About Christmas

By Bill Williamson

How can I determine about Christmas? Where can I decide about Christmas?

I’ve concluded that I cannot judge a real Christmas by flipping through the channels of my TV set. I have searched through the hundreds available and found little giving me clues of Christmas, only reindeer with red noses, make-believe green creatures, stories of angels coming to help troubled people, animated snowmen, and Charlie Brown’s trial with the lump of coal.

I wondered if I could determine a true Christmas from the myriad of brightly lit shops adorning the streets of the city. I found many clues here, but they were clues to the wrong Christmas. I could, I found, purchase: toys, tools, housewares, skis, bikes, TV’s, remote cars, candy, nuts, turkeys, and pumpkin pie. All wrapped in delightful ways. They were clues to Xmas.

I thought maybe the red costumed bell ringers with shouts of, ‘ho-ho-ho’, with pots stationed appropriately at the entrance of the shops could provide a clue. They had none! Only my recollection of scams intended to extract dollars from givers to use for their own profit and pleasure.

So, I pondered, where can I decide about Christmas? I walked across the court of the mall and onto the city sidewalk. As I neared the corner, through the lightly falling snow I caught a glimpse of a dim light that glowed in Station Park. I ventured closer and discovered a tiny replica of a manger lined with straw hay. Inside I found an infant doll wrapped in a soiled white cloth. Figurines were crowded around as if gazing at the infant. I remembered this from the story from the Bible, about Jesus. Is this display one that had escaped scorn? Why was this part of Christmas? Hadn’t the city council forbidden this inappropriate and illegal?

Pulling the worn Testament from my pocket, I thumbed through the tattered pages. My eyes fell upon, Luke 2:6-14:

“While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.’”

I placed the Testament back into my pocket and turned away from the tiny manger and peered through the snowfall back to the bright lights of the shops, the tinkling of the bells, snowmen and Santa Claus. I lowered my head and started homeward, mulling over the Testament verses I just read.

I stepped onto the porch, kicked the snow off my boots, shook my coat and cap, and entered my little house on Elm Street. I opened the door of the wood stove in the corner. Smoke swirled...
from the open door and made its way across my face. I savored the smell of the wood on the fire as I pushed another piece onto the coals.

I slumped back into my old easy chair a few feet away, noticing how dark the arms had turned over the years. Still thinking of the verses, I reached for my Webster’s Dictionary on the corner stand. What would Daniel have to say about Christmas? I found one small line;

‘The festival of the Christian church observed annually on the 25th day of December, in memory of the birth of Christ - Christmas day.’

I tipped my head back against the stained head cushion of the old chair, pulling my glasses off and rubbing my tired eyes, I whispered, ‘Father, what have we done? How many remember, and how many care?’