



December 2017

"The Last Christmas Tree" by Gary Wheeler

I grew up on television, so when Christmas comes around, I reminisce about the Christmas specials that came on television each year when I was a child. The abominable snowman in "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer" always gave me nightmares. At first, I was a little scared of "The Grinch", but I came to enjoy and hilarious words and animation. There were so many: "Frosty the Snowman," "Santa Claus is Coming to Town," and of course "It's A Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown."

You remember the story: Charlie Brown, the kid that can't do anything right, the kid with the world's longest losing streak as a pitcher, who never has been able to kick a football.

Charlie Brown goes out to buy a Christmas tree for the school play. As he enters a lot, he considers what kind of tree to buy with the little money he has. In the corner of the lot, he finds a small, lifeless tree, crooked and sparse, and this is the tree he buys. Everyone laughs as he brings in the tree, sits it down, and half the needles fall off.



I may be sentimental, but I always felt for that tree and for Charlie Brown, because, in some ways, as a child I felt like Charlie Brown, the kid who had bad things happen to him, who was teased on the playground at school. At times, I felt like the lonely Christmas tree, not as "pretty" as the others. Although I had wonderful parents and a loving family, the insecurities of growing up made me feel like Charlie Brown.

But the Christmas story is all about the Charlie Browns and little Christmas trees in the world. Consider this:

Jesus went from the highest to the lowest. Philippians 2:7-8 tells us that Jesus "gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross."

He came in the form of a baby to lowly parents and an insignificant town. I mean, what good comes out of Nazareth (see John 1:46).

When the Magi ask where the baby was to be born, they were told "in Bethlehem" in accordance to the prophecy, "It's you, Bethlehem, in Judah's land, no longer bringing up the rear. From you will come the leader who will shepherd-rule my people, my Israel" (Matthew 2:6 & Micah 5:2).



- > Pray for our Ashram family during this season of Christmas.
- > Pray for 9 year old Alivia Comer. She is dealing with HSP, which affects the small blood vessels of the skin, joints, intestines, and kidneys. It's causes spots on the lower extremities, swollen and sore joints, abdominal pain, or bloody urine. She is struggling to eat or keep food down.



2018 Ashram Dates: August 2-5

The Last Christmas Tree (continued)

Of course we know that Jesus was born in a simple manger. Last month, Myra and I stood at the place where tradition says Jesus was born and placed in the manger.



This was typical of Jesus. When he preached in his home synagogue, declaring his mission in life, he said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has

anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come." (Luke 4:18-19) That's the kind of ministry Jesus had, and the kind of ministry he insisted his followers take on (see Matthew 20:26-28)

Jesus came to lowly people for lowly people. Jesus came for me and the rest of us Charlie Browns and little Christmas trees.

Merry Christmas from our family to yours.

Gary and Myra

Interested in going to the Holy Land?

Myra and I recently went on a Holy Land trip, and found it to be a very spiritually uplifting experience. More than any sight-seeing trip, we felt it was more of a spiritual pilgrimage. Our emotions weld up at Caiaphas' House and as we walked along the Via Dolorosa. We looked in amazement upon the Valley of Jezreel as we could see Nazareth, Mt. Tabor (the traditional site of the Transfiguration), Mt. Moreh (where God gave Gideon the victory over the Midianites), and Samaria (where Jesus met a woman at Jacob's Well). We sailed on the Sea of Galilee and remembered the storms and the teachings amid that beautiful body of water, then Myra floated in the Dead Sea. We were touched by so many beautiful places of worship devoted to the honor and glory of God. We saw the roads and walked in the steps of Jesus.



And we wondered: Would any of our Ashram family like to go with us on our next trip? Well, would you?

We are planning two more potential trips: September 2019 and September 2020 (which will include the Oberammergau Passion Play), and will travel with [Educational Opportunities](#).

If you are interested, [email Gary](#) or call him @ 937-204-4400. We're giving you plenty of time to pray, think, and save.

Special Dates



Birthdays

Dec 9 Ruth Garland

Dec 9 Raymond

Jackson



Anniversary

None this month



December's Stanley Snippet:

"Christ and life are one, and I cannot live against Christ without living against life."
E. Stanley Jones, "The Way."