



WHEN MY HEART FOUND CHRISTMAS

Chris Seay

Christmas was always magical for me as a child. It wasn't just Santa flying around with all my new stuff that made the holidays so joyful, it was the way everything else stopped so we could be together. We always celebrated Christmas at my grandparent's house, and every December I go back there in my mind. The scent of Christmas candy, the clutter of infinite gifts, and a family room that could easily hold thirty people with an enormous Christmas tree in the corner. We savored every moment of gift-wrapping and opening, watching *Miracle on 34th Street*, and maintaining a regular rotation of eating and napping. I'm not sure when that innocent magic started to fade, but in 1992 a big chunk of it was stolen. I'll never forget that Christmas.

While studying at Baylor, I was serving as a part-time Pastor in Central Texas. I gave my brother Robbie his first guitar for Christmas that year, and I remember driving back to Waco on Christmas night (because I had to preach the next morning) wondering if my sister liked her sweater and if my brother would begin a career as a rock star all because of my gift (worked out well for me). I also meditated on my calling as a Pastor and some recent good deeds done by my roommate, Kevin Childress, and I. Kevin and I had invited a new friend, Jose, into our home on a regular basis to pray, read the scriptures, and learn about faith in Christ. Under our tutelage Jose was growing in his new faith and we had found a sincere friend. As Christmas approached we went out and splurged on dozens of gifts for Jose to give to his children whom he had not seen in over a year. I was thinking what a hero Jose must have been when he marched in with all these gifts for his estranged children. We helped facilitate a place of reconciliation in his family, and isn't that what Christmas is all about.

As these visions of spiritual sugarplums danced through my head I pulled into my driveway to find a Christmas surprise—broken glass and blood. My front window was shattered and blood was everywhere, on the porch, stairs, floor, bathroom, everywhere. And my worldly possessions were no longer there. I had been robbed. As I sat in the rubble of my home, my friend Jose came up the stairs. He was drunk and was still bleeding from a deep cut on his wrist. I hadn't been burglarized; my friend Jose repaid my Christmas spirit with grand theft larceny, and I was fuming.

I sent Jose away and started to clean the blood. I became angrier and speculated how someone I knew and trusted could do this to us on Christmas day. I wondered what could have happened on Christmas morning that led Jose to get drunk, break my window with his bare wrist and rob me blind. Apparently things didn't go so well with his kids. Jose like so many others spent the holidays alone, scared and depressed. Seven days later I knocked on Jose's door prepared to forgive him. Jose was dead.

These events didn't feel very Christmasy to me. I want the Macy's parade, chocolate candy, mistletoe, and caroling. But this new path of loving and being betrayed is really what Christmas is all about. That year Christmas lost a lot of magic, but regained a lot of mystery, the mystery of the virgin birth, the incarnation, God's forgiveness and unfailing love.

If you can get past the magic and see hurting people all around you, you may find the path of Christmas. Like Christ you can make yourself vulnerable, chose to love, hope, and hurt. Merry Christmas will mean something new to you on that day too.

Are your expectations for the perfect Christmas sabotaging your chance to experience the real path of Christmas? What will it take to begin a fresh journey?

Are you trapped in the same mechanical process of preparing for Christmas year after year? With whom in your life can you start new and meaningful traditions that celebrate Jesus' incarnation?

Are you able to rejoice in the coming of Emmanuel?

How can you share the true story of the birth of God without coming to terms with your own struggles, loneliness and regret?

Have you betrayed the mysterious joy of Christmas for the commercial mystique of Christmas? What are several ways you can embrace the mystery?