

Christmas 2014

Christmas – A Fairy Tale?

Luke 2:8-14

Rev. Freddy Fritz

December 24, 2014

Christmas – A Fairy Tale?

Ron Walters tells the following story in *Preaching* magazine. During the 1960s, a phenomenon called “Peanuts” was born. The comic strip began popping up in newspapers across America. It was destination reading. The cartoon’s childlike characters and modest storylines had become the perfect placebo for millions looking for a dose of innocence.

None of it was lost on Madison Avenue.

CBS first approached Charles Schultz, creator and writer of “Peanuts,” with an idea of an animated television Christmas Special, featuring Charlie, Lucy, Linus and the whole gang. Schultz agreed, work began, and CBS was quick to review the script.

Schultz titled the special, “A Charlie Brown Christmas.” CBS approved.

The opening scene placed Charlie on his tiptoes peeking into his snow-covered mailbox hoping to find a Christmas card, but to no avail . . . again. Feeling dejected, he stopped by Lucy’s psychiatric booth to mourn the commercialism of Christmas. Lucy concurred, adding her own lament: “Christmas is nothing but a lot of stupid toys. What I really want is real estate!”

CBS loved it.

In the next scene, Charlie became further disillusioned as Snoopy was busy decorating his doghouse with an endless string of lights and gaudy decorations in hope of winning a neighborhood contest. "Good grief!" says Charlie.

"Yeah, yeah, that's it!" thought CBS.

Sally, Charlie's baby sister, was caught up in the trappings. She recruited him to take dictation for a letter to Santa. "Dear Santa. Just send money, preferably \$10s and \$20s."

More laughter from the CBS heads.

As the story progressed, Lucy sent Charlie to pick out a Christmas tree for their neighborhood pageant: "A big, shiny aluminum tree . . . maybe painted pink." However, Charlie couldn't do it. Instead, he brought back a real, albeit small, pathetic, lifeless tree . . . and the kids hated it. "You blockhead, Charlie Brown!"

In frustration, Charlie screamed, "What is Christmas about, anyway?"

"This is good, really good!" CBS drooled.

Then Linus stepped into the spotlight and answered Charlie's question:

⁸"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And, lo, the angel of the Lord came

upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. ¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, 'Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, 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,
Good will toward men.' " (Luke 2:8-14,
KJV)

"Hold everything!" demanded CBS. "You can't recite Bible verses on national television – especially the *King James Version*! You'll alienate our viewers and chase away our advertisers. The tree can stay, but the Bible has to go."

Schultz stood firm. "If I can't tell the Christmas story, you can't have the 'Peanuts' cast. If the Christmas reading goes, so do they!"

CBS looked at the fast-approaching deadline – and gulped. "OK, it stays; but we're going to pay a terrible price for this."

Sure enough, on the night of the Christmas Special, the CBS switchboard was flooded with calls from around the country, all asking the same

question, "When can we have more 'Peanuts' Christmas specials?"

"Soon," CBS promised, "very, very soon."

Thus, a TV tradition was born: 50 percent of America tuned into the show that night. It won an Emmy and a Peabody. *TV Guide* claimed Linus' biblical recitation was one of the top 35 moments in television history, and this became the longest-running Christmas Special on CBS.

The Christmas story never can be told too much. Christ's coming never was meant to be secretive. After all, God "emptied himself" and "became a man." He stepped out of eternity and into time, and "we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father."¹

But, not everyone agrees that the birth of Jesus Christ was a unique and world-changing event.

The American Atheists, a national group headquartered in New Jersey, has taken on the Bible Belt with a Christmas billboard campaign in Tennessee and Arkansas. The static ad shows a mischievous-looking young girl wearing a stocking hat while writing out her wish list. To the side of her picture is the tagline scrawled in child-like

¹ Ron Walters, "Good Grief! It's Christmas!" *Preaching* (November/December 2014), 38.

print, “Dear Santa, All I want for Christmas is to skip church! I’m too old for fairy tales.”²

This provocative ad will no doubt provoke agreement by some people and anger by many other people.

What do you think of the ad? What do you think of its message? Is the Christmas story a fairy tale?

Well, what is a “fairy tale”? The definition of a fairy tale is a question of considerable dispute. One universally agreed-upon matter is that fairy tales do not require fairies. I suppose I would suggest that a “fairy tale” is a story with various characters, a fascinating plot, a struggle between good and evil, a hero, and a happy ending.

Defined this way, the Christmas story *is* a fairy tale. In fact, the Christmas story is, as C. S. Lewis would say, the *true* fairy tale. It is the true story of a world that God originally created in magnificent beauty and glory, where everything was good. God created a perfect man, and then created a perfect wife for him. But then something went horribly wrong, when sin entered the perfect world of that first man and woman. A noble race fell into unspeakable corruption and ruin. Instead of love and

² See

http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2014/12/atheist_group_from_nj_launches_anti-christmas_billboards_across_the_country.html.

joy and peace, people were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, and malice. They were full of envy, murder, strife, and deceit.

But, God sent another perfect man into this world. He would be the hero who would save people. That man was born in Bethlehem in a filthy stable to humble parents. He lived his life in obscurity in Galilee. Then, when he was about thirty years old, he started to proclaim the good news of God's message of salvation. He told all who would listen that there would be a happy ending for all who repent of their rebellion and sin against their Creator and believe that the hero would pay the penalty for all their sin. That hero eventually went to the cross and died to save all who would believe his message.

Listen again to how Linus quoted the angel's announcement of the true fairy tale, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

Is Christmas a fairy tale? Yes, it is! It is the true fairy tale of a hero rescuing sinners who call out to him for help and salvation. Turn to Jesus this Christmas in faith and repentance, and he will rescue you. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp
3. www.sermonaudio.com/source_detail.asp?sourceid=FredFritz

Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

Answers for Life!

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org

Web site: www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org

PRAYER:

Our Father, thank you for the true fairy tale.

Jesus came into this world to save sinners such as us. He came to put right what was wrong when sin entered the world through Adam in the Garden of Eden. How grateful we are for all that Christ has done for us.

And for this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!