



Merry Christmas!

We are delighted to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior with you tonight! As Christmas Day approaches, don't let the symbols or commercialism overshadow the true "reason for the season." In fact, there are things all around us that can remind us of, and even draw us closer to, Him:

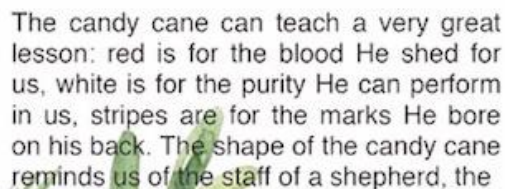
Santa Clause, or St. Nick, was actually a God-fearing man who gave gifts to the poor. He was eventually imprisoned because he would not stop sharing the Gospel.

Let the Christmas tree remind us that Jesus died on a tree for our sins. The lights can represent that we are the light of the world and that Jesus came to light up our darkness.


The Grinch actually becomes "born again": "It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes, or bags. Christmas I suppose doesn't come from a store. Christmas, perhaps, is a little bit more."

Read the book *A Christmas Carol* as it is filled with messages of the Gospel and sacrifice.

The Little Drummer Boy, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, and *Nestor, the Long-Eared Christmas Donkey* are some of the sweetest little movies, filled with the Christmas message.



The candy cane can teach a very great lesson: red is for the blood He shed for us, white is for the purity He can perform in us, stripes are for the marks He bore on his back. The shape of the candy cane reminds us of the staff of a shepherd, the



first to come see baby Jesus. Turned upside down, the candy cane forms a "J," for the first letter of the name Jesus.

Be careful of watching commercials with perfectly decorated homes; don't try to be like Martha Stewart! Make do with what decorations you have: they have professional people who spend hours creating the perfect setting.

They may have the fireplace, but we have the fire.

They may have perfect decorations, but we have eternal dwellings.

They may have the table perfectly set, but we have the food, the Bread of Life, that truly satisfies our hungry soul.

They may have a great present, but we have His presence.

Focus on others at this time. There are so many needs that it is good to remember that Christmas is a time for giving, not just for getting.

Put one wrapped present under the Christmas tree to represent what you are going to give Jesus this year. Jesus wants your heart.

Perhaps the best reminder this month is that the messier your house is, the more it looks like the nativity. Jesus was born in a messy, smelly stable!

When it seems least like Christmas is when it's most like Christmas. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight! Tidings of comfort and joy. God and sinners reconciled. Joy to the world, the Lord has come!



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Karen Pulley