



Christmas Before Thanksgiving!

I've decided that it isn't the merchants who have messed up Christmas. It's the preachers who rail against the merchants who, they say, have defamed Christmas. They drive me nuts. I think they are party-poopers and have ruined what could be, if not for them, a reasonably fun time.

I'm writing this before Thanksgiving and have just returned from a department store. Do you know what they've done? They have Christmas decorations up! There are decorated Christmas trees everywhere and all kinds of enticements to buy Christmas presents for those you love. I fully expect, with the way things are going, they will put up fresh Christmas decorations on the day after Christmas with large signs that read "Only 364 Days Until Christmas!"

It really ticks me off! So let me give you fair warning: This column is not going to be warm and fuzzy.

You probably wonder why Christmas trees before Thanksgiving tick me off. You're probably saying that Christmas trees anytime tick me off, and you're probably right. But it's worse before Thanksgiving. After Thanksgiving I just cuss and spit...before Thanksgiving I become a serial killer.

(Don't send me letters. I already know what some of you want to say: "Steve, what kind of model are you? My children read these columns, and here you're encouraging cussing." "Steve, how could you take a crime of that magnitude so lightly? You're probably not even saved.")

Hey, I'm not being literal here. I'm using metaphors. I don't really cuss and spit...much. And I don't really try to kill people...I just think about it.

Why does Christmas stuff make me so angry especially before Thanksgiving? Let me explain. It's because I...well...uh...I don't know. But it does. It's not that I have a problem with merchants pushing their wares. I'm a capitalist. I don't have altogether that much capital...but, if I did, I would be a major, big time capitalist and, not only that, I wouldn't feel guilty about it. In fact, I'm glad for capitalist mer-

chants who make money on Christmas. They, as they should, rise up and call Santa blessed.

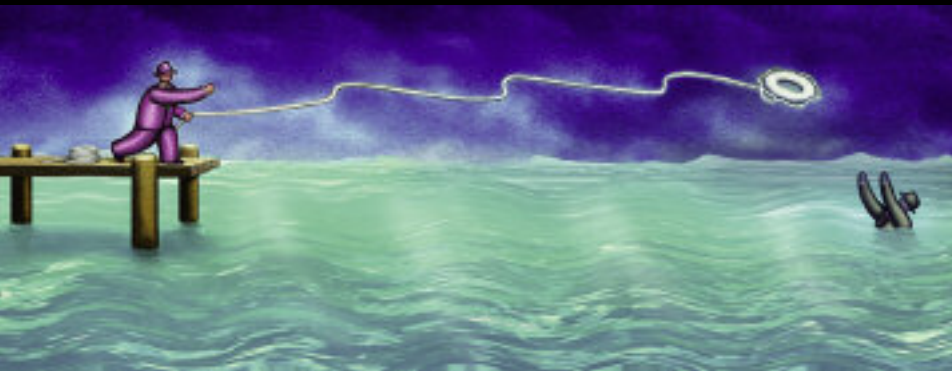
And no, it isn't the commercialization of Christmas that ticks me off, either. What's with that? Frankly, I wish it did make me angry. Given my sin, there are precious few areas where I can feel self-righteous and this could be a major source of self-righteousness for me. I could become a modern Puritan and rail against those who would dare to take a major, profound and sacred place of remembrance and sell stuff surrounding that event. I could preach sermons against it. I could proclaim the fact that I'm offended, horrified and shocked by what has happened to our culture.

Maybe I could even write a book. I could title it *Look What They've Done to Baby Jesus*. If I could get it done by the summer, it could be out in time to make the publisher's Christmas product list for next year. Maybe it would become a best-seller as people bought it for Christmas presents. Then I could become a real capitalist.

Sorry. I got carried away there. But the commercialization of Christmas really doesn't bother me that much. As my late friend, Rusty Anderson, said, "I like the parties, the presents and the neat feeling I get at Christmas...but Jesus keeps messing it up!"

I can understand that. The Christmas music in the department stores, the people in the malls who are all there for someone else, the warm, fuzzy feeling one can get, the Christmas trees, the parties, the family, etc...all of that would be fine if I didn't feel so guilty about enjoying it.

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—Utah

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Your messages never fail to inspire. I think that I am affected from the many years I was captive of a bad version of Christianity. Please keep reminding me that God loves me.—Illinois

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he asked me

famed Christmas. They drive me nuts. I think they are party-poopers and have ruined what could be, if not for them, a reasonably fun time.

So it's none of that! Okay? I'm just ticked and would prefer that you just leave me alone.

You through?

No, I could say a whole lot more. You want to hear it?

I've heard it. In fact I've heard it often from people who are a lot more spiritual than you are.

You agree, of course, being spiritual yourself and all. You're holy and righteous and your wrath is poured out on those who would defame the birth of your only begotten Son. Right?

Not really. Remember the angel? Try to remember what I told the angel to say.

Like “Good news of great joy to all people” and things like that?

And what did the angel tell Joseph?

The angel told Joseph that the baby Mary would conceive was of the Holy Spirit and then the angel said, “She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

Now, why do you feel so ticked? Maybe it's because you feel so guilty?

Could be. If I start lying, it probably won't be to you. I have reason to feel that way.

And could it be that you feel guilty because you have forgotten that I've forgiven you, that I said you would live forever, and that I love you? Could it be that you have been blinded by your past, enamored with the lies you tell yourself in the present about being so pure, and maybe you are even afraid of the future?

Uh...maybe.

Well, get over it. And when you do, tell someone who doesn't know.

But what about the stupid Christmas trees they put up before Thanksgiving?

No response. So I've decided to practice a little silence myself. Sorry for the rant. Don't you forget it though.

He asked me to remind you. □

—Steve Brown