

The World Needs More Manger Time

Pastor John Hicks

First United Methodist Church

The kid with the round head and his pitiful looking tree have become a regular part of America's Christmas. In "The Charlie Brown Christmas", Charlie Brown reaches a point of frustration in the midst of all of the commercial hustle and bustle of Christmas and cries out, "Isn't there anybody who can tell me what Christmas is all about?"

Enter blanket boy Linus to the rescue. Linus steps into the spotlight on the stage and turns the spotlight on Jesus. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

It's interesting that this line almost didn't make it into the TV special. Charlie Brown almost missed Christmas and America almost missed out on a Christmas special that contained the real Christmas message.

Charles Schulz, the creator of "Peanuts," was under pressure to leave the Jesus part out of the TV special. But Schultz stood his ground. He said, "If we don't do this, who will?" Good question!.

In our post-Christian culture, Linus' little speech about "to you is born a Savior" may be the only fragment of the Gospel some people have ever heard.

But we don't have to be a prime-time TV producer to feel the pressure to not bring up Jesus. Most of us who've ever tried to live for Him have experienced that pressure. Saying "Happy Holidays" is being pushed over proclaiming "Merry Christmas". Across the country, Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus are being displaced by non-religious displays. To reference another Christmas special, Grinches across the country are trying to wipe Christ out of Christmas.

This should not come as a surprise. Satan has been trying to edit out Jesus for over 2,000 years! The early disciples were hauled in by the same religious leaders who had arranged for the crucifixion of Jesus. They were ordered to never again mention "The Name" in their preaching. The disciples response? They never stopped teaching and proclaiming the Good News that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 5:42). Why?

In the words Dr. Seuss gave to the Grinch after his conversion: "Maybe Christmas doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more."

And that's why we can't afford to leave out Jesus. Jesus is the reason for the season. His Name is where the power is. His name is where the hope is. Many Christmases ago a cartoonist made a courageous choice and refused to edit the Name. This Christmas would be a good time for us to make that same choice. The world needs more "stable" time and we can all use a "silent night".