid the evil of the world, by the thought of the Christmas gathering, coming or passed!

How shall we gather up all the threads which the hours like swiftly gliding shutters weave? Mother thinks that Mary looks rather over-wrought, and says so to the father, and they have a talk with her. She laughs merrily at their anxiety, and declares she is perfectly well, only tired with the Christmas rush. Then the

father says he never saw the boys look so well, he is sure they have grown an inch, and he wants to know if their salaries have been raised. In the middle of the morning the sailor-boy arrives, and his mother kisses again and again the bronzed chubby face. In the afternoon the girls go round to see their girl-friends, not without a hope that their brothers will be at home; and the lads manage to come across the playmates of their boyhood, whose faces have been their guiding stars through many a mile of tossing foam. Then dinner, and the old stories, the well-worn jokes, the reminiscences of what this one did or that in the old days, the babble of voices, the compliments to mother's cooking, the teasing of the sisters, their scathing answers, the happy, happy play of life and fun, till the whole party from the grandparents to the grandchildren have caught the infection. oh, blessed English homes, the heart of old England can never grow old or sad so long as Christmas comes to stir your smouldering embers into flame!

The Gifts! For weeks before, there have been schemings, whisperings, and mysterious parcels brought in under cloaks and secreted in safe places. Hints dropped and caught at! Leading questions suggested! Shops ransacked! Purses emptied! Probably each gets back an equivalent for what he gives; and probably also a good many things are given which are of no kind of use. Still, the thought for each other is lovely. The endeavor to understand one another's needs is wholesome. And it is always more blessed to give than to receive. What a wealth of giving has been elicited by that Unspeakable Gift which we commemorate at Christmas.

Let us put no stint on our gifts, lest the fountains of our life become frozen at the heart. None would become a Dead Sea, always taking in, and never giving out. But let us give, not only to those who can recompense us again, but to such as cannot repay.

Thus our Christmas days come and go. The happy party breaks up. We take our several ways, and settle to our pursuits. But the light of the Yule-log flickers still in our hearts, and the love of the home acts as a preservative against the evils of the world.

Do you know of lonely ones that have no Christmas circles awaiting them? Find them out, and invite them to join your own. Let there be with you, as with Israel, a tender thoughtfulness for the stranger that is within your gates. And be sure that all the Christmas joy is tinctured with the thought and love of God. Let the old family Bible be opened, and thanks be rendered to him of whom every family in heaven and earth is named. Let nothing be said or done to grieve his gentle and Holy Spirit. Let the home harmonies be keyed to those of heaven. And if there are the empty chairs, the vacant seats, the sad memories of vanished hands and silenced voices, look away to that great home festival in the many mansions' of the Father's house, where the severed shall reunite, and the circles be complete, and from horizon to horizon shall be only love and peace and joy.

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