

"Christmas Merry-Making" ..Cover page

Date written: Dec. 13, 1960.

Date and place used:

Shenandoah, Wyo., city teachers
Christmas party - 12/13/60.

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH
SUNDAY SCHOOL
ATTENDANCE RECORD

DATE _____

CLASS NAME _____

TEACHER _____
Present Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT _____

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION _____

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT _____

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS

Introduction:

1. Once a ~~college~~ class at a church-related college was being quizzed on Bible subjects. "With what weapon did Samson slay the Philistines?" the instructor asked. No one ventured to reply, so the professor decided to coach them a little. "What is this?" he asked, as he pointed to his jaw. "The jawbone of an ass!" triumphantly exclaimed a student (#332 of #400 More Snappy Stories that Preachers Tell," by Paul E. Holdcraft.).

2. Sometimes in their merry-making people do make donkeys of themselves. But for the sake of the fun most are willing to take the chance of so doing.

I. For people have always liked to "have fun," to enjoy "a good time," to "make merry."

1. It has always been this way, as far as I can determine from reading. To love to have fun, to enjoy laughing together, seems to be a part of human nature; or, indeed, a need of humans.

a. Festivals and dances of various kinds have been in all cultures of which we know, from the most primitive

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right on up to the present.

b. The Bible, from which comes our record of Christmas, and which is the religious sourcebook for most of us, is full of instances of merry-making, humor and fun. Jesus, whose birthday we celebrate at this season, loved to share in the merriment of people so much that he was once called a "winebibber and a glutton." We know of him attending a wedding feast, often the most merry of events.

2. We like to have our fun today, too.

a. We have birthday parties for this purpose. Sometimes people tend to carry their enjoyment beyond the bounds of good taste. This is often true of children attending birthday parties, especially when they get an eye on the refreshments. One mother knew the love of her son for good cake, so instructed him before he left for the party not to ask for seconds. He promised he wouldn't. When he came home his mother looked him straight in the eye and said, "I hope that you didn't ask for a second piece of cake." "No," replied Bobby. "I only asked

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Mrs. Smith for the recipe so you could make some like it, and she gave me two more pieces just of her own accord."

#408, Public Speaker's Treasure Chest).

b. Many business men and other professional people celebrate their promotions by parties, or by "setting up" their colleagues to some sort of treat.

Tommy, a diminutive office boy, had worked hard on a salary of about \$35 a week. He was a subdued little chap, faithful and quiet. Finally he plucked up courage to ask for an increase.

"How much more would you like?" his employer asked.

"Well," answered Tommy, "I don't think \$50 a week is too much."

"You are a rather small boy to be earning \$50 a week," said the boss.

"I suppose I am," said Tommy. "I know I am small for my age, but to tell the truth, since I've been working here I've been so busy I haven't had time to grow."

He got the raise.

(Master Book of Humorous Illustrations, # 803).

Many a teacher or minister probably feels so busy in the details of his

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profession that he feels that he just doesn't have a chance to "grow." It is not without cause that the school systems and ecclesiastical organization put a premium on additional formal education, whereby they seek to insure that a person keeps growing mentally and in ability. It is right that promotions are based partly on how much growth, educationally and in ability, a person achieves. Promotions usually are the result of long years of hard work and preparation, and it is but natural to want to celebrate, partly from relief ~~of~~ at the end of a hard grind, partly from joy at the honor being given for the achievement reached.

In the military many a time I've had to take my coke, in lieu of stronger drink, to help a fellow celebrate his promotion. I've seen the same in business, too. This is natural, and I think good.

II. The season in which we make merry the most probably is the one into which we are now entering: the Christmas-New Year's season. Evidences of this merriment are seen in:

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1. Office parties
2. Professional and group get-togethers (like this one).
3. Family reunions
4. Church parties and treats, as well as the religious ceremonies.

5. Gift-giving. Sometimes a gift is a delight to one but torture to another.

There is the story about a little boy named George who received a new drum for Christmas. Shortly thereafter when his father came home from work one evening, George's mother said: "I don't think the man next door likes to hear Georgie play his drum, but he's certainly subtle about it."

"What do you mean," asked the father.

"Well," said the mother; "this afternoon he gave Georgie a knife and asked him if he knew what was inside the drum." (# 225, Public Speaks Treasure Chest).

6. Lavish decorations -- most city streets, Denver city-county building, home trees, etc.. (Leo waiting for first snow so we could get our Christmas tree and have Christmas).

III. Many people participate gladly and actively in these types of Christmas

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merry-making who don't accept and believe in the religious dogma and symbolism of Christmas.

1. Business folks send greetings and gifts to customers and friends, even though they themselves may be Jewish or of other non-Christian religions.

2. Agnostics, atheists or folks of other religions frequently join with zest in the merry-making at Christmas time.

IV. It is fitting that Christmas should be a happy time.

1. The original Christmas was a happy time for Mary and Joseph, as the birth of a healthy baby is for most any normal family.

2. The first Christmas was a happy time for the shepherds ~~xxxxxxx~~ who heard the angels sing, and for the wise men who followed the star to the manger.

3. In ~~xxxx~~ the nearly-20 centuries of Christianity, for about 17 of these centuries Christmas has been a time of joyous and happy celebrating. We have

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leave out most of the first three centuries of the Christian era in thinking about Christmas joy, for during those years great attention was placed on the Lord's resurrection, on his baptism, but little on his birth. It was actually in the middle of the fourth century before wide-spread celebrations of his birth began taking place.

Many of the elements and customs of the occasion from non-Christian festivals and lands became blended with the Christmas message during these centuries.

4. All of us are familiar with the fact that today Christmas is a happy time and all of us believe it should be just that.

5. However, it is possible to come to think of the season of Christmas as a holiday simply for merry-making and whooping it up. Actually

V. It is impossible to leave Christ out of Christmas, or to separate Christmas from its religious significance.

1. Recent overhaaring of a remark, WWWhy sing 'Silent Night'x at Christmas? Christmas is a time for fun, not for

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religion."

2. Without its central, dogmatic Christian meaning, however, Christmas has no significance whatever.

3. The merry-making at Christmas time is because in a tiny new life came the revelation of man's individual worth to God. When society abandons this Christ-inspired message of the importance of each person our culture quickly degenerates into a state of anarchy or totalitarianism. When the welfare of the masses becomes most important the freedom of the individual is often lost.

Conclusion:

1. If we would have our freedoms we must keep and cherish and strengthen ~~our~~ their religious foundations. Only with religiously-based freedom can we choose the time and occasion for our merry-making!

2. Each in his own way, each according to his own tradition, but to have Christmas you must keep Christ in it!

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