

Ornaments on Our Christmas Trees  
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Christmas trees. Take a look around and you will notice that everyone is different and everyone reflects some of the person or people who decorated it. How we decorate our trees echoes some of who we are. Some people like natural trees, some like artificial. Some decorate their trees with handmade ornaments from their kids. Others decorate their trees very meticulously and ornately. Many like traditional trees. Some like very untraditional ones. I had a friend in college who decorated his palm tree every Christmas.

I recently heard of someone who put his tree in the middle of a large nativity set. From the way I heard it, there were the shepherds gathered around, the angels overhead, the wise men kneeling, Mary and Joseph gazing, and the baby Jesus in a manger. The animals were there, lying on the hay. It was just like you might imagine a nativity scene except for one thing. Illuminating it all was a Christmas tree. It was carefully decked with gold trimmings and white lights. It towered above the Christ child, who gazed curiously up at the tree.

I kind of like the image. I know there was no Christmas tree at the first Christmas, but the idea intrigues me. I can imagine in my mind's eye the way that I would decorate that tree. Can you?

There are little glimmering angels strung about the branches, like tinsel, shining their light of love. Near the bottom of the tree there are little shepherd boys hanging from the limbs while watching their flocks. There are kings, seeking a greater king, bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Near the top of the tree is a carpenter named Joseph, and his betrothed, a young girl named Mary. They are leading a donkey, and Mary is heavy with child. At the very top of the tree is a star, shining with a light of hope and a promise of love from God on high.

But there are more ornaments hanging on that first Christmas tree. There, hanging out to the side is John the Baptist, the voice crying out in the wilderness, proclaiming God's messiah. There is old Simeon and the prophetess Anna. And there are the beggars on the street, the blind men and the lepers, the vineyard keepers and the fishermen. There's the woman at the well and the rich young ruler. There's even Judas, as well as the eleven other disciples. And if you look, you will see, hanging in the back, the prophets .

And if you look more closely, you will see some more special ornaments. Can you see them? There, hanging on the tree is you and me. There are our families, our friends. There are our neighbors and colleagues. All of us are there because all of us are a part of the great Christmas story as it unfolds again this Christmas. God's incarnation at Christmas, God's becoming real at Christmas, is not a one-time event. It is one that continues in you and in me and in each of us as we let the Christ be born in us.

We belong on the Christmas tree for we are parts of the story of God coming into the world. When we embrace the Christ child, we become Christmas. But more than that, we become Easter and Good Friday and all of the truth that Jesus embodied in His life and His teaching. When Christ is in us, God is made real through us.

When these days of Christmas are done and the gifts have all been opened; when the cookies have all been eaten and the guests have all gone home, please don't put God away with the rest of the Christmas decorations. Instead, make room in your heart and let God live in you and through you every day of the year.